Higher Education Students Early Statistics survey 2026-27 (HESES26)

Guidance for providers

Reference OfS 2026.49

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Summary and introduction

This document sets out the rules and definitions used in completing the HESES26 survey.

Action: Submission of HESES data is a requirement for all providers registered with the Office for Students (OfS) in the Approved (fee cap) category.

The data collected in HESES26 provides an early indication of the number of higher education students studying in 2026-27 and is the main data source that will inform the allocation of OfS funding for 2027-28.

This document has two parts:

- **Part I: Overview of HESES26**

This section contains an overview of HESES26, a summary of changes and clarifications since HESES25, and additional information about the HESES26 process.

- **Part II: Funding rules and definitions**

The annexes in this section define the student population covered by the HESES return and give guidance on what is 'countable' in HESES26, as well as providing information on the rules and definitions that are needed to complete the survey correctly.

Colour coding

We aim to treat all providers fairly and equally; therefore, the vast majority of the guidance contained in this document applies to all providers. In some specific cases, different guidance will apply. This will be explicitly stated in the text and the relevant paragraphs will be labelled with a coloured band on the left of the page as below:

a. Guidance that applies solely to **further education and sixth form colleges and academies** (light blue).

b. Guidance that applies to **all other providers** (red).

Additional guidance

We are also publishing separate guidance on submitting representations on multiplication factors. This provides information on when representations should be submitted. It is published to assist staff at providers in making appropriate representations with sufficient information should they wish to do so.

Part I: Overview of HESES26

Purpose

1. The 2026 Higher Education Students Early Statistics (HESES26) survey collects data on the number of students registered with a provider in the 2026-27 academic year (1 August 2026 to 31 July 2027). It is a requirement for all higher education providers registered with the OfS in the Approved (fee cap) category to return this data. Providers registered in the Approved category are not required to complete the HESES return.

2. This document describes the HESES26 survey and the funding rules and definitions that apply in completing it. The data provided in the HESES26 survey will:

   a. Give an early indication, for purposes including government planning, of the number of higher education students studying in the academic year 2026-27.

   b. Inform the allocation of teaching funds for the academic year 2027-28.

3. Information on how HESES data informs funding allocations is in our 'Guide to funding 2026-27'.[1] Further guidance on how HESES26 data will be used in calculating funding in 2027-28 will be published later this academic year.

Timetable of events and action required

4. HESES26 workbooks will be available to providers in late October 2026. Providers must ensure that they complete and submit their workbooks on time. The timetable for HESES26 is summarised in Table 1. Actions for providers are in bold.

Table 1: Timetable for HESES26

Date	Action
September and October 2026	HESES26 webinar held. A recording and slides are available from the OfS website.[2]
Late October 2026	HESES26 workbook will be available to download from the OfS portal.
1 November 2026	HESES26 census date for further education and sixth form colleges and academies.
13 November 2026 (noon)	HESES26 submission deadline for **further education and sixth form colleges and academies**. A valid HESES26 workbook must be submitted through the OfS portal by **noon**.

[1] See 'Guide to funding: How the Office for Students allocates money to higher education providers on the OfS website.

[2] See the HESES training materials page on the OfS website.

Date	Action
From 14 November 2026	Data verification phase, using our credibility checks and data comparisons, begins for further education colleges. Student data contacts are asked to verify, and answer any questions about, the data. This may involve several rounds of queries.
1 December 2026	HESES26 census date for all other providers.
11 December 2026 (noon)	HESES26 submission deadline for **all other providers**. A valid HESES26 workbook must be submitted through the OfS portal by **noon**.
From 12 December 2026	Data verification phase, using our credibility checks and data comparisons, begins for all other providers. Student data contacts are asked to verify, and answer any questions about, the data. This may involve several rounds of queries.
29 January 2027	Sign-off deadline **for all providers.**
12 February 2027 (noon)	Deadline **for all providers** to submit representations on multiplication factors for inclusion in the initial grant announcement for 2027-28. A valid workbook should be submitted by **noon**. See paragraphs 36-40.

Sign off and accuracy of data

5. We expect that the data signed off as correct by the 29 January deadline will be the final data that we will use to calculate funding for 2027-28. We will accept amendments after this point only in exceptional circumstances, and any such amendments will need to be submitted through the OfS data amendment process.[3]

6. As set out in our 'Terms and conditions of funding for 2026-27',[4] if the OfS finds (whether through data reconciliations, data audit or any other means) that erroneous data has resulted in providers receiving incorrect funding or student number allocations, then we will adjust these accordingly – subject to the availability of funds. Where data error has resulted in a funding allocation being too high, we will recover the excess funding from the provider for any year informed by the audited or reconciled data (including any consequential effects on funding for subsequent years). If there is evidence that a provider has deliberately not complied with the funding rules or has ignored previous advice and recommendations from the OfS, we may recover funding that relates to a longer period, up to a maximum of seven years. A provider must repay any funding that is identified as having been overpaid as a result of such recalculations.

7. If data or information has not been provided, or the OfS considers that it is incomplete, incorrect or otherwise not of a satisfactory quality, then the OfS may, at its sole discretion, use its own assumptions or estimates about the relevant data or information for the provider to determine its eligibility for, and level of, funding. This may include assuming that the

[3] See the Amendments to data page on the OfS website.

[4] See 'Terms and conditions of funding' on the OfS website.

provider has no eligible activity to count towards the allocation of a particular element of funding and thus that no such funding should be provided to it.

Funding for 2027-28

8. Information returned in the HESES26 survey will be the primary data source that informs our funding calculations for the 2027-28 academic year. The methods used to allocate funding for 2027-28 will reflect the outcomes of our upcoming funding review consultation. Though we cannot pre-empt the outcomes of the consultation, we do not expect to require any additional data collection to support our allocation of funding for 2027-28.

9. In the longer term, the outcomes of the funding review may require changes to be made to future HESES collections. Any such changes will be subject to the usual consultation process and we will release guidance to clearly set this out to providers in advance.

10. The timetable for the announcement of recurrent grant for academic year 2027-28 and capital grant for financial year 2027-28 cannot yet be specified, as this depends on the timing and content of statutory guidance from the Secretary of State relating to our funding settlement from government. We will update providers about this as soon as we can.

Summary of changes and clarifications since HESES25

11. Those completing HESES26 who previously completed HESES25 should note the following changes and updates that have been made for HESES26. The main changes were set out in 'Changes to 2026 student data surveys to inform funding'.[5]

Changes to HESES definitions arising from introduction of exemptions to the subcontracted partner requirements

12. We have made changes to the guidance in Annex F in relation to the fundability status of students on courses taught under subcontractual arrangements.

Changes to HESES definitions arising from introduction of the lifelong learning entitlement (LLE)

13. We have made changes to annexes B, C1, C2, D and F to account for the introduction from 1 January 2027 of eligible provision delivered under the LLE, which introduces a new student support system.

Annex G - Overrides

14. We have introduced guidance in this annex to clarify the use of overrides for HESES26.

Before completing your survey

15. In preparation for completing the survey, we recommend that you read this guidance thoroughly. When completing the survey, you will need to follow the definitions given in Part II. Accompanying this guidance we have published a number of online training materials

[5] See 'Changes to 2026 student data surveys to inform funding' on the OfS website.

on the OfS website.[6] Depending on your level of experience in completing HESES, you may find it useful to consult this material when reading the rest of this guidance document.

16. Your HESES workbook is a Microsoft Excel (.xlsx) file that will be available to download from the OfS provider portal in late October 2026.[7] Please note that HESES data must be submitted through the portal and that the OfS portal administrator will need to delegate access to the HESES area of the portal.

17. When the survey workbooks are released, we will write to the 'student data contact' that your provider has nominated. This person will be our primary point of contact throughout the HESES process, though it is possible for your provider to nominate alternative contacts. It is important that your contact details are correct. If you want to check or amend them, please contact us at recurrentgrant@officeforstudents.org.uk. We recommend that more than one person is involved with completing the survey so that expertise is spread across your staff.

Notes on completing your survey

18. Table 2 below lists the worksheets in the HESES26 workbook.

Table 2: Worksheets in the HESES26 workbook

Name of worksheet	Title or description	Action
Information	Workbook information.	Automatically filled
Table of contents	Descriptions of and links to other worksheets.	Automatically filled
Validation	If you upload a workbook with validation errors, the resulting package will include this sheet which will contain details of the errors.	Automatically filled in the results package
1_Full_Time_and_sandwich	Counts of years of engagement for Full-time and Sandwich years out by subject grouping.	Provider to complete
2_Part_time	Counts of years of engagement for Part-time by subject grouping.	Provider to complete
3_Total_years_and_FTE	Total counts of years of engagement. Optional section to review multiplication factors and submit representations for mode, price group and level.	Automatically filled Provider to complete

[6] See the HESES page on the OfS website.

[7] The provider portal can be found on the OfS website at https://ofsproviderportal.officeforstudents.org.uk/.

Name of worksheet	Title or description	Action
4_Health_years_and_FTE	Counts of years of engagement for Home fee students on pre-registration health courses. Optional section to review multiplication factors and submit representations for Home fee years of engagement for pre-registration health courses.	Provider to complete Provider to complete
Comparison tables	Tables in these worksheets summarise your HESES26 data and compare it with previous years (if available). You may be asked questions on large changes between years during data verification.	Automatically filled

19. The HESES survey workbook provides an in-year count of the students on higher education courses recognised for OfS funding purposes at your provider in 2026-27, including a snapshot of your provision on the census date (see Table 1). This means that your HESES survey will include:

    - a count of the students who have started their year of engagement by the census date
    - a forecast of the students you are expecting to start their year of engagement after the census date.

    These two populations are then added together to produce a single count of years of engagement for the academic year, which informs our funding calculations.

20. When completing the workbook, you may see automatic highlighting of four types:

    a. Validation errors on Tables 1 to 4, highlighting where data is not correct (for example, where a negative number is entered in a cell that requires a positive number). Any validation errors must be corrected before the workbook is submitted.

    b. Credibility warnings on Tables 1 to 4, highlighting where data is possible, but appears unusual.

    c. Highlighting on the Comparison worksheets. These worksheets contain tables that summarise your HESES26 data and compare it with data from previous years (where available). Any highlighting shows differences that are greater than might be expected.

    d. Multiplication factor representations checks on Tables 3 and 4, highlighting where representations have not been submitted correctly (for example, no explanation has been given for the representation). These should be reviewed to ensure that representations have been submitted correctly and that all required information is available for the OfS to consider.

Use of the portal and delegated authority to submit a HESES return

21. Your provider will need to have delegated the ability to submit the HESES return to one or more members of staff.[8] Staff that are given access to the HESES26 area of the portal will be able to:

    - access the blank HESES workbook for your provider
    - upload completed HESES workbooks and download copies of submitted data
    - sign off the HESES data on behalf of your provider
    - download any supplemental files released to support verification of HESES26
    - submit representations on the multiplication factors shown in the HESES26 workbook.

    It is up to providers to decide which members of staff should have this access.

22. When you upload a HESES workbook, you will be asked to confirm that the data submitted is correct and fit for purpose. We expect that the person undertaking this confirmation on behalf of the provider will either be the accountable officer or someone issued with delegated authority by the accountable officer.

Submitting and signing off your survey

23. When you are satisfied that the survey is complete and accurate, you should upload it to the OfS portal. You have until the submission deadline to upload the workbook to the OfS portal.[9]

    a. The deadline is noon on **Friday 13 November 2026** for further education and sixth form colleges and academies.

    b. The deadline is noon on **Friday 11 December 2026** for all other providers.

24. Please note that the portal usually sees heavy traffic on the days leading up to the deadline and this can cause the upload process to take longer than usual. Please note the following about the submission of HESES workbooks:

    a. Although it is possible to upload your survey to the portal at any time, you must have uploaded **at least one submission after the census date**.

    b. It is possible to submit the workbook several times, but we will use only the version most recently uploaded.

25. It is up to individual providers, not the OfS, to determine when uploaded HESES data is ready to be signed off; you can do this at any point after submitting the workbook. Please note that signing off the data does not mean that the data verification process is finished. If any issues

[8] Staff previously given access to HESES25 will retain their previous delegation, with no further action required for those individuals to gain access to the HESES26 area of the portal.

[9] Available on the OfS website at https://ofsproviderportal.officeforstudents.org.uk/.

are discovered with the submitted data, we will require you to submit an amended HESES return. Sign-off must be completed after the latest upload prior to the sign-off deadline.

Amending HESES data

26. After the submission deadline you will be able to upload amended HESES workbooks to the portal. This facility can be used to address any errors discovered in the data.

27. If you submit an amended workbook, you should also email us with explanations of the changes made. We will review the amended workbook; if we discover any issues with the data then we will email you to ask for additional information. We may require a further amendment to be submitted, if there are issues that prevent an amended workbook from replacing the previous version. Only the most recent workbook will be used for funding purposes.

28. In order not to breach data protection regulations, you **must not submit the HESES workbook by email**. Please use the OfS portal.

The data verification phase

29. After you have submitted your HESES workbook, we will review the data and email with any questions that we have on your submission. This data verification phase of the HESES process allows us to:

    - gain confidence in the accuracy of your data
    - understand any context to how your data has changed between years
    - identify and discuss any large or unexpected changes from previous years.

30. The data verification phase starts after the submission deadline and ends on the sign-off deadline (Friday 29 January 2027 for all providers). By this point any queries we have will need to be answered. The timescale for data verification takes account of the holiday period. It is advisable to have more than one member of staff involved with completing the HESES survey.

Deadline for signing off your data

31. Under condition of registration F3, a provider must provide the OfS with such information as the OfS specifies at the time and in the manner and form specified.[10] All providers registered in the Approved (fee cap) must submit a HESES26 return. If providers in this category do not have students registered with them in 2026-27 on courses recognised for OfS funding purposes, they should contact us at HESES@officeforstudents.org.uk to discuss submitting a blank return.

32. In order to comply with condition F3, your provider will need to submit (and sign off) a HESES26 return through the portal. You will also need to resolve any data verification queries

[10] See 'Deadlines and requirements for 2026-27 data returns' on the OfS website.

concerning your workbook. **This must be completed by the final sign-off deadline of 29 January 2027**.

33. Where a provider fails to submit data on time, or returned data is not credible after verification, we may allocate funds based on our own estimates of student activity.[11] Providers that do not submit credible data on time are more likely to be audited.

34. 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 that they contain errors or inappropriate classifications or forecasts that would significantly and materially affect our use of the data. This may include requiring changes to how providers use subject classifications and hence how students are assigned to subject groupings and price groups.

Submitting representations on multiplication factors

35. To convert years of engagement into full-time equivalence (FTEs) for funding purposes, we will apply multiplication factors to the HESES26 data. These factors can be viewed on the relevant worksheets within the HESES26 workbook.

36. If you believe the multiplication factors are no longer representative of the provision delivered by your provider, you can submit representations. These representations are also submitted through the HESES26 workbook. The multiplication factors representations process is not compulsory and is not included in the F3 notice.

37. Representations can be submitted at any point from the census date to noon on 12 February 2027, although we recommend that submissions are made between 1 February and 11 February 2027 to allow providers to base representations on their latest signed-off HESES26 data. Full guidance on the representations process will be published on the multiplication factors section of the HESES webpages.[12]

38. Please note that we will take your representations from the most recent submitted HESES26 workbook.

39. You will be able to submit representations after your HESES26 data has been signed off. When submitting representations, you should take efforts to ensure that the HESES26 student data is not changed. Any unexplained changes to the HESES26 student count may require further data verification queries or may mean that we reject the uploaded return.

After the data is signed off

40. After the representations deadline, we will consider any valid representations and then start to prepare HESES data for various uses, including the calculation of recurrent grant allocations

[11] See paragraph 9 of 'Terms and conditions of funding for 2026-27' on the OfS website.

[12] See the 'Multiplication factors' page on the OfS website.

for 2027-28. We will publish the HESES data for all registered providers as part of an official statistic.[13]

41. Shortly after the data verification phase has ended, we may contact you for feedback on the HESES process through an online survey. This feedback helps us to evaluate the effectiveness of the HESES process and will guide any improvements that we may consider for future data collection.

Audit trail

42. You should keep an adequate audit trail between student record systems and the HESES return for at least five years. This should include a record of the basis for estimating non-completions and forecast countable years, along with any relevant electronically stored data, printouts and working papers used in completing the return. Source documents such as registration forms should also be retained, including information on students' detailed study intentions for the academic year and their qualifications on entry.

43. There should be an audit trail to individual figures in the return. In the case of figures based on activity up to the census date, a clear trail from individual students to the figures should be retained. During audit we may ask for a sample of these figures to be rebuilt. In the case of estimates and forecasts, there must be a clear and justified rationale for the figures, and backup data justifying what is being returned.

44. Where your provider is involved in subcontractual or other partnership arrangements, your audit trail must contain evidence for the inclusion or exclusion of students (including details of the partnership arrangements between providers), and forecasts relating to such students.

[13] For the release schedule, see the Official statistics page on the OfS website.

Part II: Funding rules and definitions

The annexes in Part II define the student population covered by the HESES26 return and give guidance on what is ‘countable’ in HESES26, as well as providing information on the rules and definitions that are needed to complete the survey correctly.

Annex A: Defining the HESES student population

This annex defines an ‘engagement’ and explains which student engagements should and should not be included in the HESES population. It also explains how to treat provision delivered through subcontractual arrangements.

Annex A contents

Definitions

- The HESES population for 2026-27
- Who is in the HESES population for 2026-27?
- Partnerships between providers

Good practice

Definitions

The HESES population for 2026-27

1. HESES26 records counts of years of engagement for students (regardless of whether or not the student is repeating a year) on a recognised higher education course. References to ‘recognised higher education course’ mean recognised solely for OfS funding purposes, according to the definition in Annex B, rather than any wider purpose.

2. For the purposes of HESES:

    a. ‘Provider’ means a ‘higher education provider’ as defined in Section 83 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA).

    b. ‘The appropriate student record’ means the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) submitted to the Department for Education (DfE), or the Student record returned to the designated data body (DDB).[14]

    c. An ‘engagement’ is a student’s commitment to an educational aim (the award of a qualification or credit or the completion of an apprenticeship) and its realisation over time. This shares the same definition as used by the DDB.[15] Guidance for recording higher education data in the ILR notes that several fields in higher education entity refer to ‘instance’ and that this can be considered as equivalent to the concept of ‘engagement’. For HESES purposes, an engagement can be split into one or more years of engagement.[16] The number of years of engagement recorded by a provider within an

[14] The ILR was previously returned to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This was an executive agency of the Department for Education (DfE) that closed in April 2025. Jisc is the DDB for higher education in England. Previously the DDB was the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), which is now part of Jisc.

[15] See the Engagement page on the DDB website.

[16] See the additional guidance for recording HE data page of the ILR provider support manual.

academic year will be used in determining a measure of how much teaching activity that provider is delivering.

d. When and how a year of engagement is counted in HESES depends on how providers return individualised data to the DDB or the DfE, reflecting the different specifications used by these data returns. As such, a definition of a 'year of engagement' for further education and sixth form colleges and academies can be found in Annex C1. For all other providers, a definition of a 'year of engagement' can be found in Annex C2.

e. 'Joint courses' are courses made available by two (or more) providers with degree awarding powers, in which each provider has responsibility for the provision of education to students, and which lead on successful completion to a joint award or dual or multiple awards from each provider involved. Teaching may be provided in varying proportions by the providers involved.

f. The 'provider with which a student is registered' (for both HESES purposes and the appropriate student record)[17] means:

    i. For all courses, except joint courses, the provider which has the full contractual responsibility to the student for the provision of educational services. This applies whether the provider provides all the teaching for the course or subcontracts out some or all of that teaching to another body.

        1. Where fee payments from the Student Loans Company are concerned, this will also be the provider that collects the student course fee.

        2. Where payments from the the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for apprenticeships are concerned, this will be the provider that is paid by the DWP.

    ii. For joint courses, the provider to which the student is assigned for data reporting purposes when they start their course. In joint courses, responsibility for the provision of education to a student is held by more than one provider, and there may be variation from year to year as to which of these collects the course fee for a year of engagement. Providers should determine at the outset what proportion of the initial entry cohort should be reported by each provider. Reflecting this proportion, each student should then be assigned to a single provider when they start their course and retain this assignment until they finish it. This approach will support student tracking for performance indicators and other longitudinal studies. Students on courses provided under the Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters scheme should be registered with and reported by the provider with which they initially start the course.

g. An 'exchange' is defined as a programme offered in partnership with an overseas provider where there is a movement of students in both directions between the providers. The movement of students does not have to be balanced. For an exchange programme:

[17] Although this guidance sets out providers' responsibilities in terms of HESES and the appropriate student record, this does not preclude providers' particular responsibilities under the regulatory framework, whether to students registered with them, students they teach or students for whom the provider is an awarding body.

i. In an ‘outgoing’ exchange, the UK provider sends participants from its registered students to undertake a period of study at a provider abroad or, under the Turing scheme only, a work placement abroad.

ii. In an ‘incoming’ exchange, the UK provider receives students registered at a provider abroad, who are undertaking a period of study with them.

Who is in the HESES population for 2026-27?

3. Engagements meeting all the following criteria should be included in the HESES population:

a. A year of engagement, in which the student is registered and actively pursuing studies with the provider, begins within the academic year (1 August 2026 to 31 July 2027). This:

i. Includes outgoing, but not incoming, exchange students.

ii. Excludes students who the provider teaches under a subcontractual relationship with another provider, where the latter provider has the full contractual responsibility to the student for the provision of education.

iii. Excludes engagements for students who are on school-centred initial teacher training programmes.

iv. Excludes engagements that are being returned on any other provider’s HESES survey.

v. Excludes engagements where no year of engagement for which the student is actively studying with the provider falls even partly in the academic year 2026-27, such as:

1. Engagements where all years of engagement falling in the year are entirely writing up. Writing up is not considered to be ‘study’ for HESES purposes.

2. Engagements where the only activity is assessment. This includes teacher training programmes that consist only of a Qualified Teacher Status assessment.

vi. Excludes engagements whose course aim is a research qualification awarded primarily on the basis of published works, unless the engagement involves a significant amount of research at the provider.

vii. Excludes graduate and undergraduate internships.

b. The engagement is for a higher education course recognised for OfS funding purposes (see Annex B). This excludes engagements where the sole outcome of the course is a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) but includes engagements which lead to both a recognised higher education qualification and an NVQ.

c. No more than half of the active study time for the whole engagement is spent outside the UK (including through distance learning), unless any of the following apply:

i. There is a clear academic reason for studying abroad rather than in the UK. Even where such a reason exists, we must specifically sanction the course as eligible.

ii. The student is temporarily and unavoidably abroad and remains liable to UK tax on their earnings, or is a dependant of such a person. This includes members of HM Forces and their dependants.

iii. The student is receiving UK student support from the Student Loans Company for the year.

Engagements for sandwich students working abroad and students on a study year abroad as part of an exchange should normally be included in the HESES population, because the year abroad will not constitute most of the engagement.

4. All engagements included in the HESES population must be included in the provider's appropriate student record(s), even if this is not normally compulsory under the coverage of the record. This includes where students are in the HESES population but do not generate a countable year in HESES26.

5. The responsibility for reporting student data (other than for joint courses) depends on which provider has full contractual responsibility to the student for the provision of education. Students should not, other than in exceptional circumstances, change the provider they are registered with, and no change should be made as to which provider reports data on students who are continuing on the same course without each student's informed agreement. The only case where we expect this to be common practice is in formal collaborative research programmes (such as doctoral training partnerships or centres for doctoral training), where students will often transfer, having completed a Master of Research (MRes) qualification. In reporting student data to us, providers will be confirming their contractual responsibilities for the provision of education to these students.

6. The flowcharts provided in Figures A1 to A4 can be used to determine whether a student is included in the HESES population for 2026-27.

Figure A1: Determining the HESES population for 2026-27

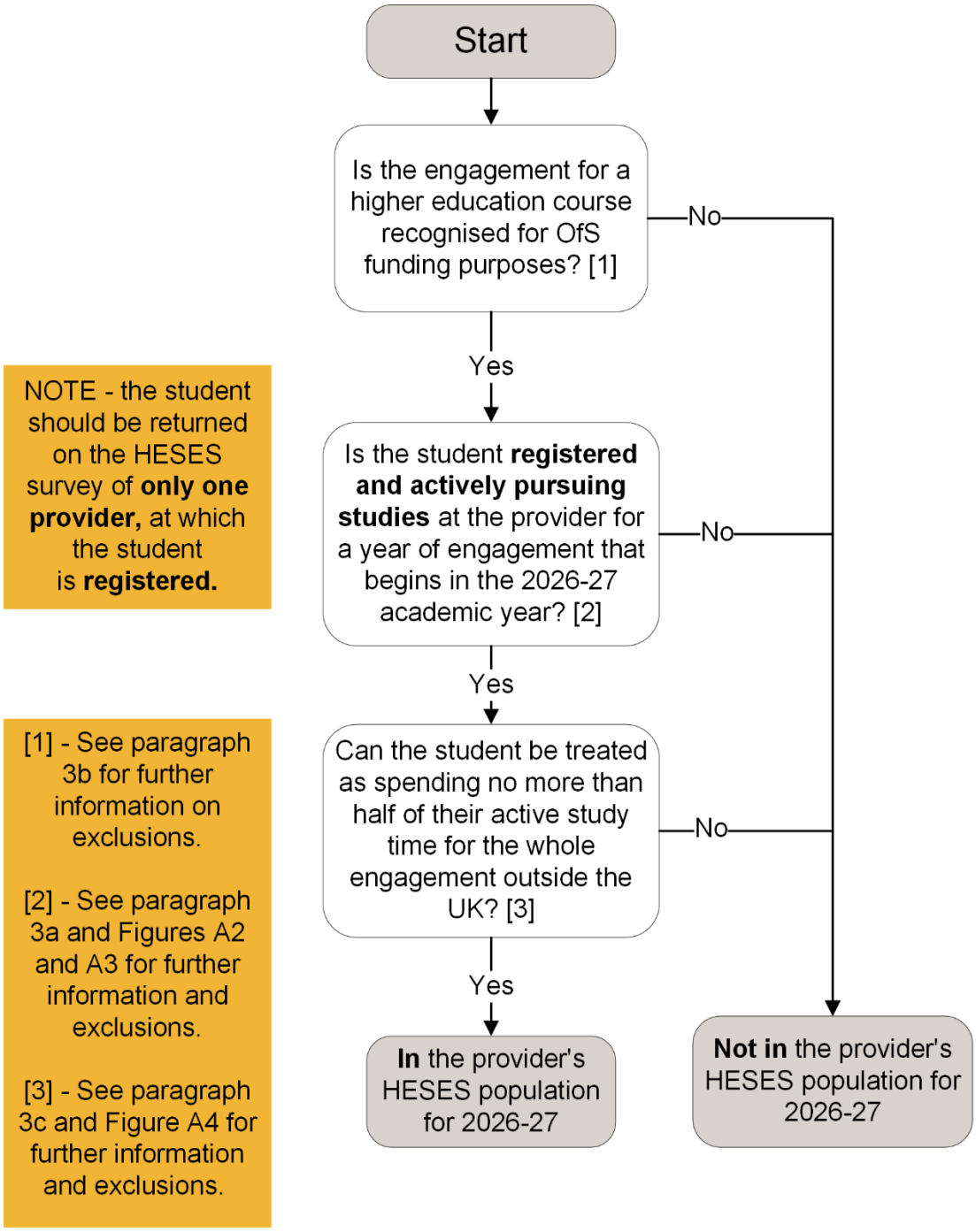


Figure A2: Determining whether a student is registered with a provider

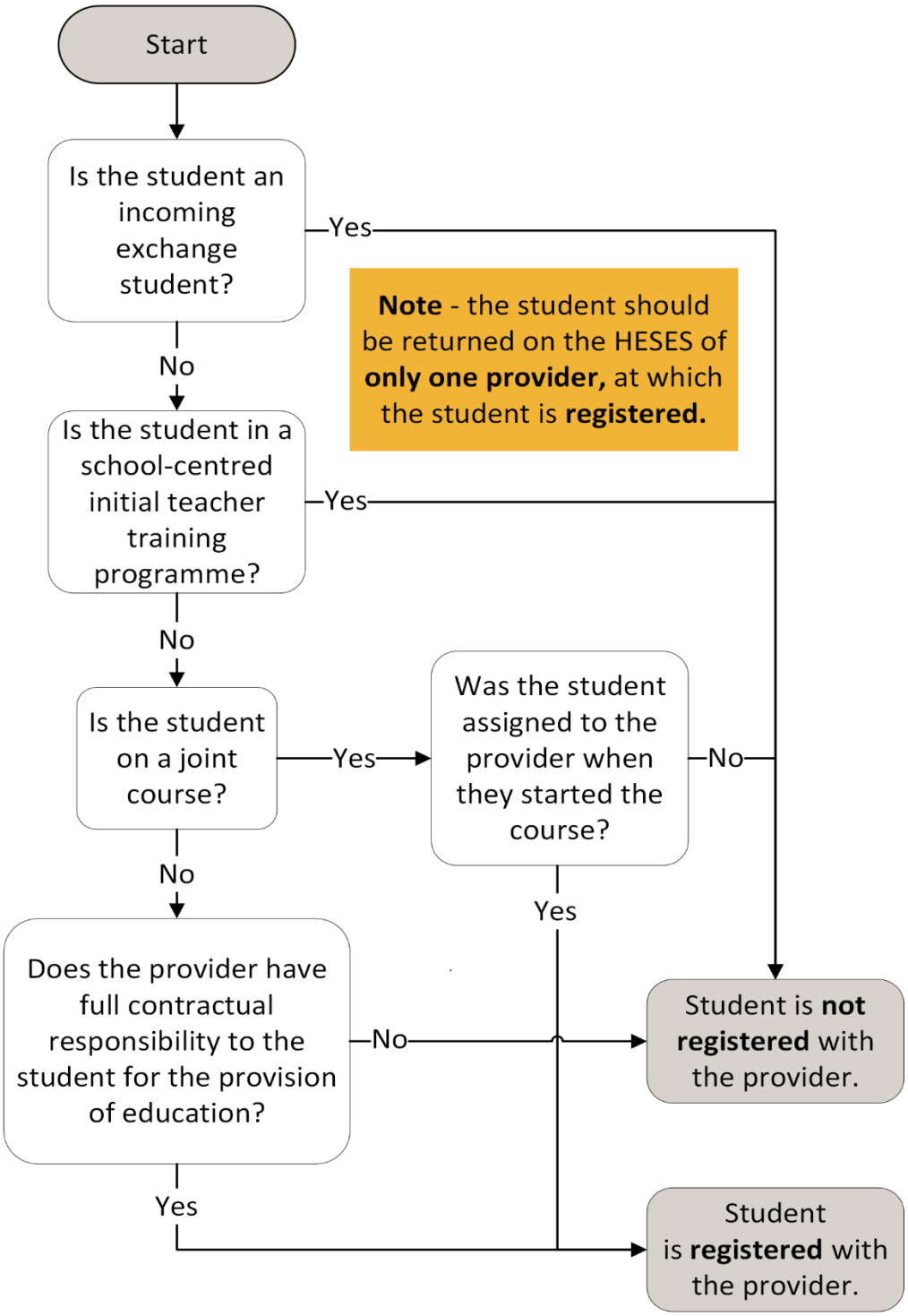


Figure A3: Determining whether a student is actively studying with a provider for a given year of engagement

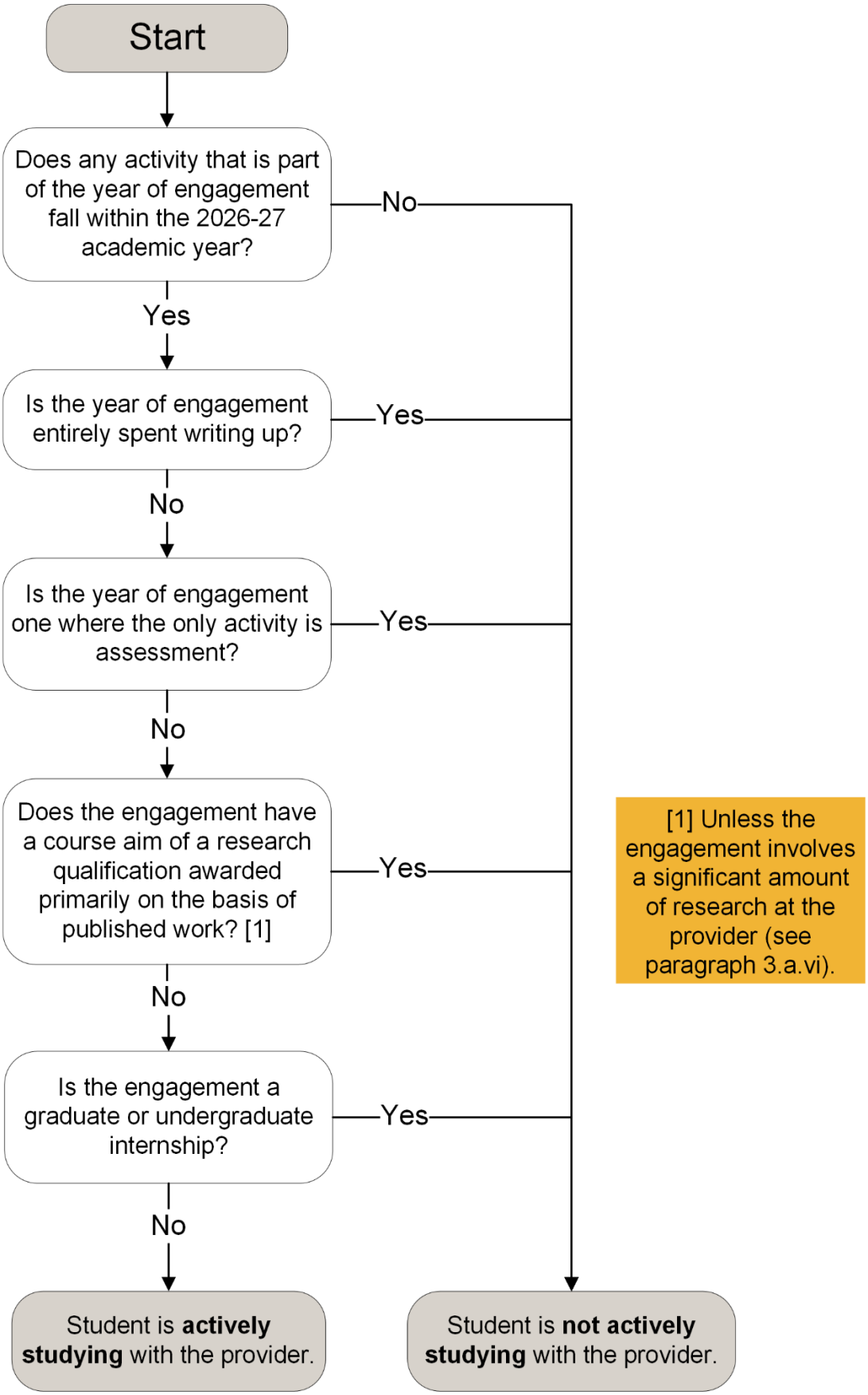
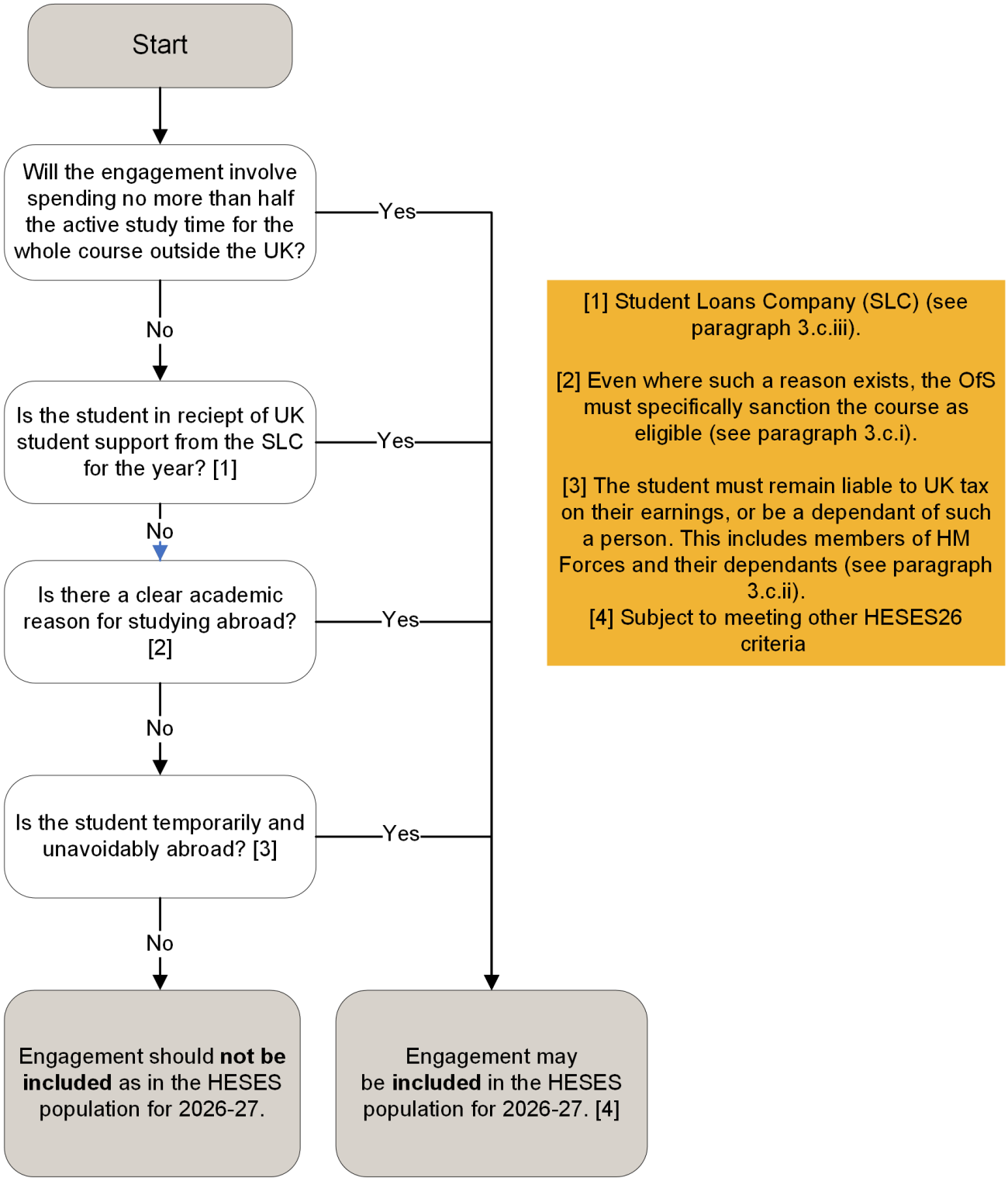


Figure A4: Engagements involving study time abroad



Partnerships between providers

7. Our regulatory framework provides guidance on the definitions of validation and subcontractual arrangements:[18]

    a. A validation arrangement applies to a course (module or programme) which a degree awarding body approves to contribute to, or lead to, one of its awards. The validated course is delivered by the provider that designed it and students on the course normally have a direct contractual relationship with that provider and not the validating provider. The validating provider remains responsible for the academic quality and standards of the award granted in its name.

    b. A subcontractual arrangement (sometimes described as a 'franchise arrangement') is a relationship, based on a formal contract, in which a provider (the lead provider) allows another provider (the delivery provider) to deliver all or part of a programme which has been designed, approved and owned by the degree awarding body. The lead provider or subcontracting provider retains overall control of the programme's content, delivery, assessment and quality assurance arrangements.

    This does not include informal arrangements that are not governed by contracts between providers, such as those that might exist for shared teaching between constituent parts of the University of London, or for study abroad under the Turing scheme. It may include some exchange programmes, if there is a formal contract between providers.

8. Under an apprenticeship, the provider with whom a student is registered is the one that is in receipt of payments for the apprenticeship from the DWP (see paragraph 2f of this annex). That provider is responsible for reporting all activity undertaken as part of the apprenticeship on the appropriate student record (which may include on returns by the provider both to the DfE and the DDB) and, where the activity is towards a qualification recognised for OfS funding purposes, on HESES. If other providers also deliver training as part of the apprenticeship, they are treated (for both HESES purposes and the appropriate student record) as doing so under a subcontractual arrangement: they should not include the student in their own data returns. This applies irrespective of whether those other providers have their own degree awarding powers and are delivering their own qualifications as part of the apprenticeship. Where the provider responsible for reporting activity as part of an apprenticeship is not registered with the OfS in the Approved (fee cap) category, then students will not be included in any HESES return.

9. While the nature of any partnership arrangement (including for joint courses, as defined in paragraph 2 of this annex) is for providers to decide, we would consider this to be determined by the details of the contract between the relevant providers.

10. A course is considered to be part of a subcontractual arrangement if:

    a. There is a written, legally binding agreement in place between the lead provider and the delivery provider that sets out the conditions of the arrangement.

[18] See the Regulatory framework for higher education in England on the OfS website.

b. The lead provider has a contractual relationship with the student (and the full contractual responsibility for the provision of educational services, as mentioned in paragraph 2f of this annex).

c. The fee or fee loan (or in the case of an apprenticeship, payment from the DWP) is paid to the lead provider.

d. The student is registered as a student of the lead provider and is included in its data returns.

11. Providers should be clear on the nature of any partnership agreements and ensure that this is communicated to students.

12. The Student Loans Company requires that students are registered with the validating body before a provider collects the fee for the student. In the case of subcontractual arrangements it should be the lead provider with contractual responsibility that registers the student with the validating body. Where delivery of Higher National Diplomas or Higher National Certificates is subcontracted to another provider, we expect the arrangement to be approved by Pearson PLC. Please refer to Pearson's guidance on collaborative and consortium arrangements.[19]

13. It is the responsibility of the registering provider to ensure the quality of all the data it returns, including that relating to activity at its subcontractors.

Good practice

14. It is essential that exchanges of information and communications between the partners are frequent, timely, open and effective. In particular, we highlight the importance of a lead provider being told promptly by its partner delivery providers about any changes to students' study, including withdrawing. This may require clear protocols among partner providers regarding the exchange of information.

15. The different roles of each partner in collecting and managing data will vary. The principle applied at audit is that student data should be managed with equal professionalism at all partner providers. When entering into subcontractual arrangements, the systems in operation and the exchange of information should form part of the negotiations and final agreement.

16. It is important that students are returned on the HESES survey and the appropriate student record by the lead provider only. A provider's student record system should contain all subcontracted-out students' records in the same way as it does students taught directly. However, providers' student record systems should clearly identify those students subcontracted out and to be returned by them and should ensure that those not eligible (including those subcontracted in) are excluded from the survey. This will help to ensure that subcontracted-out students are correctly returned in HESES, and that an audit trail for such students is available.

17. Use of the lead provider's standard processes by partner providers is strongly encouraged – for example for enrolment, module registration, interruption of studies, change of module, change of programme and withdrawal. This helps to identify clearly which provider a student

[19] See on the Pearson website.

has a contractual relationship with and is especially important where a lead provider deals with more than one delivery provider. It also ensures that the lead provider is collecting all the data it requires for its own purposes.

Annex B: Recognised courses of higher education for OfS funding purposes

This annex defines the recognised higher education courses which students must be studying if they are to be included in HESES. It also details the treatment of students on higher, degree or advanced apprenticeships which include both recognised higher education and other elements.

Annex B contents

Definitions

- Recognised higher education courses for OfS funding purposes
- Learning aims and learning aims search
- Professional (or similar) qualifications
- Foundation years ('Year 0')
- Recognised higher education provided as part of an apprenticeship

Definitions

Recognised higher education courses for OfS funding purposes

1. To be included in the HESES population and therefore potentially counted in HESES, an engagement must be for a course that meets our definition of recognised higher education for OfS funding purposes. This means it is either:

    a. A course that is designated under the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011.20

    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.21

    c. A course designated under the Lifelong Learning (Student Support) (Amendment of Fees and Awards etc.) Regulations 2026.[22]

[20] The regulations are available on the https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ webpage at 'Education Reform Act 1988', but this does not incorporate all amendments in recent years. Providers should consider amendments made through statutory instruments also listed on that website.

[21] See Education Reform Act 1988 and the Find a regulated qualification page on the Ofqual website.

[22] See The Lifelong Learning (Student Support) (Amendment of Fees and Awards etc.) Regulations 2026 - GOV.UK.

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, or

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

    From January 2027, this will include eligible provision delivered under the LLE for modules on the approved subject list delivered by approved providers.[23]

3. Engagements that do not meet this definition are excluded from the HESES population. References to 'recognised higher education' mean recognised solely for our funding purposes, rather than any wider purpose.

Valid learning aims and the learning aims search

4. Colleges should ensure that all courses for which they intend to return engagements in HESES have valid learning aims recorded with the DfE.[24] The Department provides a 'Find a learning aim' service (FaLA), which allows providers to review the awarding body, qualification type and subject Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS) codes for a given learning aim. [25]

Professional (or similar) qualifications

5. Courses leading to professional or similar qualifications will not normally be recognised for OfS funding purposes, because they are likely to be on the Register of Regulated Qualifications and not eligible for student support. However, if these courses also meet the definition given in paragraph 1 of this annex, they will be recognised.

Foundation years ('Year 0')

6. Engagements for foundation years, access provision and other provision commonly referred to as 'Year 0' will be included in the HESES population only if they are an integrated part of a recognised higher education course, as defined in paragraph 1, such that both of the following apply:

    a. Students are already registered for the recognised higher education course at the same provider.

    b. Progression to the recognised higher education course is guaranteed, subject to satisfactory completion of the foundation year.

7. Free-standing foundation years and other free-standing Year 0 provision are not recognised higher education courses. The requirement that students are already registered for the

[23] See LLE modular funding: approved providers and subjects in scope - GOV.UK.

[24] We reserve the right to reject data where course(s) without a learning aim are included. This may include requiring a provider to amend its data to correct for courses that are not on the DfE's learning aims database.

[25] See the Find a learning aim page on the DfE website.

recognised higher education course at the same provider means that, where the foundation year is taught by a different provider, this will only be treated as integrated – and therefore within the HESES population – if it is done under a subcontractual arrangement from the provider offering the recognised higher education course.

Recognised higher education provided as part of an apprenticeship

8. An apprenticeship is a job with training, through which an apprentice will gain the technical knowledge, practical experience and wider skills and behaviours that they need for their immediate job and future career. The apprentice gains these through formal off-the-job training and the opportunity to apply the skills in a real work environment (in the productive job role) through on-the-job training. Apprenticeships can include education and training at several specific levels, including degree apprenticeships where apprentices study towards an undergraduate or postgraduate degree qualification.

9. Although apprenticeships are funded from a variety of sources, including the DfE, this does not in itself affect whether years of engagement taken as part of an apprenticeship are included in HESES, or whether Home fee students are reported as OfS-fundable or non-fundable. Recognised higher education courses taken as part of an apprenticeship are eligible for inclusion in HESES and may be reported as OfS-fundable, subject to meeting the criteria in Annex F, in the same way as non-apprenticeship courses.

10. Only the activity within an apprenticeship that meets the definition of a recognised higher education course for OfS funding purposes given in this annex should be included in HESES. This means that a student who has commenced an apprenticeship, but is not undertaking the recognised higher education course element of that apprenticeship during the year of engagement, should not be included. For the purposes of determining a student's mode of study, only time spent in study or learning in the workplace that directly contributes to their recognised higher education course should be counted towards a student's activity.

11. The main provider delivering apprenticeship training, holding a funding agreement for the purpose with the DfE, is the lead provider. It has contractual responsibility for students and should report students in its data.[26] Where a recognised higher education course that is part of an apprenticeship is delivered by a different provider, this should be through a subcontractual arrangement with the lead provider (see Annex A for full definition).[27]

12. Where higher education providers (or their subcontractual partners) are also providing, as part of an apprenticeship, other courses that are not recognised for OfS funding purposes, the lead provider should report the study as follows:

    a. For further education and sixth form colleges and academies that are lead providers, the recognised higher education course for OfS funding purposes and any other element of

[26] The main provider is the organisation holding a funding agreement with the DfE (previously the ESFA), through which the DfE directly routes funds from an employer's apprenticeship service account or government-employer co-investment. The main provider will have the overall responsibility for the training and on-programme assessment conducted by itself and its delivery subcontractors, and have a contractual relationship on behalf of the employer for the end-point assessment.

[27] If the lead provider of an apprenticeship is not registered with the OfS in the Approved (fee cap) category then these students will not be reported in any provider's HESES return, and no OfS funding will be provided.

the apprenticeship should be returned directly to the DfE as separate components of the same engagement in the ILR.

b. For other lead providers, both of the following are necessary:

    i. The higher education element of the apprenticeship should be returned in the appropriate student record.

    ii. All elements of the apprenticeship (including the higher education element) should be returned directly to the DfE as separate components of the same ILR engagement in the ILR.

Annex C1: Counting student activity for further education and sixth form colleges and academies

This annex gives the definition of a year of engagement and explains how to count them. This includes the criteria for counting a year of engagement in HESES26, the definitions of standard and nonstandard years of engagement, flowcharts to aid with determining how years of engagement should be counted, and guidance on counting some short courses that are sometimes known as 'summer schools'.

We have produced different versions of Annex C to be clear to each provider how years of engagement should be determined and counted.

This annex (Annex C1) applies to further education colleges and sixth form colleges and academies only. All other providers should refer to Annex C2 for guidance on how years of engagement should be determined and counted.

All other annexes apply equally to all providers.

Annex C1 contents

Definitions

- Year of engagement

Guidance

- How to count years of engagement
- New entrants and new starters
- Assigning modules to years of engagement
- Summer schools

Examples

Definitions

Year of engagement

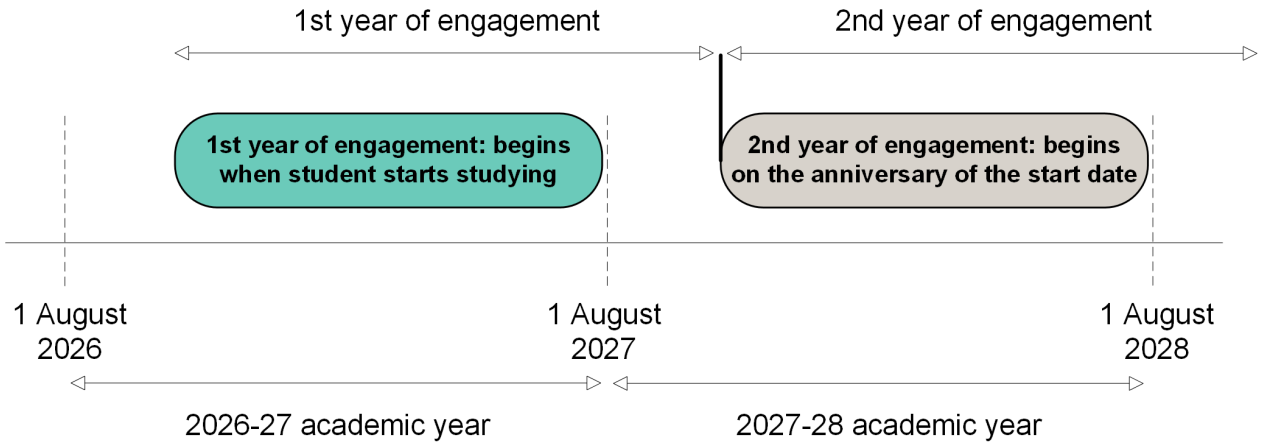
1. Annex A paragraph 2c defines an 'engagement' as 'a student's commitment to an educational aim (qualification or credit or the completion of an apprenticeship) and its realisation over time'. This aligns with the definition used by the DDB but is applicable to all providers. For HESES purposes, an engagement can be split into one or more 'years of engagement'.

2. The first year of engagement begins when the student starts studying towards the qualification, credit or on the apprenticeship; subsequent years start on or near the anniversary of this date, allowing for minor variations in term dates (see Figure C1.1). This aligns with the guidance from the DfE regarding how higher education provision for further education and sixth form colleges and academies will be expected to be returned in the ILR.

3. The start of a year of engagement is determined on an individual student basis and is the date when the student first started studying towards the qualification, credit or on the apprenticeship, or its anniversary. Therefore, a student who starts their course later than others in the same cohort will start each year of engagement later than others on the course throughout their studies.

4. This will be returned based on all teaching activity undertaken within that year of engagement, even where some of the teaching takes place after the end of the academic year (31 July 2026).

Figure C1.1 Years of engagement



5. HESES counts years of engagement for students studying on higher education courses recognised for OfS funding purposes (see Annex B). This is not the same as counting individual students. This approach ensures that the number of students on each course is recorded in order to forecast teaching activity.

Further notes on years of engagement

6. Where a student is undertaking modular provision approved under the LLE at an approved provider, they will generate only one part-time year of engagement for HESES. This is irrespective of whether they are undertaking modules from the same qualification aim or multiple qualification aims and generating multiple records within the ILR.

7. Where a student completes a foundation degree and then undertakes a foundation degree bridging course to enable them to join the final year of an honours degree, the foundation degree bridging course should be treated as an independent course, which will generate its own year of engagement for HESES.

8. Other than for foundation degree bridging courses, where a student undertakes an initial qualification then immediately progresses (disregarding any intervening vacation) to a second qualification at the same broad level, (undergraduate or postgraduate taught), for HESES purposes these are considered both part of the same engagement and are not considered independent. We would therefore usually expect the student to be counted only once in a HESES return for all activity within the relevant year of engagement. Thus, a student studying towards a foundation degree who will progress within the year of engagement to topping up to a degree, or a student taking a Higher National Certificate (HNC) who will progress within the

year of engagement to topping up to a Higher National Diploma (HND), should be returned only once in the relevant HESES.

9. Exceptionally, a student may be aiming for two independent higher education qualifications at the same time. Each engagement then generates its own countable year of engagement. Thus, a student studying towards a MSc and an unrelated undergraduate professional qualification would generate two years of engagement each year. However, a student studying for multiple credits at a provider that could count towards the same final qualification would generate only one year of engagement each year. Usually, independent engagements link to different course identifiers on the appropriate student record, and to different learning aims on the ILR.

Withdrawal from an engagement

10. For the purposes of HESES, a student has withdrawn from their engagement if they leave before its completion and do not have an intention to return and continue it. Students who suspend studies should not be treated as having withdrawn.

Counting years of engagement

11. To be counted, years of engagement must be generated by a student in the HESES population for 2026-27, and meet all the following criteria:

    a. A fee is charged for tuition or supervision of research. Exceptionally, this fee may be waived for individual students based on their particular circumstances. Other than for sandwich year out students it should not be waived for all students on a course, and the criteria which determine whether the fees may be waived should not be tantamount to waiving them for all students. Where the fee has been waived for an individual student, evidence of the reason for this waiver must be retained. This criterion does not apply to students taking a higher education course recognised for OfS funding purposes as part of an apprenticeship. In some cases, a fee may not be charged in the current year because a fee for the activity has already been paid in a previous year. This should not be treated as a fee waiver. Rather the student should be treated as having been charged a fee for the year.

    b. The student is not writing up a thesis or similar piece of work throughout the whole of the year of engagement. Students are considered to be writing up when they have completed their research work and will not undertake any significant additional research. It is common practice for such students to receive a small amount of supervision, and they may still have access to other facilities at the provider. However, such students should still be treated as writing up. Writing up is not considered to be ‘study’ for HESES purposes; therefore time spent writing up for part of a year of engagement should be taken into account and excluded when determining if a student's year of engagement should be considered full-time or part-time.

    c. The student has not withdrawn, and is not forecast to withdraw, within two weeks of starting their engagement.

Guidance

How to count years of engagement in the HESES survey

12. To be counted in HESES26, a student's year of engagement must start in the 2026-27 academic year (1 August 2026 to 31 July 2027). The start date for the year of engagement is the date when the student first started studying towards the qualification, credit or on the higher education component of an apprenticeship, or its anniversary.

Students who withdraw on or before the census date

13. If a student has withdrawn from their course on or before the HESES26 census date (1 November 2026 for further education and sixth form colleges and academies) without completing their study intentions within the year of engagement, they should not be returned.

Standard and nonstandard years

14. There are two types of year of engagement, standard and nonstandard:

    a. A standard year is one where all activity for the year of engagement is entirely within one academic year (1 August to 31 July).

    b. A nonstandard year is one where all activity for the year of engagement is not entirely within one academic year – that is, where the activity for the year of engagement crosses from one academic year into the next.

15. In both standard and nonstandard years, students become countable at the start of each year of engagement.

    a. For students on standard years, the mode of the year of engagement will usually be based on the activity undertaken within the academic year.

    b. For students on nonstandard years, the final academic year during which the student is active will not usually generate a countable year of engagement. It will do so, however, if a student undertakes a short period of activity after the anniversary of their commencement date and that activity ends in the same academic year.

16. Figure C1.2 shows how to count standard and nonstandard years in HESES26:

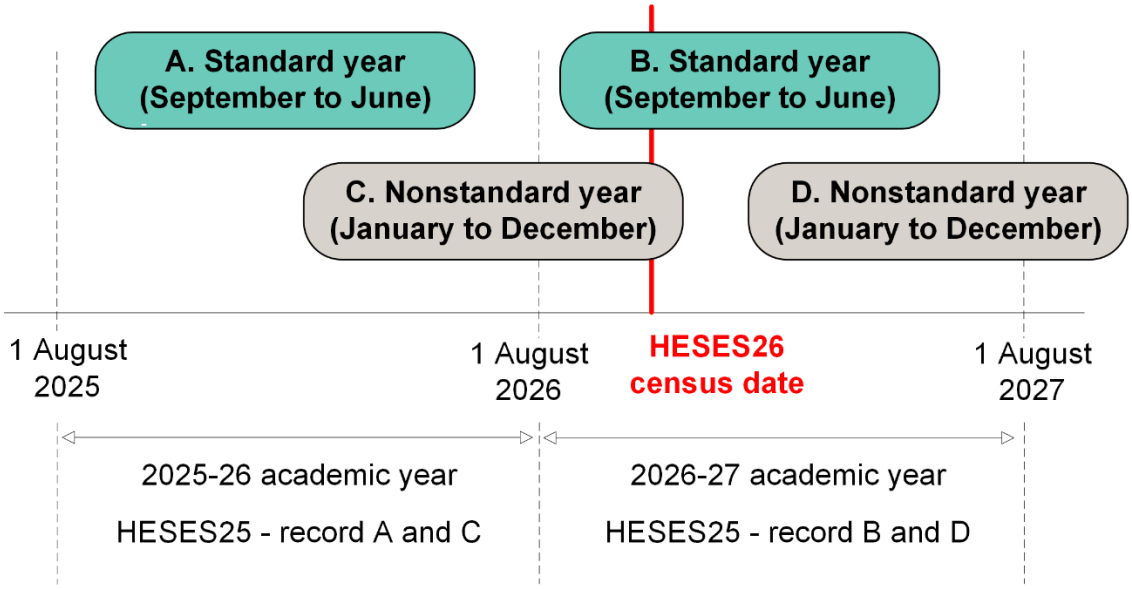
    a. Year of engagement A is a standard year that was completely within the 2025-26 academic year and should have been recorded in HESES25.

    b. Year of engagement B is a standard year that is completely within the 2026-27 academic year and should be recorded in HESES26.

    c. Year of engagement C is a nonstandard year that spans the census date, but started in the 2025-26 academic year. It should have been recorded in HESES25.

    d. Year of engagement D is a nonstandard year that starts in the 2026-27 academic year and should be recorded in HESES26.

Figure C1.2: How to record standard and nonstandard years



New entrants

17. Students should be classed as new entrants on Tables 1 and 2 when they meet both the following criteria:

    a. They first generate a countable year of engagement for a higher education course recognised for OfS funding purposes.

    b. They have not been active at the same broad level (undergraduate or postgraduate taught) as a student of the same registering provider in either of the two previous academic years.

18. Students repeating the first year of a course should not therefore be included as new entrants, whereas those entering directly into the second or later year of a course could be. For merged providers the registering provider includes the previous constituent providers that merged to form the current one.

19. Where a student starts more than one engagement at the same broad level in the same academic year and could be considered as a new entrant for each engagement, they should be recorded as a new entrant for only one. If one such engagement has an earlier start date than the others the student should be recorded as a new entrant for that engagement.

Recording starters on Table 4

20. In general, starters on Table 4 are students starting study for the first time on a relevant pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course in a specific academic year. Please note:

    a. Students who transfer during an academic year onto a pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course from one that is not should be treated as a starter in the year in which they transfer onto the pre-registration course.

b. Students who transfer between different types of pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course should be recorded against the profession that applies to their current course. They should be treated as a starter in the year that their previous course started.

c. Students repeating the first year of a pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course should be treated as starters in the year they started the course, and not when they repeated the first year.

21. Students classified as starters on Table 4 in 2026-27 will not necessarily be new entrants on Tables 1 and 2, though the two populations will overlap significantly.

Assigning modules to years of engagement

22. If a module spans two years of engagement, then all activity for that module should be counted in the second year of engagement in which it occurs. Exceptionally, where the duration of the module is greater than 12 months, the activity for the module should be assigned to the year of engagement in which the activity falls. This means that the module is countable across two or more years of engagement. In such cases, and for HESES purposes only, the module activity in each year of engagement will be treated as a separate module in its own right.

Summer schools

23. Four types of short course are sometimes referred to as ‘summer schools’. They are described in more detail below.

Summer schools for potential higher education students

24. These are intended for prospective students to experience a short period of study in a higher education environment, normally in the summer vacation. Such students are not included in the HESES population because the provision is not higher education.

Access provision

25. In some cases, providers offer short preparatory or access courses for individual students to facilitate progression to an initial higher education course. They are taken immediately before the start of the higher education course. Where such provision is an integrated part of a recognised higher education course for OfS funding purposes, the students are included in the HESES population: see Annex B paragraphs 6 and 7 for when such provision is considered integrated. The short access course and the first year of the higher education course will typically count as one year of engagement.

26. If the access provision is not an integrated part of the recognised higher education course, it is not higher education and the students are not part of the HESES population.

Within-course periods of study in vacation time

27. These are short periods of study within a course which generally take place in vacation time and are normally for students to catch up with others on the course. They usually fall between the normal periods of activity for years of engagement, but within a course. They are counted as part of the preceding year of engagement.

28. Such short periods of study should be returned on the ILR in the same way that they are returned on HESES. That is, they should be included as part of the year of engagement preceding the short period of study.

Foundation degree bridging courses

29. These are short courses which come after a foundation degree has been completed, but before the final year of an honours degree course. They are not an integrated part of the course from which they are bridging. Progression is assured from successful completion of a foundation degree bridging course to the final year of an honours degree. For the purposes of HESES, such a course is counted as a separate year of engagement and is returned as part-time. If the bridging course spans two academic years, it should be recorded in the academic year in which the bridging course ends.

Examples

Example 1: Standard year

29. A full-time student starts a degree programme on 22 September 2026 with each year of course finishing at the end of June: each year is a standard year. The student becomes countable on 22 September 2026 and on or around the anniversary of this date each subsequent year.

Example 2: Nonstandard year

30. A full-time student starts a three-year degree programme on 18 January 2027 with each year of the course finishing in December: each year is a nonstandard year. The student becomes countable on 18 January 2027 and on or around the anniversary of this date in each subsequent year.

Example 3: Nonstandard year, final year of course

31. In January 2027, a full-time student begins the final year of a degree programme they started on 18 January 2025. Each year of the course runs from January to December: each year is a nonstandard year.

32. The student initially became countable on 18 January 2025, the date they started their course. As they progressed through the course they were counted on or around the anniversary of this date in each subsequent year.

33. For HESES26, as the final year of engagement becomes countable between the census date and 31 July 2027, the student should be included in HESES26. All activity for this final year would be recorded in HESES26 and not in HESES27.

Example 4: Standard year, student starting late

34. A full-time HND course starts on 10 October 2026 and takes two years to complete. Study runs from 10 October to 24 June each year. A student starts the HND programme late, on 10 January 2027, but intends to catch up with the rest of the students on the course and follow the same pattern of activity as them.

35. The student should be recorded with a full-time nonstandard year of engagement from January 2027 to January 2028. This will include activity from the first and second years of the course. Their second year of engagement will consist of the remaining activity for the period 10 January 2028 to 24 June 2028 and will be part-time as it does not meet the definition of full-time as set out in Annex D.

Example 5: Students topping up from a foundation degree

36. An OfS-fundable student studies full-time for a foundation degree at a college in the academic years 2024-25 and 2025-26, then tops up to a full-time bachelors' degree at a university in 2026-27:

a. If the foundation degree was delivered by the college under a subcontractual arrangement from that university, then the student would be considered to be registered with the same provider (the university) and at the same broad level throughout the period 2024-25 to 2026-27. They should not therefore be reported as a new entrant for 2026-27.

b. If the foundation degree was not delivered under a subcontractual arrangement, then the student would be considered to be registered with the college for 2024-25 and 2025-26, and with the university in 2026-27. Because the student has changed registering provider, the student should be reported as a new entrant when they top up to the bachelors' degree in 2026-27.

Example 6: Students who switch modes

37. A student started studying towards an HND on a part-time basis in 2024-25. In 2026-27 they switch to full-time study. The student is studying at the same provider and at the same broad level throughout the period 2024-25 to 2026-27 and so they should not be reported as a new entrant for 2026-27.

Example 7: Students who start a new course at the same provider

38. A student completed an undergraduate degree course at a provider in 2024-25. In 2026-27 they start a one-year masters' course at the same provider. The student is generating their first countable year for that course and has not been active at the same broad level (postgraduate taught) at the registered provider in either of the two previous academic years. Therefore, they should be reported as a new entrant.

Example 8: Students who start more than one year of engagement in the same academic year

39. A student is starting the first year of an undergraduate degree course at a provider on 1 September 2026. On 1 March 2027 the student begins the first year of a part-time HNC course with the same provider. The student is therefore starting more than one engagement in the same academic year and could be considered a new entrant for each. The student should only be recorded as a new entrant for one course. As the degree course has the earlier start date the student would be recorded as a new entrant for the degree course and not for the HNC course.

Example 9: Within-course periods of study in vacation time

40. A student studies full-time for a degree over three years, with activity for each year of engagement running from October to July. Between the second and third years, a short period of study – running from 25 July to 5 September – is undertaken to bring the student up to the standard of others on the course. This short period of study counts as part of the second year of the degree and is not a separate engagement.

Example 10: Students who transfer onto a pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course from one that is not

41. A student studies full-time at a provider for a bachelors' degree in biological sciences in 2024-25 and 2025-26 and completes the first two years. However, in September 2026, the student transfers to a pre-registration midwifery course, studying full-time at the same provider. The student is reported as a 'starter' for 2026-27 in Table 4. Such a student transferring within a provider would not be a 'new entrant'.

Annex C2: Counting student activity for ‘all other providers’

This annex gives the definition of a year of engagement and explains how to count them. This includes the criteria for counting a year of engagement in HESES26, the definitions of standard and nonstandard years of engagement and guidance on counting some short courses that are sometimes known as ‘summer schools’.

We have produced different versions of Annex C to be clear to each provider how years of engagement should be determined and counted.

This annex (Annex C2) applies only to providers that submit individualised data to the DDB (in the paragraphs below, we will use the term ‘Other’ providers to refer to these providers). Further education colleges and sixth form colleges and academies should refer to Annex C1 for guidance on how years of engagement should be determined and counted.

All other annexes apply equally to all providers.

Annex C2 contents

Definitions

- Year of engagement

Guidance

- How to count years of engagement in the HESES survey
- New entrants and new starters
- Summer schools

Examples

Definitions

Year of engagement

1. Annex A paragraph 2c defines an ‘engagement’ as ‘a student’s commitment to an educational aim (qualification or credit) and its realisation over time’. This aligns with the definition as used by the DDB but is applicable to all providers. For HESES purposes, an engagement can be split into one or more ‘years of engagement’.

2. For ‘Other’ providers, a year of engagement will usually be recorded for an engagement based on the latest student course session (SCS) that the student starts, or is forecast to start, in the 2026-27 academic year.[28]

[28] The definition of student course session is the same as for the Student record; see the Student Course Session page on the DDB website for more details.

3. For most students, we would expect only one such SCS to start within the academic year.

4. HESES counts years of engagement for students studying on higher education courses recognised for OfS funding purposes (see Annex B). This is not the same as counting individual students. This approach ensures that the number of students on each course is recorded in order to forecast teaching activity.

Further notes on years of engagement

5. Where a student is undertaking modular provision approved under the LLE student support system at an approved provider, they will generate only one part-time year of engagement for HESES. This is irrespective of whether they are undertaking modules from the same qualification aim or multiple qualification aims.

6. Where a student completes a foundation degree during the academic year and then undertakes a foundation degree bridging course, to enable them to join the final year of an honours degree, the two separate SCSs (for the foundation degree and for the bridging course) can be recorded in HESES as two separate years of engagement.

7. Other than for foundation degree bridging courses, where a student undertakes an initial qualification then immediately progresses (disregarding any intervening vacation) to a second qualification at the same broad level (undergraduate or postgraduate taught), for HESES purposes these are considered both part of the same engagement and not independent. We would therefore expect the student to generate only one year of engagement to be recorded in HESES.

8. Exceptionally a student may be on two courses at the same time, for example if a student is studying towards a MSc and an unrelated undergraduate professional qualification. As these are two separate engagements, each will generate a countable year of engagement that should be recorded in HESES.

9. Where a student is undertaking a course via a ‘fully flexible’ arrangement, this will be considered as a single engagement. Within that, each year of the course is a single SCS. Providers will therefore be expected to return a year of engagement based on that SCS starting within the 2026-27 academic year in HESES26.

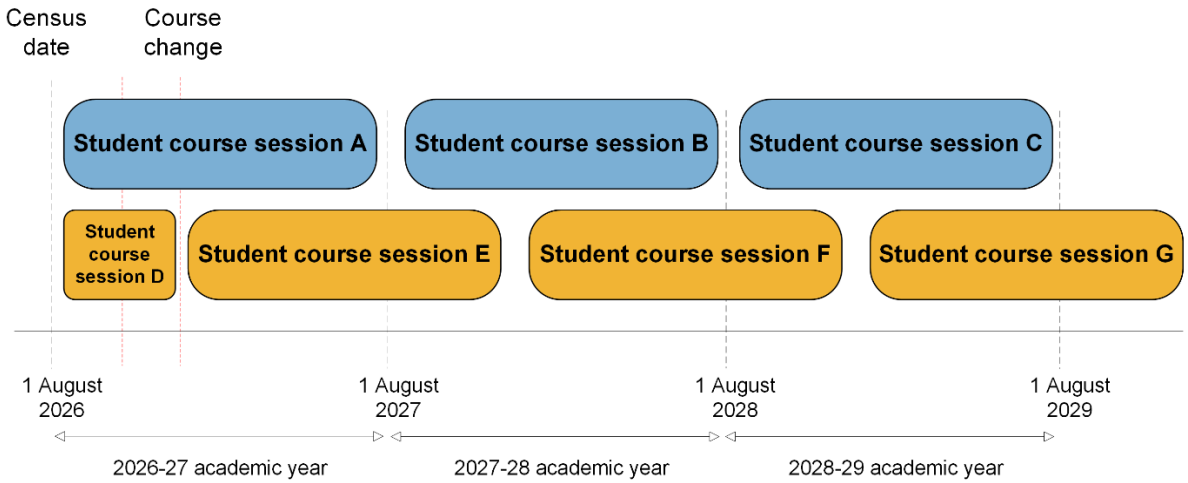
10. Where a student is undertaking multiple short courses (such as modules for credit) at a provider within the same academic year, that could count towards the same final qualification, for HESES purposes this would be considered a single engagement and the student would generate only one year of engagement in HESES.

11. Guidance on when to record separate engagements and SCSs can be found on the DDB website.[29]

12. Where a student changes course, they may generate a new SCS if their pattern of study and cohort changes. This is illustrated in Figure C2.1.

[29] See the Engagement page on the DDB website.

Figure C2.1: Counting student course sessions (SCSs) for students changing course



13. In the scenarios shown in Figure C2.1, a student starts studying in September 2026 for a BSc in mathematics. In January 2027 the student decides to change to an equivalent course at the same provider, leading to a BSc in physics.

    a. Scenario A, shown in blue. The student joins a cohort of students that also started in September 2026. A new SCS is not generated in the academic year and SCS A should be recorded in HESES26 The student's study pattern and subsequent SCSs will follow the pattern shown by SCS A, B and C.

    b. Scenario B, shown in gold. The student joins a new cohort of students starting in January. SCS D would end early and a new SCS (SCS E) would be generated. SCS E would be counted in HESES26 because it is the latest SCS to start within the 2026-27 academic year. The student's study pattern and subsequent SCSs will follow the pattern shown by SCS E, F and G.

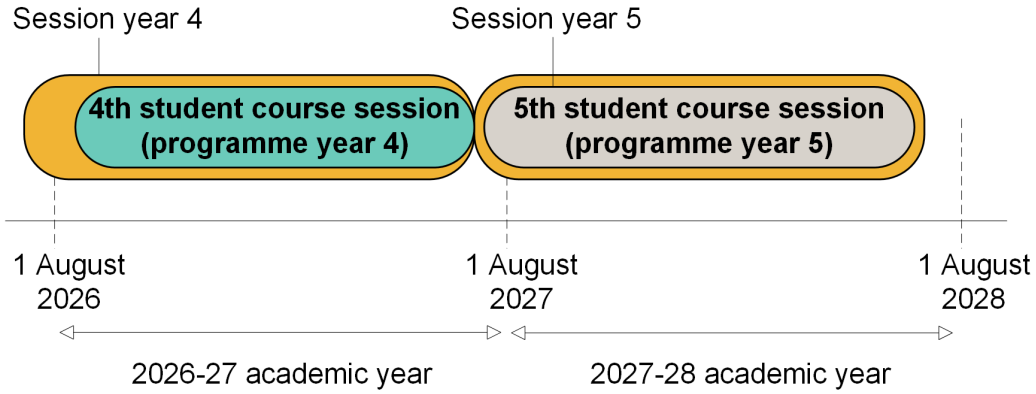
14. Where a student has multiple SCSs starting within an academic year (1 August to 31 July), but the SCSs are in successive programme years, providers should determine which SCS to report in HESES as follows:

    a. Where a student has multiple SCSs starting within an academic year due to an initial period of access provision, such as a foundation year, the latest SCS that starts should be returned in HESES. See paragraphs 36 to 37 of this annex for further information on access provision.

    b. For all other scenarios, the SCS in the earlier of the two programme years should be counted so long as all other relevant criteria are met. The SCS in the later programme year should be recorded in the following year's HESES return.

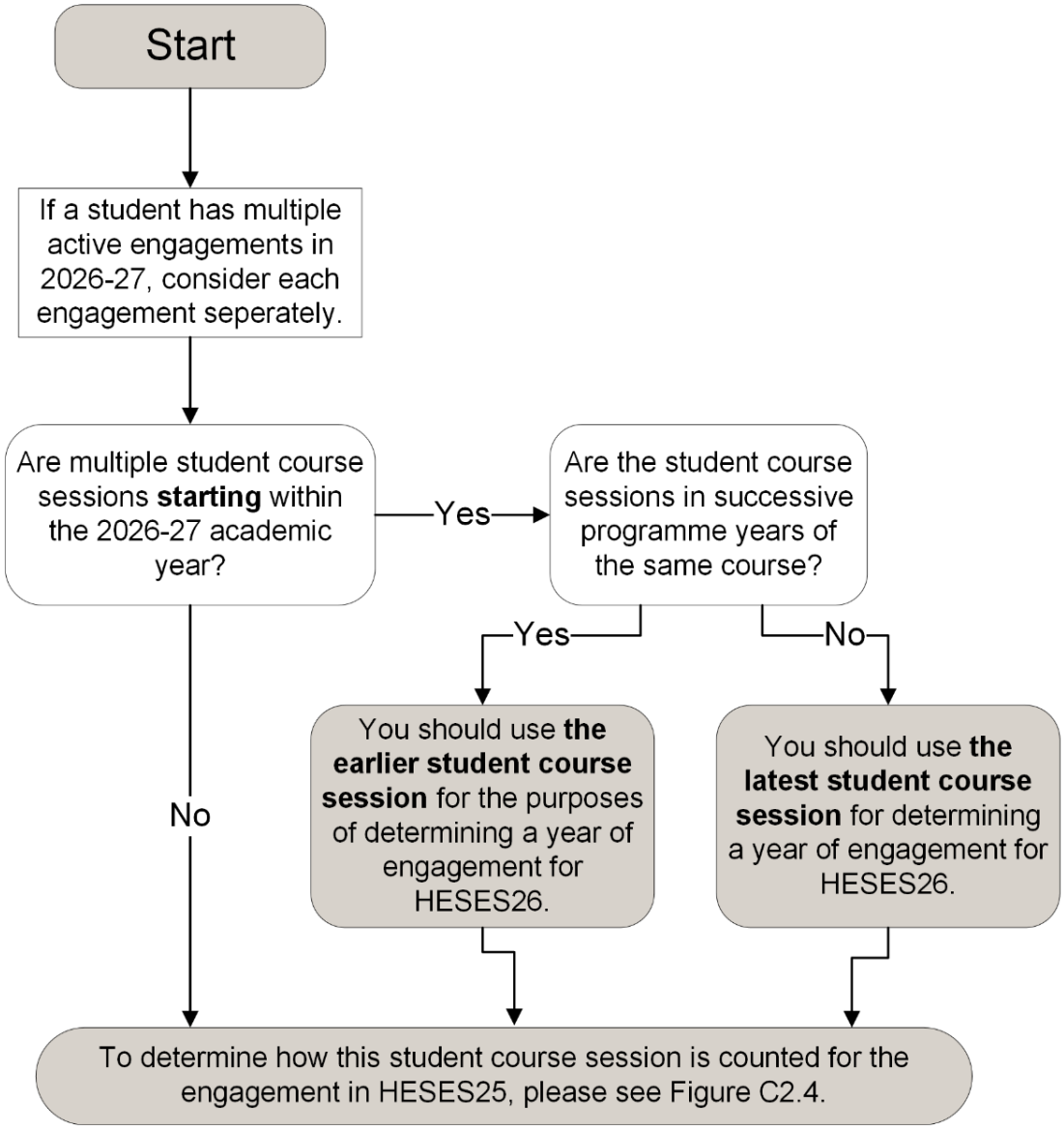
15. An example of the scenario in paragraph 13.b would be where a medical student begins their fifth year clinical placement immediately after finishing the academic study for their fourth year of study and is illustrated in Figure C2.2.

Figure C2.2: Multiple student course sessions (SCSs) within a year of engagement in successive programme years



16. The flowchart in Figure C2.3 provides guidance on how to identify the student course that defines a year of engagement when multiple SCSs start within an academic year.

Figure C2.3: Determining which student course session (SCS) to consider when more than one starts in the same academic year



Withdrawal from an engagement

17. For the purposes of HESES, a student has withdrawn from their engagement if they leave before its completion and do not have an intention to return and continue it. Students who suspend studies should not be treated as having withdrawn.

Counting years of engagement

18. To be counted, years of engagement must be generated by a student in the HESES population for 2026-27, and meet all the following criteria:

    a. A fee is charged for tuition or supervision of research. Exceptionally, this fee may be waived for individual students based on their particular circumstances. Other than for sandwich year out students it should not be waived for all students on a course, and the criteria which determine whether the fees may be waived should not be tantamount to waiving them for all students. Where the fee has been waived for an individual student,

evidence of the reason for this waiver must be retained. This criterion does not apply to students taking a higher education course recognised for OfS funding purposes as part of an apprenticeship. In some cases, a fee may not be charged in the current year because a fee for the activity has already been paid in a previous year. This should not be treated as a fee waiver. Rather the student should be treated as having been charged a fee for the year.

b. The student is not writing up a thesis or similar piece of work throughout the whole of the year of engagement. Students are considered to be writing up when they have completed their research work and will not undertake any significant additional research. It is common practice for such students to receive a small amount of supervision, and they may still have access to other facilities at the provider. However, such students should still be treated as writing up. Writing up is not considered to be 'study' for HESES purposes; therefore, time spent writing up for part of a year of engagement should be taken into account and excluded when determining if a student's year of engagement should be considered full-time or part-time.

c. The student has not withdrawn, and is not forecast to withdraw, within two weeks of starting their engagement.

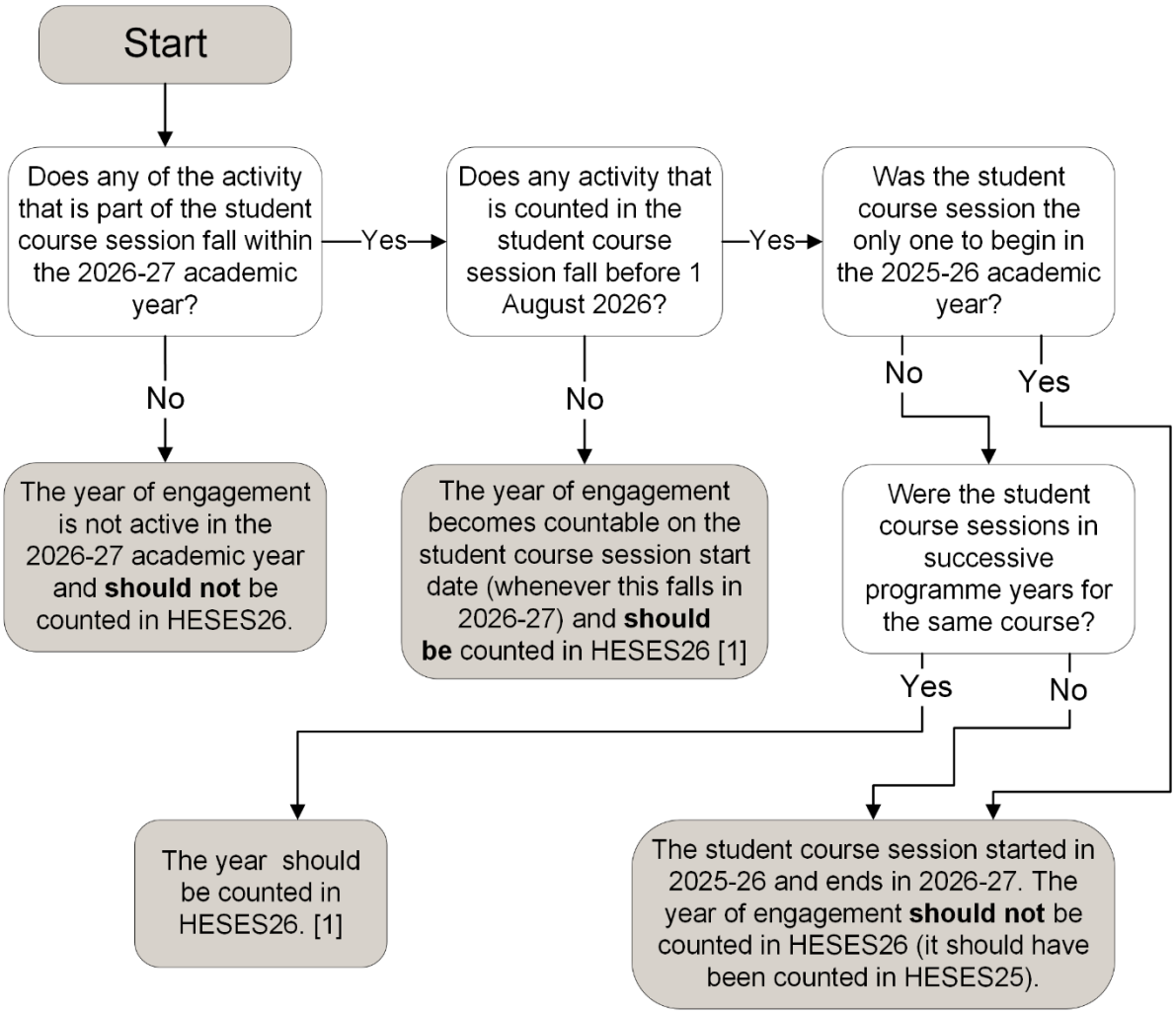
Guidance

How to count years of engagement in the HESES survey

19. To be counted in HESES26, a student's year of engagement must start in the 2026-27 academic year (1 August 2026 to 31 July 2027). The start date for the year of engagement will be the same as the start date for the SCS that defines it. This is the date the student first engages with the structured teaching and learning and may include any timetabled activity such as classes, lectures or induction, or engagement with online learning content.

20. The flowchart in Figure C2.4 can be used to determine whether the year of engagement should be counted in HESES26.

Figure C2.4: How to determine how a year of engagement, as defined by an identified student course session (SCS), should be returned in HESES26



[1] Subject to meeting the other conditions to be counted in HESES26.
[2] The census date is 1 December 2026 for all other providers.

Students who withdraw on or before the census date

21. If a student has withdrawn from their course on or before the census date of 1 December without completing their study intentions within the year of engagement, they should not be returned.

Standard and nonstandard years of study

22. For HESES purposes, years of engagement can be separated into two categories, standard and nonstandard years:

    a. A standard year is one where all activity for the student, represented by the SCS, is entirely within one academic year (1 August to 31 July).

    b. A nonstandard year is one where all activity for the student, represented by the SCS, is not entirely within one academic year – that is, where the activity for the SCS crosses from one academic year into the next.

23. In both standard and nonstandard years, students become countable at the start of the relevant SCS.

24. For students on nonstandard years, the final academic year during which the student is active will not usually generate a countable SCS.

25. Figure C2.5 shows how to count standard and nonstandard student course sessions in HESES26:

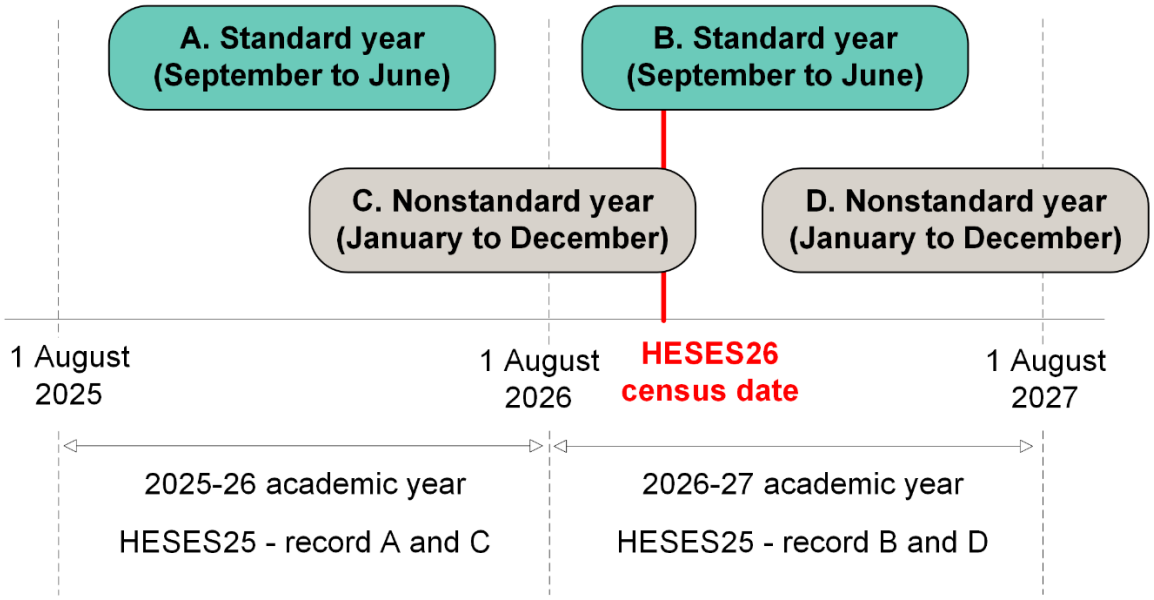
    a. SCS A is a standard SCS that was completely within the 2025-26 academic year. The year of engagement defined by this SCS should have been recorded in HESES25.

    b. SCS B is a standard SCS that starts before the census date in the 2026-27 academic year and should be recorded in HESES26.

    c. SCS C is a nonstandard SCS that spans the census date but started in the 2025-26 academic year. The year of engagement defined by this SCS should have been recorded in HESES25.

    d. SCS D is a nonstandard SCS that starts after the census date in the 2026-27 academic year and should be recorded in HESES26.

Figure C2.5: How to record standard and nonstandard years



New entrants

26. Students should be classed as new entrants on Tables 1 and 2 when they meet both the following criteria:

    a. They first generate a countable year of engagement for a higher education course recognised for OfS funding purposes.

    b. They have not been active at the same broad level (undergraduate or postgraduate taught) as a student of the same registering provider in either of the two previous academic years.

27. We anticipate that there will be significant overlap between students generating new engagements in the Student record and new entrants in HESES. However, a student generating a new engagement in the Student record is not necessarily a new entrant for HESES purposes because a new engagement could be generated for a student at the same provider within two years. Both the criteria outlined above must be met for students to be recorded as new entrants in HESES26.

28. Students repeating the first year of a course should not be included as new entrants, whereas those starting on a course and entering directly into the second or later year of a course could be. For merged providers, the registering provider includes the previous constituent providers that merged to form the current one.

29. Where a student starts more than one engagement at the same broad level in the same academic year, and could be considered as a new entrant for each engagement, they should be recorded as a new entrant for only one. If one such engagement has an SCS with an earlier start date than the other, the student should be recorded as a new entrant for that SCS and engagement.

30. Where a student is progressing from one course to another across broad levels they should be counted as a new entrant for HESES purposes. For example, if a student finished an undergraduate course and then continues studying at the same provider on a taught masters course, the student should be counted as a new entrant on the taught masters course.

31. A student should not be recorded as a new entrant if they are progressing from one level to another as part of a single course, for example an undergraduate degree with an integrated masters'.

Recording starters on Table 4

32. In general, starters on Table 4 are students starting study for the first time on a relevant pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course in a specific academic year. Please note:

    a. Students who transfer during an academic year onto a pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course from one that is not should be treated as a starter in the year in which they transfer onto the pre-registration course.

    b. Students who transfer between different types of pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course should be recorded against the profession that applies to their current course. They should be treated as a starter in the year that their previous course started.

    c. Students repeating the first year of a pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course should be treated as starters in the year they started the course, and not when they repeated the first year.

33. Students classified as starters on Table 4 in 2026-27 will not necessarily be new entrants on Tables 1 and 2, though the two populations will overlap significantly.

Summer schools

34. Four types of short course are sometimes referred to as ‘summer schools’. They are described in more detail below.

Summer schools for potential higher education students

35. These are intended for prospective students to experience a short period of study in a higher education environment, normally in the summer vacation. Such students are not included in the HESES population because the provision is not higher education.

Access provision

36. In some cases, providers offer short preparatory or access courses for individual students to facilitate progression to an initial higher education course. They are taken immediately before the start of the higher education course. Where such provision generates an SCS at the beginning of the academic year, providers should count the latest SCS which starts, or is predicted to start, within the academic year.

37. To be included in the HESES population, this access provision must be an integrated part of a recognised higher education course for OfS funding purposes. See Annex B, paragraphs 6 and 7, for when such provision is considered integrated. If the access provision is not an integrated part of the recognised higher education course, it is not higher education and the students are not part of the HESES population.

Within-course periods of study in vacation time

38. These are short periods of study within a course which generally take place in vacation time and are normally for students to catch up with others on the course. They usually fall between the normal periods of activity for years of engagement, but within a course. They are counted as part of the preceding year of engagement.

Foundation degree bridging courses

39. These are short courses which come after a foundation degree has been completed, but before the final year of an honours degree course. They are not an integrated part of the course from which they are bridging. Progression is assured from successful completion of a foundation degree bridging course to the final year of an honours degree. For the purposes of HESES, such a course is counted as a separate year of engagement and is returned as part-time. If the bridging course spans two academic years, it should be recorded in the academic year in which the bridging course ends.

Examples

Example 1: Standard year

40. A full-time student starts a degree programme on 22 September 2026 with each year of course finishing at the end of June: each year is a standard year. The student becomes countable on 22 September 2026 and on or around the anniversary of this date each subsequent year.

Example 2: Nonstandard year

41. A full-time student starts a three-year degree programme on 18 January 2027 with each year of the course finishing in December: each year is a nonstandard year. The student becomes countable on 18 January 2027 and on or around the anniversary of this date in each subsequent year.

Example 3: Nonstandard year, final year of course

42. In January 2027, a full-time student begins the final year of a degree programme they started on 18 January 2025. Each year of the course runs from January to December: each year is a nonstandard year.

43. The student initially became countable on 18 January 2025, the date they started their course. As they progressed through the course they were counted on or around the anniversary of this date in each subsequent year.

44. As the final year of engagement becomes countable between the census date and 31 July 2027, it should be included in HESES26.

45. No activity for this student course session would be recorded on HESES27 (for the period from August to the census date), as all the activity would have been returned on HESES26 and there would be no year of engagement / student course session starting in the 2027-28 academic year.

Example 4: Standard year, student starting late

46. A full-time HND course starts on 10 October 2026 and runs from 10 October to 24 June each year. A student starts the HND programme late, on 10 January 2027, but intends to catch up with the rest of the students on the course and follow the same pattern of activity as them.

47. As the first student course session starts in the 2026-27 academic year, it would be recorded in HESES26. It will be necessary to determine if the student course session that defines this year of engagement meets the definition of full-time.

Example 5: Students topping up from a foundation degree

48. An OfS-fundable student studies full-time for a foundation degree at a college in the academic years 2024-25 and 2025-26, then tops up to a full-time bachelors' degree at a university in 2026-27:

a. If the foundation degree was delivered by the college under a subcontractual arrangement from that university, then the student would be considered to be registered with the same provider (the university) and at the same broad level throughout the period 2024-25 to 2026-27. They should not therefore be reported as a new entrant for 2026-27.

b. If the foundation degree was not delivered under a subcontractual arrangement, but was funded directly at the college, then the student would be considered to be a student of the college for 2023-24 and 2024-25, and of the university in 2025-26. Because the study is not at the same provider, the student should be reported as a new entrant in Table 5 when they top up to the bachelors' degree in 2025-26.

Example 6: Students who switch modes

49. A student started studying towards an HND on a part-time basis in 2024-25. In 2026-27 they switch to full-time study. The student is studying at the same provider and at the same broad level throughout the period 2024-25 to 2026-27. Therefore, they should not be reported as a new entrant for 2026-27.

Example 7: Students who start a new course at the same provider

50. A student completed an undergraduate degree course at a provider in 2024-25. In 2026-27 they start a one-year masters' course at the same provider. The student is generating their first countable year for that course and has not been active at the same broad level (postgraduate taught) at the registered provider in either of the two previous academic years. Therefore, they should be reported as a new entrant.

Example 8: Students who start more than one engagement in the same academic year

51. A student is starting the first year of an undergraduate degree course at a provider on 1 September 2026. On 1 March 2027 the student begins the first year of a part-time HNC course with the same provider. The student is therefore starting more than one engagement in the same academic year and could be considered a new entrant for each. The student should only be recorded as a new entrant for one course. As the degree course has the earlier start date, the student would be recorded as a new entrant for the degree course and not for the HNC course.

Example 9: Within-course periods of study in vacation time

52. A student studies full-time for a degree over three years. Each year contains a single SCS running from October to July. Between the second and third years, a short period of study – running from 25 July to 5 September – is undertaken to bring the student up to the standard of others on the course. This short period of study counts as part of the second year of the degree and is not a separate engagement.

Example 10: Students who transfer onto a pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course from one that is not

53. A student studies full-time at a university for a bachelors' degree in biological sciences in 2024-25 and 2025-26 and completes the first two years. However, in September 2026, the student transfers to a pre-registration midwifery course, studying full-time at the same university. The student is reported as a 'starter' for 2026-27 in Table 4. Such a student transferring within a provider would not be a 'new entrant'.

Annex D: Mode of study

This annex explains how to determine, for the purposes of HESES, the mode of study for a year of engagement (full-time, sandwich year out or part-time). It includes guidance on how to treat learning in the workplace and work experience when determining mode of study. In general, all students on a given course with a broadly similar pattern of activity, for a given year of engagement, should be recorded as having the same mode.

Annex D contents

Assessing attendance for mode

Distance learning courses

Full-time

- Part-time students in receipt of full-time student support
- Accredited prior learning

Sandwich year out

Part-time

Additional guidance on mode of study

- Apprenticeships
- Students only active for part of a year
- Students who change from full-time to part-time within a year of engagement
- Treatment of learning in the workplace and work experience for the purposes of determining mode of study

Examples

Assessing attendance for mode

1. ‘Attendance’ means that the student is required to be at a provider location, or other specified location (such as a partner provider, or defined workplace) to undertake periods of study, tuition, learning in the workplace, or sandwich work placement. These locations are expected to be collective for all students on the course. Where the normal expectation is that students attend virtually (for example through online or pre-recorded lectures), we would not consider this to meet the definition of attendance. An exception to this would be where alternative arrangements are made because a student is unable to attend for a reason that relates to their disability.

Distance learning courses

2. A ‘distance learning course’ means a course on which a student undertaking the course is not required to be in attendance by the provider of the course, where ‘required to be in attendance’ is not satisfied by a requirement imposed by the provider to attend any provider location (or other specified location):

    - for the purposes of registration or enrolment or any examination
    - on a weekend or during any vacation
    - on an occasional basis during the week.

Full-time

3. A year of engagement is counted as full-time if it meets all of the following criteria:

    a. The student is normally required to attend (see paragraph 1) the provider, or elsewhere, for periods amounting to at least 24 weeks within the year of engagement.

    b. Within that time, they are expected to undertake periods of study, tuition, learning in the workplace, or sandwich work placement that does not meet the criteria to be sandwich year out, which amount to an average of at least 21 hours per week. (‘Guided learning hours’ should not be used in isolation to determine how many hours each week a student spends studying. All guided learning hours count towards this total, but it is expected that higher education students will spend a significant amount of time each week in self-led individual learning, and an estimate of this time should also be included.) Time spent in study away from the specified locations noted in paragraph 3a can be included when determining if this criterion is met.

    c. Full-time fees are chargeable for the course for the year. Exceptionally, all or part of the fee may be waived for individual students based on their particular personal – rather than course-related – circumstances. This does not include cases where fees are reduced because students are studying less intensively than is normally expected for a full-time student. It should not be waived for all students on a course, and the criteria that determine if fees may be waived should not be tantamount to waiving them for all students.

4. The full-time category includes full-time, sandwich and year abroad students, other than those falling within the definition of ‘sandwich year out’ given below. For student finance (including regulated fees) purposes, distance learning courses may be classified as full-time or part-time, but for HESES purposes cannot meet the attendance requirements to be classified as full-time. Students on such courses should therefore be classified as part-time for HESES purposes. From January 2027, full-time will also include any complete full-time courses delivered under the new LLE student support system. Any provision delivered under the new LLE student support system that does not meet our definition of full-time should be classified as part-time (see paragraph 10).

Part-time students in receipt of full-time student support

5. Some students may receive full-time student support, but be on a year of engagement that does not meet the criteria given in paragraphs 3a and 3b of this annex. This includes those on distance learning courses that are studying at a full-time rate. Years of engagement that do not meet the criteria given in paragraph 3 should be returned as part-time, unless they fall under the definition of 'sandwich year out' given in paragraph 7 below.

Accredited prior learning

6. Years of engagement for students who are on a full-time programme, but who, because of accredited prior learning, do not meet the attendance requirements to be full-time, should be returned as part-time.

Sandwich year out

7. A year of engagement is counted as a 'sandwich year out' if it includes a period of work-based experience and meets the following criteria:

    a. The course falls within the definition of a 'sandwich course' in Regulation 2(10) of the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011 (Statutory Instrument 2011 No. 1986) as amended, or the year of engagement is an Erasmus year abroad spent working.[30]

    b. It is a year of engagement that fulfils one of the following:

        i. Any periods of full-time study within the year of engagement are in aggregate less than 10 weeks.

        ii. In respect of that year of engagement and any previous years of engagement, the aggregate of any one or more periods of attendance which are not periods of full-time study (disregarding intervening vacations) exceeds 30 weeks.

    c. A reduced fee is chargeable for the course for the year, compared with what would be chargeable if the student were studying full-time in the year.

8. Students spending a full year abroad working, including under the Turing scheme, should be returned as sandwich year out. This includes students under the British Council's Language Assistants scheme.

Part-time

9. A year of engagement is counted as part-time if it does not meet the requirements to be either full-time or a sandwich year out.

10. From January 2027, any provision delivered under the new LLE student support system that does not meet our definition of full-time should be classified as part-time. This will include

[30] See the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011 (regulation 2) page on the Legislation.gov.uk website. Providers should note in particular that the definition of an Erasmus year in the regulations includes academic years where the student is participating in 'the scheme established by the Secretary of State for Education known as the Turing scheme'.

both complete part-time courses and we expect it will also include most, if not all, modular study.

Additional guidance on mode of study

11. In some cases, a student's mode of study reported on HESES changes between years. For example, the mode of a student on a full-time, 18-month course would be full-time in year one and part-time in year two, if the second year does not have 24 weeks of study. On the student record returned to the DDB, the student's activity in year two would be recorded as 'other full-time' (SCSMODE = 02). On the ILR, it would be recorded as part-time (MODESTUD = 3).

Apprenticeships

12. Where students are studying on a recognised higher education course as part of an apprenticeship, they will normally be dividing their time between work and study. Therefore, we would commonly expect years of engagement for these students to be part-time for HESES purposes. For apprenticeships, only activity that directly relates to their recognised higher education course should be counted. We do not expect this to include all the apprentice's time in the workplace, including for the purpose of determining whether the attendance requirements for categorisation as a full-time year of engagement are met.

13. We recognise that the concept of a full-time fee may not be meaningful for recognised higher education undertaken as part of an apprenticeship. Where this is the case, the criterion in paragraph 3c of this annex can be disregarded for the purpose of determining whether a year of engagement for an apprentice should be classified as full-time.[31] However, years of engagement for any recognised higher education studied as part of an apprenticeship should not be categorised as full-time unless, when compared with the equivalent full-time course not taken as part of an apprenticeship, both:

    - the duration of the course is the same
    - the number of credits studied per year is the same.

14. Where no such equivalent course exists, the duration and number of credits studied should be assessed against the typical length of a similar qualification.

Students only active for part of a year

15. In general, where a student plans to study at a full-time rate for a portion of the year – for example only for the first semester – they will be recorded as part-time, even though they are 'full-time' for that period of study. The mode of attendance must be established with reference to the intended activity for the whole year of engagement.

Students who change from full-time to part-time within a year of engagement

16. Where full-time students change mode within a year of engagement to become part-time, the year of engagement should be recorded as part-time only. This applies only when the student continues to study actively on their year of engagement, where there is a formal process for agreeing the change in mode, including confirmation by the student, and a recalculation of

[31] The criteria in paragraphs 3a and 3b must still be met.

their course fee to reflect their part-time status. It may also result in the student losing entitlement to full-time student support.

Treatment of learning in the workplace and work experience for the purposes of determining mode of study

17. For the purposes of meeting the attendance definition for a full-time course, full-time study can include learning in the workplace, where this is a course requirement. Such learning is frequently a feature of foundation degrees, the placements for courses leading to first registration in various healthcare professions and may also occur in other programmes. Learning in the workplace is a structured academic programme, controlled by the higher education provider and delivered in the workplace by the academic staff of the provider, staff of the employer, or both.

18. Unlike work experience, which is one element of a course such as a sandwich placement (whether for all or part of a year), learning in the workplace is at the heart of a student's learning programme and must be subject to the same level of academic supervision and rigour as any other form of assessed learning. It includes:

- the imparting of relevant knowledge and skills to students
- opportunities for students to discuss knowledge and skills with their tutors
- assessment of students' acquisition of knowledge and skills by the provider's academic staff, perhaps jointly with an employer.

19. Learning in the workplace should be substituting for learning that under other circumstances would normally take place within the provider. The inclusion of an element of learning in the workplace should not, therefore, extend the normal duration of a course.

Examples

Example 1: Student intermitting their studies

19. A student intends to study full-time in 2026-27 for the second year of their course. They complete all modules in term one but then intermit their studies for a year. They return to full-time study in term two of 2027-28 and complete all remaining modules.

a. For 2026-27, the student would have a full-time mode of study for the year of engagement.

b. For 2027-28, the student would have a part-time mode of study for the year of engagement, as they would not meet the criteria given in paragraph 3 of this annex.

Example 2: Student on the final year of a full-time course

20. A student is studying on a full-time course, the final year of which is ordinarily completed in less than 24 weeks. The student would have a part-time mode of study for the year.

Example 3: Student repeating part of the year

21. A student was studying full-time in 2025-26 but failed three modules. In 2026-27 the student repeats these modules on a part-time basis, studying for an average of seven hours per week. The student is still eligible to claim full-time student support. As the year of engagement would not meet criteria given in paragraph 3 of this annex, the student would have a part-time mode of study for the year.

Example 4: Year in which total sandwich placement exceeds 30 weeks

22. A student studies for an HND over three years. This includes two periods of work placement, taken in the first and second years of engagement.

a. The first year of engagement is full-time, as the period of full-time study is more than 10 weeks, the cumulative period on work placement to date is less than 30 weeks, and the total attendance is greater than 24 weeks.

b. The second year of engagement is a sandwich year out. Though the pattern of activity is the same as for the first year, the cumulative period on work placement exceeds 30 weeks (16 + 16 = 32 weeks' total work placement). This meets the definition in paragraph 7b.ii of this annex.

Example 5: Degree apprenticeship

23. A provider is currently offering a pre-registration nursing course, requiring study for 360 credits over three years. Starting in the next academic year, it will also offer the course as a four-year degree apprenticeship. On this course, apprenticeship students will be studying at the university for 30 weeks in the year, at an average of 22 hours of study per week.

24. Students on the four-year degree apprenticeship course would be considered to be part-time as the duration of the course is longer and they will be studying for fewer credits in each year than in the equivalent full-time course (see paragraph 12 of this annex).

Annex E: Level of study

This annex explains how to determine a student's level of study (undergraduate or postgraduate) for the purposes of HESES. It also explains how to separate postgraduate students into the different categories of postgraduate taught and postgraduate research.

Annex E contents

Undergraduate

Postgraduate

Undergraduate

1. Undergraduates are students on higher education courses for which it is not a normal condition of entry that they are already qualified to degree level: that is, not already qualified at Level 6 of the 'Sector-recognised standards' or 'Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ).[32] They may be studying towards a first degree (including foundation degree), integrated masters' programme (such as a four-year Master of Engineering (MEng)), higher education certificate, higher education diploma or equivalent, or registered for a higher education-level credit that can be counted towards one of these qualifications.

Postgraduate

2. Postgraduate students are registered for courses or credits where a normal condition of entry is that entrants are already qualified to degree level: that is, already qualified at Level 6 of the sector-recognised standards or FHEQ. There are two groups: postgraduate research (PGR) and postgraduate taught (PGT).

Postgraduate research

3. Postgraduate research students are those whose qualification aim is a research-based higher degree. This is a postgraduate programme comprising a research component (including a requirement to produce original work) which is larger in terms of student effort than any accompanying taught component. Postgraduate research students are not reported in HESES.

Postgraduate taught

4. Postgraduate taught students are postgraduates who do not meet the requirements to be a research student. This includes students on graduate conversion courses, graduate-entry courses (including graduate-entry medicine, dentistry and veterinary courses) and on postgraduate initial teacher training courses such as Postgraduate or Professional Graduate Certificates in Education (PGCEs).

[32] For the sector-recognised standards that apply in England, see the Sector-recognised standards page on the OfS website. The FHEQ is available at the Qualifications Frameworks page on the QAA website.

Students with multiple stated qualification aims

5. Where students have stated multiple qualification aims as part of the same engagement, they should be recorded against the lower aim.

Annex F: Residential and fundability status

This annex provides guidance on identifying the residential and fundability status of a student for the purposes of HESES26. It includes guidance on:

- which students should be classified as Home fee, and which are Overseas
- categorising Home fee students as OfS-fundable or non-fundable
- how to determine the fundability status of students aiming for equivalent or lower qualifications (ELQ), and of those supported from other UK or EU public sources.

Annex F contents

Definitions

- Home fee students
- Overseas
- OfS-fundable students
- Non-fundable students

Students aiming for ELQs

- Identifying entry qualifications through other sources
- Students with multiple stated qualification aims
- Students exempt from ELQ policy for OfS funding purposes
- Determining level of qualification
- Reviewing ELQ status
- Relationship to fee regulations

Examples

Good practice

Definitions

Home fee students

1. Students are classified as 'Home fee' if they can be regarded as eligible as defined in Schedule 1 of the Education (Fees and Awards) (England) Regulations 2007 (Statutory Instrument 2007 No. 779), as amended.[33] Students from specified overseas territories may be classified as eligible for Home fees if they meet the criteria set out in those regulations. Although our definition of Home fee is not changing (in that it is still determined by Schedule 1

[33] See the Education (Fees and Awards) (England) Regulations 2007 page on the Legislation.gov.uk website. Amendments to these regulations for 2025-26 have been made by the Education (Student Fees, Awards and Support) (Amendment) Regulations 2025.

of Statutory Instrument 2007 No. 779), providers are reminded that they should review this legislation annually in order to identify any relevant changes to the legislation.

Obtaining guidance on fee eligibility

2. Student Finance England (SFE) provides a practitioners' helpline for detailed information about policy, regulations or for help with more complex questions about assessment, eligibility or circumstance. If you are unsure whether an individual student meets the eligibility requirements as set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this annex, call the practitioners' helpline on 0300 100 0618. If SFE states that the student is eligible, this means that the student is also regarded as 'Home fee' for HESES purposes.

3. Further policy information and guidance is available from the SFE practitioners website.[34]

Overseas students

4. All students who fall outside the definition of 'Home fee' in paragraph 1 of this annex should be recorded as 'Overseas'. This will include those EU, EEA and Swiss national students not eligible for Home fee status under the Withdrawal Agreements or Common Travel Area with Ireland and those from the Crown Dependencies who are studying outside the UK (for example by distance learning from the Islands). Overseas students are not counted towards the calculation of OfS funding allocations.

OfS-fundable students

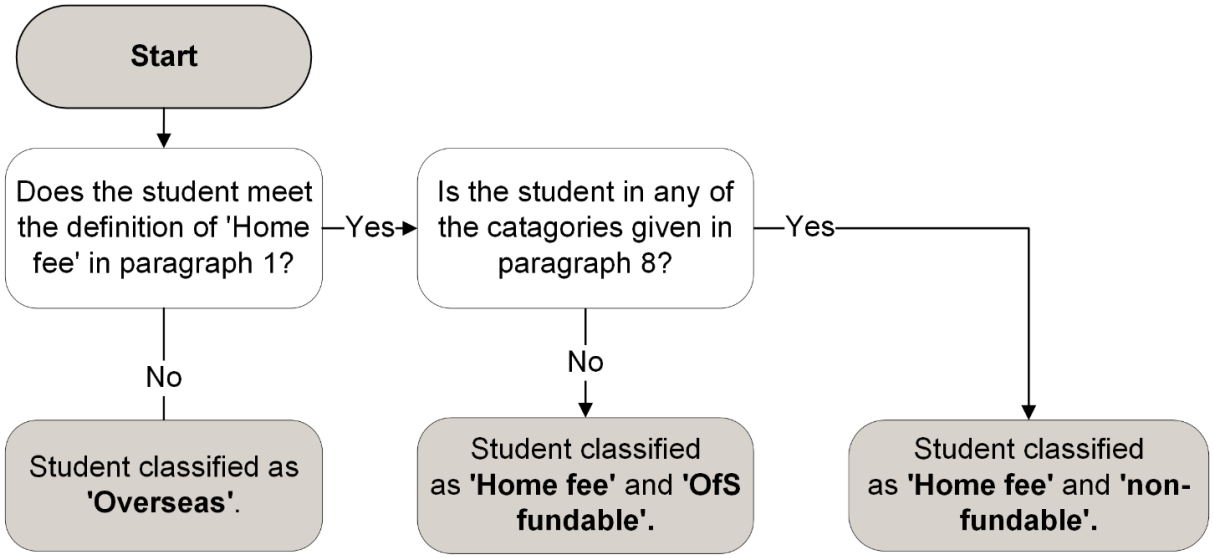
5. Home fee students are categorised as 'OfS-fundable' if they are in the HESES population, as defined in Annex A, and do not meet any of the criteria in paragraph 9 of this annex. OfS-fundable students are eligible to be counted towards the calculation of OfS funding allocations for a higher education provider.

6. Where a source other than a UK or EU public source is paying the fee, the level of the fee paid does not affect the eligibility of the student to count as OfS-fundable.

7. The flowchart in Figure F1 can be used to determine a student's residential and fundability status.

[34] See the Policy pages on the SFE website.

Figure F1: Classifying students in the HESES population



Non-fundable students

8. Home fee students meeting any of the following criteria should be recorded as non-fundable:

   a. Students on initial teacher training (ITT) courses leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) or to early years teacher status (EYTS), and all students holding QTS who are on an in-service education and training (INSET) course.

   b. Students on courses commissioned and funded by an NHS organisation, where the course fee charged to the student is zero because an NHS organisation is meeting the full costs of the course. This does not include students on courses studied as part of an apprenticeship, who remain fundable as long as all other fundability criteria are met. A course is commissioned by an NHS organisation if there is a contractual agreement with it that the provider will provide a certain number of places on the course. Other students on the same course who are not funded by an NHS organisation should be returned as fundable, where they meet all other relevant criteria.

   c. Postgraduate taught students on a course, other than an apprenticeship, funded by another UK or EU public source where the course fee charged to the student is zero because that source is meeting the course costs.

   d. Students on closed courses. These are courses that are not generally available to any suitably qualified candidate, but only to employees of particular companies or organisations that are meeting the costs of students' studies. This being the case, few students on such courses will be claiming student support. Closed courses will not commonly be marketed or advertised in general prospectuses or in course searches on a provider's main website, because enrolment on them is not open to the general public. The content of such courses will also commonly be tailored towards the needs of the employers concerned. Recognised higher education courses taken as part of an apprenticeship should not be treated as closed courses. Years of engagement taken as part of an apprenticeship may therefore be treated as OfS-fundable subject to meeting all other criteria necessary for that status.

e. Students who are aiming for an equivalent or lower qualification (ELQ). Under the LLE, students may choose to use their available entitlement on any eligible courses or modules. However, for HESES26 purposes, LLE students should still be assessed for ELQ status and this criteria still applies. There are exemptions from the ELQ policy, as defined in paragraphs 9 to 28 of this annex.

f. Undergraduate and postgraduate taught students at the Open University who are domiciled in Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland.

g. Students on courses taught under a subcontractual arrangement, unless the courses are either:

   i. delivered by a teaching partner that is registered in the Approved (fee cap) category of the OfS Register, or where that partner falls into an exempt category defined by the government.[35]

   ii. a pre-registration nursing, midwifery and allied health profession course (as defined in Annex H).

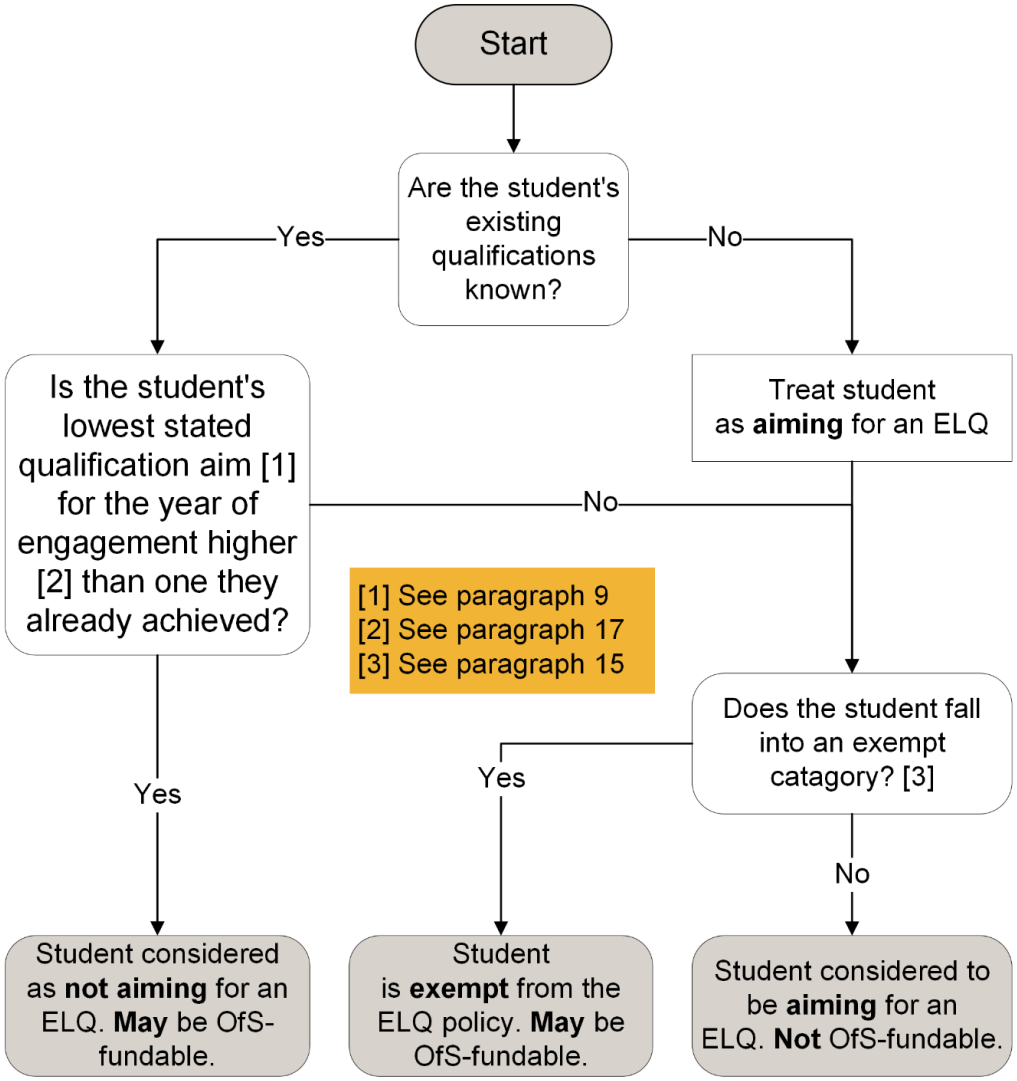
Students aiming for ELQs

9. An equivalent or lower qualification (ELQ) is a qualification that is no higher than one that a given student has already achieved. The two key considerations in determining whether a student is aiming for an ELQ are the academic levels of the qualifications already awarded to the student and the academic levels of the qualifications that the student has stated they are aiming for. If the qualifications already achieved are not known, the student should be treated as if aiming for an ELQ.

10. The flowchart in Figure F2 can be used to determine the ELQ status of a student.

[35] See Franchise arrangements for higher education providers - GOV.UK.

Figure F2: Establishing ELQ status



Identifying entry qualifications through other sources

11. Providers should take reasonable steps to test the accuracy of the entry qualifications reported by their students, taking into account the availability of other sources of information such as data from UCAS, the Learning Records Service,[36] the Student Loans Company, application forms and students' certificates. This does not require a provider to test the qualifications achieved by all its students. For many students, the data provided by UCAS through the awarding body linkage (often referred to as ABL) will be sufficient. However, this will not apply in some cases, such as students who achieved their qualifications some time ago or whose qualification types are not included. In these circumstances we expect providers to verify entry qualifications using the Learning Records Service. Otherwise, providers should use a random sample to test the overall accuracy of their entry qualifications data, plus selective samples where doubts exist about the entry qualifications reported by individual students or where there is a higher possibility that the student is aiming for an ELQ.

[36] See the Learning Records Service page on the GOV.UK website.

Students with multiple stated qualification aims

12. Where students currently have multiple recognised higher education qualification aims stated as part of the same engagement, they should be recorded against the lower aim, as explained in Annex E. Where the student's currently stated qualification aim for that engagement is at a higher level than their highest existing qualification, then the year of engagement should not be treated as an ELQ, even where a given year is at the same or lower level than a qualification already achieved.

13. The ELQ policy applies regardless of where a student's previous qualifications were obtained, or how they were financed.

14. In some circumstances, a student may not be formally awarded a qualification which they have stated as their aim and to which they are entitled, having completed all the necessary work for that qualification. This may occur if, for example, the student has been assessed as eligible for the award but has not completed the formal process of receiving it. In such cases, the student should be treated for ELQ purposes as if they had been awarded the qualification. The achievement and award of credit should not be treated as a qualification for these purposes.

Students exempt from the ELQ policy for OfS funding purposes

15. Students falling into one of the following categories are exempt from the ELQ policy for OfS funding purposes, and therefore may be reported as OfS-fundable provided they meet all other relevant criteria:

    a. They receive Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) for at least some of their year of engagement reported in the HESES return. Providers should make estimates for HESES purposes of the numbers of students whose receipt of the DSA for the year of engagement will be confirmed after the census date.

    b. They have stated that their qualification aim is a foundation degree.

    c. They are on a course of initial or in-service teacher training (in any mode or level of study). In-service teacher training courses are defined as courses whose primary (but not necessarily only) purpose is to improve the effectiveness of teachers, lecturers or trainers.

    d. They are on a year of engagement (in any mode or level of study) for which an NHS bursary is payable.

    e. They are on an undergraduate or postgraduate course (in any mode of study) that on successful completion leads to first registration as a professional with one of the following:

        i. General Medical Council.

        ii. General Dental Council for the professions of:

            1. Dentist

            2. Dental therapist

            3. Dental hygienist

iii. Nursing and Midwifery Council.

iv. Health and Care Professions Council for the professions of:

1. Podiatrist
2. Dietician
3. Occupational therapist
4. Operating department practitioner
5. Orthoptist
6. Paramedic
7. Physiotherapist
8. Prosthetist or orthotist
9. Radiographer
10. Speech and language therapist.

v. Social Work England.

vi. Scottish Social Services Council.

vii. Social Care Wales.

viii. Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

ix. Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

f. They are on an undergraduate course (in any mode of study) whose primary (but not necessarily only) purpose is to improve the effectiveness of practitioners registered with one of the professional bodies listed in paragraph 16e of this annex. In the case of the Health and Care Professions Council, this must additionally relate to practitioners in the professions listed in paragraph 16e.iv of this annex.

g. They are on an undergraduate course (in any mode of study) which leads to a professional qualification that has been professionally validated by the National Youth Agency. These are courses leading to qualification to practise as a youth and community worker.

h. They are on an undergraduate course (in any mode of study) whose primary (but not necessarily only) purpose is to improve the effectiveness of professionally qualified youth and community workers.

i. They are on a full-time course (for student support purposes) which leads towards registration with the Architects Registration Board.

j. They are aiming for a postgraduate research qualification.

16. All exemptions listed above, except that for students in receipt of DSA mentioned in paragraph 16a above, are an attribute of the course not of the individual student.

Determining level of qualification

17. It is not possible to provide a full hierarchical list of the qualifications that are awarded in the UK, or indeed elsewhere. In most cases, whether or not a student will be aiming for an ELQ will be clear. However, in a minority of cases, providers will need to make a reasonable academic judgement about whether or not a student's qualification aim is at a higher level than their highest existing qualification achieved. Providers should bear in mind the guidance in paragraphs 19 to 32 of this annex.

Sector-recognised standards in England and the Frameworks for higher education qualification of UK degree awarding bodies

18. In assessing the ELQ status of students, providers should determine a basic hierarchy of qualifications that reflects:

    a. For qualifications awarded in England, the 'sector-recognised standards' that have been adopted in relation to those conditions of OfS registration that relate in whole or part to the standards applied to higher education.[37]

    b. For qualifications awarded in other parts of the UK, the 'Frameworks for higher education qualifications of UK degree awarding bodies' (FHEQ).[38]

    c. Any revisions to these documents should be reflected as they are introduced and further guidance on their use is provided below.

19. In general, providers should treat qualifications that fall within the same level in the sector-recognised standards and FHEQ as being equivalent. However, for ELQ purposes, it may be appropriate in certain circumstances to consider a hierarchy of qualifications within a single level, especially where students are progressing through a succession of qualifications. In particular:

    a. Within Level 7 in the sector-recognised standards and FHEQ, it may be appropriate to consider a masters' qualification to be at a higher level than a postgraduate diploma, which in turn may be at a higher level than a postgraduate certificate. However, this may not apply in all cases and will depend on the naming adopted by different awarding bodies.

    b. Within Level 6 in the sector-recognised standards and FHEQ, it will normally be appropriate to consider a bachelors' degree with honours to be at a higher level than a bachelors' degree without honours.

[37] These are available from the Sector-recognised standards page on the OfS website.

[38] The FHEQ is available at the Qualifications Frameworks page on the QAA website.

c. Within Level 5 in the sector-recognised standards and FHEQ, it will normally be appropriate to consider a foundation degree bridging course (which gives access to the final year of an honours degree) to be at a higher level than a foundation degree.

20. For a student who already holds an honours degree, their classification in HESES as either undergraduate or postgraduate taught should not in itself determine whether or not they are aiming for an ELQ. The ELQ policy is about the academic level of qualifications, so the level of the final qualification for which the student is aiming will determine their ELQ status. By contrast, whether or not a student is recorded as postgraduate taught in HESES is determined by whether or not a degree-level qualification is a normal condition of entry to their course, and does not necessarily indicate the academic level of their study or final qualification aim. In particular, the following considerations will apply to any student whose highest qualification already achieved is an honours degree:

    a. Where they are undertaking a graduate conversion course, they should be recorded as a postgraduate taught student, but also considered as aiming for an ELQ. In this context, a graduate conversion course is one for which a normal condition of entry is an honours degree, but whose academic level is no higher than Level 6 in the sector-recognised standards. Some such courses may be designed to enable access to postgraduate courses for those whose first degree was in a different subject area.

    b. Where they are undertaking an integrated masters' programme (such as a four-year Master of Engineering (MEng), Master of Physics (MPhys) or Master of Chemistry (MChem)), they should be recorded at undergraduate level in HESES, because a degree is not a normal entry requirement for such study. However, with the exception of the Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) (see paragraph 23 of this annex), they should not be treated as aiming for an ELQ, because the academic level of the final qualification of the integrated masters' programme is at Level 7 in the sector-recognised standards. This also means that (again, with the exception of students who hold an MPharm) a student who holds an integrated masters' qualification and who wishes to enrol on a taught postgraduate masters' qualification (such as an MA or MBA) should be treated as aiming for an ELQ.

21. For the purposes of determining ELQ status, MAs granted by the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge should not be treated as academic qualifications.[39] Students holding such awards should be treated as holding Level 6 qualifications (reflecting whether or not a student's preceding bachelors' degree was with honours for the purpose of the guidance at paragraph 20b of this annex). A number of universities in Scotland also have a tradition of awarding MAs as opposed to BAs at undergraduate degree level. These should also be treated in the same way as bachelors' degrees, reflecting also whether they are with honours.

Exceptions to the sector-recognised standards and FHEQ

22. The MPharm should be treated for ELQ purposes as a Level 6 qualification in the sector-recognised standards and FHEQ. This means that the following hold true:

[39] This refers to Master of Arts (MA) awards granted by the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge, which are normally granted, on application, to graduates of these universities with a bachelors' degree. No further study or assessment is required, but the recipient may be required to pay a fee.

a. A student whose highest qualification already achieved is a bachelors' degree with honours and who is studying for an MPharm should be treated as aiming for an ELQ.

b. A student who holds an MPharm as their highest qualification already achieved and is now studying for a taught postgraduate masters' qualification at Level 7 (such as an MA or MBA) should not be treated as aiming for an ELQ.

23. The sector-recognised standards and FHEQ state that the final outcomes of first degrees in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science typically meet the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at Level 7. However, for ELQ purposes only, these qualifications should continue to be treated as if they were at Level 6. This means that the following hold true:

    a. A student whose highest qualification already achieved is a bachelors' degree with honours and who is studying for a first registrable degree in medicine, dentistry or veterinary science should be considered to be aiming for an ELQ. However, they are exempt from the ELQ policy by virtue of paragraph 16e of this annex and (assuming they meet all other criteria for that status) can be recorded as OfS-fundable.

    b. A student who holds a first registrable degree in medicine, dentistry or veterinary science as their highest qualification already achieved and who is studying on a taught postgraduate masters' qualification (such as an MSc or MBA) should not be treated as aiming for an ELQ.

24. All postgraduate initial teacher training courses, such as PGCEs (whether Postgraduate Certificates in Education or Professional Graduate Certificates in Education) should be treated, for the purpose of the ELQ policy only, as being equivalent to Level 6. This means that a student whose highest qualification already achieved is a PGCE, and who has no other postgraduate qualification, would not be treated as aiming for an ELQ if they enrolled on a postgraduate masters' qualification. Students on a postgraduate initial teacher training course are exempt from the ELQ policy, as explained in paragraph 16c of this annex.

25. Where students do not have a stated qualification aim and study by accumulating credit on a succession of 'courses' or modules, they should not be treated as aiming for an ELQ if they do not have a previous higher education qualification. Such accumulation of credit should be treated as progression towards a final undergraduate qualification. However, if the student has a higher education level qualification (as well as having potentially accumulated undergraduate level credit from recent study), then the student would be treated as aiming for an ELQ if that qualification is at a level equivalent to, or higher than, the credit towards which they are now studying. A similar approach should be adopted where students are accumulating credit at postgraduate level: credit previously achieved should not generally be used to determine that a student aiming for further postgraduate credit is aiming for an ELQ, but a previous postgraduate-level qualification generally should.

Professional qualification and qualification awarded abroad

26. Providers may wish to take advice from the UK National Information Centre for the recognition and evaluation of international qualifications and skills (UK ENIC) about the

relative level of professional qualifications and those awarded abroad.[40] UK ENIC is the national agency responsible for providing information, advice and opinion on vocational, academic and professional qualifications and skills from all over the world.

27. There may be cases where UK ENIC advises that, for example, the academic level of a degree awarded in another country is below that of a degree in the UK. In such a case it is acceptable to treat a student whose highest higher education qualification is a degree from that country, and who is studying for a degree in the UK, as not aiming for an ELQ.

Reviewing ELQ status

28. In general, whether or not a student is aiming for an ELQ should be reviewed annually, at the start of each year of engagement. This is necessary to take account of changing student circumstances, such as where a student:

    - while following two separate programmes of study, receives a qualification for one before the other is complete
    - changes their qualification aim
    - begins to receive DSA.

    In general, and subject to the guidance in paragraph 16a of this annex, we would not expect providers to change the ELQ status of their students within a year of engagement.

Relationship of OfS policy on ELQs to fee regulations

29. There are differences in the way that ELQs are treated in HESES and for fee regulation and student support purposes. Providers should not assume that the guidance noted in paragraphs 10 to 29 of this annex will apply when considering ELQ status for the purposes of regulated course fees or of the different elements of student support.

Good practice

Collecting qualification data from students

30. Providers should ask students to confirm annually that they have not achieved any new qualifications since they last enrolled.

31. Providers should ensure that their data protection notices allow them, the government or their respective agents to check the accuracy of personal information provided by students against external data sources, including the Student Loans Company and Learning Records Service. For example, they should permit the provider to test if the student has been reported on earlier DDB or ILR returns of other institutions, and to contact these other institutions to confirm any qualifications obtained.

Keeping records of how students aiming for ELQs have been identified

32. In all cases, providers should keep records for audit purposes of how they are identifying students as aiming for an ELQ. This should set out the broad approach adopted by the

[40] See the UK ENIC Homepage.

provider. Where there may be uncertainty as to whether an individual student is aiming for an ELQ, the provider should also keep a record of how it has determined their ELQ status.

Recording of non-exempt students aiming for an ELQ

33. Home fee students aiming for an ELQ and not covered by an exemption should be clearly identified on the student record system, and returned in the ‘non-fundable’ column.

Examples

Example 1: Student aiming for both HND and degree

34. A student with a stated aim of both a HND and a degree as part of the same engagement should be treated as aiming for an HND for ELQ purposes.

Example 2: Student who acquires undergraduate certificate (not stated aim)

35. A student aiming for a first degree has an HNC as their highest existing higher education qualification. The student will be awarded an undergraduate certificate if they successfully complete their first year, but this is not a stated aim. The student should not be treated as aiming for an ELQ for any of their years of engagement (including the first), because the undergraduate certificate that they will acquire is not a stated qualification aim.

Example 3: Student aiming for honours degree with foundation degree as highest qualification

36. A student enters with a foundation degree as their highest qualification already achieved, and has a stated qualification aim of an honours degree. The student should not be treated as aiming for an ELQ. This would apply whether the honours degree involves three years of full-time study or the student is aiming for the honours degree through, for example, a one-year top-up from the foundation degree.

Example 4: Student with honours degree studying for foundation degree and then topping up to a second degree

37. A student enters already holding an honours degree as their highest qualification, and intends to study for a foundation degree over two years then top up to an honours degree in one year. If they have a stated qualification aim of both a foundation degree and an honours degree as part of the same engagement, then the student is exempt from the ELQ policy in the first two years when studying for the foundation degree. However, when topping up to an honours degree in the final year, the student will be treated as aiming for an ELQ.

Example 5: Student studying a succession of continuing education courses

38. A student without any prior higher education qualification is undertaking a succession of 20 credit-point undergraduate continuing education courses, all at the same academic level. After successful completion of such a course, the student is permitted to be awarded a university certificate. If the student completes 120 credit points from such courses, they can be awarded a Certificate of Higher Education. In this example:

a. A student who has successfully completed a 20 credit-point course, but has not been awarded the university certificate, should not be treated as aiming for an ELQ for any study towards another 20 credit-point course.

b. Where the student has been awarded a university certificate for successfully completing a 20 credit-point course, then:

   i. They should be treated as aiming for an ELQ if they are taking another 20 credit-point course, and either have a stated qualification aim of a university certificate or have not stated a qualification aim (that is, they are assumed to be studying towards further credit at the same level as a qualification already awarded).

   ii. They should not be treated as aiming for an ELQ if they are taking another 20 credit-point course, but have a sole qualification aim of a Certificate of Higher Education. This is because, on the basis of the guidance at paragraph 20, the Certificate of Higher Education would be considered a higher qualification than the university certificate already achieved.

Example 6: Student who acquires ELQ status part way through a course

39. A student with no previous higher education qualifications is concurrently aiming for a first degree and a part-time two-year HNC. The student completes the degree midway through the first year of the HNC.

In this example, the student should not be treated as aiming for an ELQ for the first year of the HNC. However, the student should be treated as aiming for an ELQ in their second year of engagement for the HNC, because their ELQ status should be reviewed annually to take account of any newly achieved higher education qualifications.

Example 7: Student already registered with a regulatory body for nursing, midwifery and allied health professions, who enrols on a pre-registration course for one of the professions

40. A student is already registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council as a nurse but enrols on a pre-registration midwifery course. As the midwifery course leads to a first registration for the profession 'midwifery', the student is exempt from the ELQ policy regardless of already being registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council as a nurse. The exemption from the ELQ policy is an attribute of the course, not of the individual student.

Annex G: Subject groupings

This annex explains how years of engagement should be mapped to subject groupings for the purposes of HESES26. Firstly, this is addressed for the specific cases of sandwich years out, medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, nursing, midwifery and allied health professions, education and social work. Then, where those cases do not apply, mapping based on course subject codes is explained.

Annex G contents

How years of engagement are classified by subject

- How HECoS codes describe the subject of a course
- Subject groupings

Specific cases

- Sandwich years out
- Medicine and dentistry
- Veterinary science
- Pre-registration courses in nursing, midwifery and allied health professions
- Social work
- ITT, INSET and other education students.

Using HECoS codes to determine subject groupings

- Further guidance on the use of Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS) codes for further education colleges

Examples.

A note on the structure of this annex

1. This annex describes how providers should categorise years of engagement to reflect the subjects being studied. As in HESES25, for 2026-27 providers will report subject data for years of engagement at a more granular level than in previous HESES returns.

2. Subject data will be returned using two stages:

    a. Providers will assign years of engagement to one or more subject groupings (see paragraphs 3 to 9 of this annex) which they will return in HESES25.

    b. The OfS will take the subject grouping data, and aggregate it into seven price groups (A, B, C1.1, C1.2, C1.3, C2 and D). Price group data will be used to inform our funding calculations.

How years of engagement are classified by subject

3. Years of engagement are assigned to subject groupings based on two criteria:

    a. First, they may be one of the specific cases noted in paragraphs 10 to 32 of this annex.

    b. Second, if no specific cases apply, providers should look at the HECoS codes that describe the subject of the course. Each code will map to one of our subject groupings. Further guidance on using of HECoS codes to determine subject groupings can be found in paragraphs 32 to 34 of this annex.

4. A full list of subject groupings is shown in Table G1 at the end of this annex.

How HECoS codes describe the subject of a course

5. The HECoS codes used to describe the course should reflect the guidance on the DDB website.[41] In particular providers should ensure that:

    a. 'The course subject(s) should represent directly, or relate very closely to, the qualification subject(s) associated with specific deliveries of that course.'

    b. 'The qualification subject(s) must represent directly, or relate very closely to, the wording on the qualification's official certificate of award. More than three qualification subjects would generally be regarded as exceptional.'

    c. 'Percentages should not be derived from a detailed analysis of the contributions of subjects to individual students' programmes of study. They must instead be based on a broad assessment of the relative contributions of each subject, and be consistent with the guidance on economical coding and the relationship between qualification subjects and course subjects.'

6. Determining HECoS codes is a matter for providers, though we recommend the HECoS codes assigned and the rationale for assigning them should be kept for audit purposes. However, if we believe there are errors or inappropriate classifications which would significantly and materially affect our use of the data, we will require providers to amend their data submissions. This may include requiring changes to how providers use subject classifications and hence how students are assigned to subject groupings.

Subject groupings

7. Subject groupings broadly reflect the mapping of HECoS codes to the Common Aggregation Hierarchy level 2 (CAH2) standard used by the DDB.[42] For the purposes of HESES25 we are using CAH version 1.3.4.

8. CAH codes contain 'CAH' followed by up to six digits in three pairs; CAH level 2 codes are expressed as two pairs of digits. For example, 'CAH25-01 (creative arts and design)' and

[41] See the HECoS implementation guide on the DDB website.

[42] More information on CAH2 groups can be found on the CAH page on the DDB website.

‘CAH25-02 (performing arts)’ are two separate CAH2 codes that are part of the higher level ‘CAH25 (design, and creative and performing arts)’.

9. The HECoS codes in some CAH2 categories are associated with different price groups; in these cases, the CAH2 groupings are split into different subject groupings to reflect this. For example, HECoS codes ‘100409 (geography)’ and ‘101078 (applied environmental sciences)’ are both in ‘CAH 26-01 (geography, earth and environmental sciences)’ but are mapped to different price groups. For HESES26, they would be recorded, respectively, in the ‘CAH 26-01 (subgroup C2)’ and ‘CAH 26-01 (subgroup B)’ subject groupings. This allows us to allocate these subjects correctly when the data is used to inform funding calculations for 2026-27.

Specific cases

Sandwich years out

10. All students on a sandwich year out should be recorded in this subject grouping regardless of the subject of the course. They will be assigned to price group C2 for funding purposes.

Medicine and dentistry (clinical years)

11. Medical and dental years of engagement should only be recorded in the ‘Medicine & Dentistry – clinical years (A)’ subject grouping when students are in one of the following categories:

    a. Clinical medical students on the final three years of a course (including a graduate-entry course) leading towards first registration as a doctor with the General Medical Council, taken at one of these points:

        i. After the pre-clinical part of the course.

        ii. After a free-standing pre-clinical course.

        iii. As part of an integrated pre-clinical and clinical course.

    b. Clinical dental students on the final four years of a course (including a graduate-entry course) leading towards first registration as a dentist with General Dental Council, taken at one of these points:

        i. After the pre-clinical part of the course.

        ii. After a free-standing pre-clinical course.

        iii. As part of an integrated pre-clinical and clinical course.

    c. Clinical medical (including clinical psychology) and clinical dental postgraduate taught students (other than those on graduate-entry courses leading towards first registration as a doctor or dentist) whose course meets the following three criteria:

        i. The course bears very high average annual costs of at least £15,000 per full-time equivalent.

ii. A substantial proportion of the staff teaching time contributed to the course is provided by medically or dentally qualified, university funded clinical academic staff who hold honorary contracts with the NHS (this includes general practitioners).

iii. Nearly all of the course is taught in a clinical environment. A clinical environment is one where patients are being treated – usually a hospital. This does not include settings designed for simulation, for example using models in a simulated environment, or virtual environments where, for example, patients may be seen in real time on screen but are not physically present.

d. Research students, the focus of whose research is in a clinical environment (as defined in paragraph 11c.iii above) and whose lead supervisor is a clinical academic.

12. Students who meet the criteria in paragraph 11 above should have all of their activity for the year of engagement attributed to this subject grouping, irrespective of their HECoS code. They will be assigned to price group A for funding purposes.

13. For postgraduate courses, the HECoS subject of the course aim should only be coded as 100267 (clinical medicine), 100266 (clinical dentistry) or 100494 (clinical psychology) on the appropriate student record, where the course meets one of the following criteria:

a. It is a graduate-entry medical course that meets the criteria set out in paragraph 11a.

b. It is a graduate-entry dental course that meets the criteria set out in paragraph 11b.

c. It is a postgraduate taught course that meets the criteria set out in paragraph 11c.

d. It is a postgraduate research course that meets the criteria set out in paragraph 11d.

Veterinary science

14. Veterinary science students should be recorded in the ‘Veterinary Science (A)’ subject grouping if they are in the final five years of a course (including a graduate-entry course) which leads towards eligibility to register to practise as a veterinary surgeon, irrespective of their HECoS code.

15. To be included in this subject grouping, clinical veterinary science postgraduate taught students (other than those on graduate-entry courses leading towards first registration as a veterinary surgeon) must be on courses which meet the following three criteria:

a. The course bears very high average annual costs of at least £15,000 per full-time equivalent.

b. A substantial proportion of the staff teaching time contributed to the course is provided by veterinary-qualified, university funded, clinical academic staff.

c. Nearly all of the course is taught in a clinical environment. A clinical environment for veterinary science is one where animals are receiving medical treatment – usually an animal hospital. This does not include settings designed for simulation, for example using models in a simulated environment, or virtual environments where, for example, animals receiving treatment may be seen in real time on screen but are not physically present.

16. Students who meet the criteria in paragraphs 14 or 15 above should have all of their activity for the year of engagement attributed to this subject grouping, irrespective of their HECoS code. They will be assigned to price group A for funding purposes.

17. We would expect all other years of such veterinary science courses, including foundation years, to be described by HECoS code 101384 (pre-clinical veterinary medicine). This is mapped to CAH2 code CAH05-01 and will be assigned to price group B for funding purposes.

18. Where, and only where, a postgraduate course meets the criteria set out in paragraphs 14 or 15 above, the HECoS subject of course aim should be coded as 100531 (veterinary medicine) or 101347 (veterinary dentistry) on the appropriate student record.

Pre-registration courses in nursing, midwifery and allied health professions

19. Students on pre-registration courses that on successful completion lead to first registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) as a professional in nursing (all specialisms), should be entirely attributed to the 'Pre-reg NMAH (C1.1)' subject grouping, irrespective of their HECoS code. This does not include courses leading to registration as a Nursing Associate.

20. Students on undergraduate pre-registration courses that on successful completion lead to first registration with the General Dental Council (GDC) as a professional in dental therapy or dental hygiene, should be entirely attributed to the 'Pre-reg NMAH (A)' subject grouping, irrespective of their HECoS code.

21. Students on postgraduate pre-registration courses that on successful completion lead to first registration with the General Dental Council (GDC) as a professional in dental therapy, should be entirely attributed to the 'Pre-reg NMAH (B)' subject grouping, irrespective of their HECoS code.

22. Students on pre-registration courses that on successful completion lead to first registration with a relevant recognised regulatory body as a professional in midwifery, dietetics, speech and language therapy, podiatry, orthotics and prosthetics, occupational therapy, operating department practice, orthoptics, physiotherapy, and radiography, should be entirely attributed to 'Pre-reg NMAH (B)', irrespective of their HECoS code.

23. For the purposes of paragraph 22, the relevant recognised regulatory bodies are the NMC for midwifery and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) for all other professions listed.

24. Years of engagement that are returned as 'Pre-reg NMAH' will be mapped to price groups as follows:

    a. 'Pre-reg NMAH (A)' will be assigned to price group A for funding purposes.

    b. 'Pre-reg NMAH (B)' will be assigned to price group B for funding purposes.

    c. 'Pre-reg NMAH (C1.1)' will be assigned to price group C1.1 for funding purposes.

Social work

25. Students should be entirely attributed to the 'Social Work (C2)' subject grouping, irrespective of their HECoS code, where they are on courses that:

    - lead to registration solely as a social worker with one of the UK regulatory bodies; however, courses leading to dual-registration as both a nurse and a social worker should be assigned entirely to 'Pre-reg NMAH (C1.1)'

    - provide post-registration qualifications for social workers

    - are short, post-registration, credit-bearing courses whose primary (but not necessarily only) purpose is to improve the effectiveness of social workers.

26. For the purposes of paragraph 25 above, the UK regulatory bodies are Social Work England, the Scottish Social Services Council, Social Care Wales and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

27. Years of engagement that are returned as 'Social Work (C2)' will be mapped to price group C2.

ITT, INSET and other education students

28. Students on ITT courses, whether leading to qualified teacher status (QTS), qualified teacher learning and skills (QTLS) or early years teacher status (EYTS), should be entirely attributed to the 'ITT, INSET and other education students (C2)' subject grouping, irrespective of their HECoS code. All Home fee students on ITT courses leading to QTS or EYTS should be returned as non-fundable.

29. In-service education and training (INSET) courses are defined as courses whose primary (but not necessarily only) purpose is to improve the effectiveness of teachers, lecturers or trainers. Students on these courses should be recorded as follows:

    a. Students who do not hold QTS, QTLS or EYTS but are studying for an ITT qualification via an INSET course should be recorded in this subject grouping, irrespective of their HECoS code.

    b. Other students on INSET courses should be attributed to subject groupings using their HECoS course codes.

    c. Home fee students holding or aiming for QTS on INSET courses should be returned as non-fundable.

30. Years of engagement that are returned as 'ITT, INSET and other education students (C2)' will be assigned to price group C2 for funding purposes.

31. Students studying for a foundation degree to become a teaching assistant should also be returned in this subject grouping.

Overrides

32. In exceptional circumstances, providers may have provision that does not meet the criteria for one of the specific cases above, and where it has been previously determined between the

OfS and the provider that the HECoS course codes for the provision maps incorrectly for funding purposes. In such circumstances, providers should return years of engagement in the correct price group in the 'Overrides' section of Tables 1 or 2. This should only be used where overrides have been previously agreed between the OfS and the provider. If data is entered under the overrides section, we will query it as part of HESES data verification.

Using HECoS codes to determine subject groupings

33. Where none of the specific cases defined in paragraphs 10 to 31 of this annex apply, providers should assign years of engagement to subject groupings by considering the HECoS codes that describe the course.

A detailed mapping of HECoS codes to subject groupings, CAH2 codes and price groups is available in Annex B of 'Changes to 2025 student data surveys to inform funding' (OfS2025.57).[43] We recommend that providers consult this document when assigning student years to subject groupings.

34. Some qualifications contain study in two or more distinct subject areas, for example a chemistry and business course. Where the qualification has more than one HECoS code, the student's year of engagement should be split between the relevant subject groupings in proportion to the split between each subject for the course as a whole.

35. Where activity is delivered under a subcontractual arrangement or as part of a study year abroad (partial or whole), it should be returned in the subject grouping(s) allocated to the HECoS code(s) of the course as a whole.

Further guidance on the use of HECoS codes for further education colleges

36. Further education and sixth form colleges and academies can utilise the Education and Skills Funding Agency's 'Find a learning aim' service (FaLA),[44] to access information showing the HECoS codes associated with a course.

37. It is the responsibility of providers to ensure that any information contained in FaLA relating to their courses (including those for which they intend to return engagements in HESES) is correct, including HECoS codes.

38. If there is no HECoS code for a particular course, or a college thinks that the wrong HECoS code has been assigned, the college should contact the DfE to request a change.

[43] See 'Changes to 2026 student data surveys to inform funding' on the OfS website.

[44] See the data downloads on the Find a learning aim website.

Table G1: List of subject groupings

Subject grouping (associated price group in brackets)	Description
Specific cases	
Sandwich year out (C2)	Sandwich years out (all subjects)
Medicine & Dentistry - clinical years (A)	Medical and dental years of engagement that meet the 'price group A' clinical criteria in the HESES guidance
Veterinary Science (A)	Veterinary science years of engagement that meet the 'price group A' clinical criteria in the HESES guidance
Pre-reg NMAH (A)	Students on undergraduate pre-registration courses in dental therapy or dental hygiene
Pre-reg NMAH (B)	Students on pre-registration courses in certain healthcare courses
Pre-reg NMAH (C1.1)	Students on pre-registration courses in certain healthcare courses
Social Work (C2)	Students on pre-registration courses in social work
ITT, INSET and other education students (C2)	Students on initial teacher training (ITT) courses
Subject groupings assigned by HECoS codes	
CAH01-01 (B)	medicine and dentistry
CAH02-02 (B)	pharmacology, toxicology and pharmacy
CAH02-04 (C2)	nursing and midwifery
CAH02-05 (B)	medical sciences
CAH02-06 (subgroup B)	allied health
CAH02-06 (subgroup C2)	allied health
CAH03-01 (subgroup B)	biosciences
CAH03-01 (subgroup C2)	biosciences
CAH03-02 (C2)	sport and exercise sciences
CAH04-01 (C2)	psychology
CAH05-01 (B)	veterinary sciences
CAH06-01 (subgroup B)	agriculture, food and related studies
CAH06-01 (subgroup C2)	agriculture, food and related studies
CAH06-01 (subgroup D)	agriculture, food and related studies
CAH07-01 (B)	physics and astronomy
CAH07-02 (B)	chemistry
CAH07-04 (B)	general, applied and forensic sciences

Subject grouping (associated price group in brackets)	Description
CAH09-01 (C2)	mathematical sciences
CAH10-01 (subgroup B)	engineering
CAH10-01 (subgroup C1.2)	engineering
CAH10-01 (subgroup C2)	engineering
CAH10-03 (subgroup B)	materials and technology
CAH10-03 (subgroup C2)	materials and technology
CAH11-01 (C1.1)	computing
CAH13-01 (C2)	architecture, building and planning
CAH15-01 (subgroup B)	sociology, social policy and anthropology
CAH15-01 (subgroup D)	sociology, social policy and anthropology
CAH15-02 (D)	economics
CAH15-03 (D)	politics
CAH15-04 (subgroup C2)	health and social care
CAH15-04 (subgroup D)	health and social care
CAH16-01 (D)	law
CAH17-01 (subgroup C2)	business and management
CAH17-01 (subgroup D)	business and management
CAH19-01 (D)	English studies
CAH19-02 (D)	Celtic studies
CAH19-04 (subgroup C2)	languages and area studies
CAH19-04 (subgroup D)	languages and area studies
CAH20-01 (subgroup C1.1)	history and archaeology
CAH20-01 (subgroup D)	history and archaeology
CAH20-02 (D)	philosophy and religious studies
CAH22-01 (D)	education and teaching
CAH23-01 (D)	combined and general studies
CAH24-01 (subgroup C1.3)	media, journalism and communications
CAH24-01 (subgroup D)	media, journalism and communications
CAH25-01 (C1.2)	creative arts and design
CAH25-02 (C1.2)	performing arts
CAH26-01 (subgroup B)	geography, earth and environmental studies

Subject grouping (associated price group in brackets)	Description
CAH26-01 (subgroup C1.1)	geography, earth and environmental studies
CAH26-01 (subgroup C2)	geography, earth and environmental studies

Examples

Example 1: Allocation to subject grouping based on HECoS code

39. A student studies on a course with an assigned HECoS code of 100074. From the mapping of HECoS codes to subject groupings, discussed in paragraph 32, this should be recorded in subject grouping CAH17-01 (D). For funding purposes, the student will be assigned to price group D.

Example 2: Split price groups where students study different subjects in different years

40. A provider offers a foundation degree in Climate Science and Climate Change, over two years. The course has been allocated two HECoS codes by the provider which correspond to different subject groupings:

100379 (climate science) – subject grouping CAH26-01 (B)

101070 (climate change) – subject grouping CAH26-01 (C2).

41. In the first year of the course, students mainly study climate science. In the second year of the course, there is a larger focus on climate change. Over the entire duration of this course, student activity relating to climate science makes up 40 per cent of the course, with climate change making up the remaining 60 per cent. Students in both years of this course would be reported with 40 per cent of their year of engagement in the CAH26-01 (B) grouping and 60 per cent in the CAH26-01 (C2) grouping.

Annex H: Pre-registration nursing, midwifery and allied health courses including guidance for Table 4

This annex defines the pre-registration healthcare profession courses which must be included in HESES26. It also details definitions specific to Table 4. Only providers delivering these courses in 2026-27 need to complete this table.

Annex H contents

Definitions

- HESES nursing, midwifery and allied health professions population for 2026-27
- Healthcare professions

Guidance

- Mode

Examples

Definitions

HESES nursing, midwifery and allied health professions population for 2026-27

1. The HESES26 population for Table 4 comprises years of engagement for all Home fee students on pre-registration nursing, midwifery and allied health profession courses (defined below). These years should also be included in Tables 1 to 3. The information in Table 4 will be used to inform calculation of the provider's nursing midwifery and allied health supplement funding allocation.

2. Table 4 primarily collects two mutually exclusive categories: OfS-fundable and non-fundable.

3. Additionally, Table 4 also separately collects data on all students who are 'starters' in 2026-27. These students will already have been recoded as either OfS-fundable or non-fundable. This data is collected for planning, not funding, purposes.

4. In Table 4, the definition of 'starters' is not the same as for new entrants in Tables 1 to 3 (see Annex C). In general, starters on Table 4 are students starting study for the first time on a relevant pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course in a specific year. Please note:

    a. Students who transfer during an academic year onto a pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course from one that is not should be treated as a starter in the year in which they transfer onto the pre-registration course.

    b. Students who transfer between different types of pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession courses should be recorded against the profession that applies to

their current course, but they should be treated as a starter in the year that their previous course started.

c. Students repeating a year of a pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course should be treated as starters in the year they started the course, and not when they repeated the first year.

5. Students at the Open University who are studying in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland should be excluded from Table 4, as funding responsibility for them rests with the devolved administrations. They should, however, still be included as appropriate in other HESES tables.

Healthcare professions

6. For the professions listed in Table H1, years of engagement should only be included on Table 4 when they are part of pre-registration courses that are approved by the relevant regulatory body. These are:

- the Nursing and Midwifery Council for nursing and midwifery
- the General Dental Council for dental hygiene and dental therapy
- the Health and Care Professions Council for all other professions listed.

7. Years of engagement that are not part of the specific programmes approved by the relevant regulatory body, or which relate to registration for a profession not listed in Table H1, must not be included in Table 4. This applies to:

a. Any additional activity that may be integrated with those courses, such as foundation years ('Year 0') provision. However, such other integrated activity may still be countable on other HESES tables, where it meets all relevant criteria (see Annex B, paragraphs 6 to 7 for guidance regarding foundation years).

b. Any other courses that do not lead to registration with a relevant regulatory body in the specified professions (as listed in Table H1 below), such as courses leading towards registration as a nursing associate.

8. 'Pre-registration' is an attribute of the course, not of the individual student. If a pre-registration course leads to a first registration for that specific profession, the student is recorded in Table 4, regardless of whether the student is already registered with the regulatory body for another profession. Courses that do not meet the definition of pre-registration (and will therefore not be recorded on Table 4) should still be recorded in Tables 1 and 2.

Table H1: Courses for which activity should be included in Table 4

Pre-registration courses in	Leading to registration with
Nursing – adult Nursing – children Nursing – learning disability Nursing – mental health	Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). Relevant courses are those at English providers listed at the Approved programmes page on the NMC website by selecting the relevant course type from the drop-down menu headed 'Course'. In general, these are, respectively: • 'Pre-registration nursing – adult' or 'Pre-registration nursing – adult (pre-2018)' • 'Pre-registration nursing – child' or 'Pre-registration nursing – child (pre-2018)' • 'Pre-registration nursing – learning disabilities' or 'Pre-registration nursing – learning disabilities (pre-2018)' • 'Pre-registration nursing – mental health' or 'Pre-registration nursing – mental health (pre-2018)'. In addition, the NMC website identifies six types of 'Dual award – Pre-registration nursing' courses (for each possible combination of two of the four specialisms) and similarly six types of 'Dual award – Pre-registration nursing (pre-2018)' courses. Years of engagement for students on such courses should also be included on Table 4, but split equally between the two nursing specialisms concerned. For example, for a course identified on the NMC website as 'Dual award – Pre-registration nursing – mental health/child', years of engagement should be split equally on Table 4 between the categories 'Nursing – children' and 'Nursing – mental health'.
Nursing – unclassified	NMC. In some cases, pre-registration nursing courses may share a common first year, during which students will choose their nursing specialism for later years of the course. Any such years of engagement that cannot yet be assigned to one of the nursing specialisms above should be recorded under 'Nursing – unclassified'. They must, however, be part of a pre-registration course listed at the NMC approved programmes page by selecting the relevant course type from the drop-down menu headed 'Course'. The category 'Nursing – unclassified' must not be used to report years of engagement on courses that do not meet the criteria for inclusion in Table 4, such as pre-registration courses for nursing associates, or post-registration courses.

Pre-registration courses in	Leading to registration with
Midwifery	NMC. Relevant courses are those at English providers listed at the NMC approved programmes page by selecting the relevant course type from the drop-down menu headed 'Course'. In general these are, respectively: • 'Pre-registration midwifery' • 'Pre-registration midwifery – short course' • 'Pre-registration midwifery – three-year programme – 18-month programme (pre-2020)'.
Dietetics	Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). Relevant courses are those at English providers listed at Approved programmes page on the HCPC website by selecting 'Dietitian' from the drop-down menu under 'Search by profession'.
Occupational therapy	HCPC. Relevant courses are those at English providers listed at the HCPC approved programmes page by selecting 'Occupational therapist' from the listing under 'Search by profession'.
Operating department practice	HCPC. Relevant courses are those at English providers listed at the HCPC approved programmes page by selecting 'Operating department practitioner' from the listing under 'Search by profession'.
Orthoptics	HCPC. Relevant courses are those at English providers listed at the HCPC approved programmes page by selecting 'Orthoptist' from the listing under 'Search by profession'.
Orthotics and prosthetics	HCPC. Relevant courses are those at English providers listed at the HCPC approved programmes page by selecting 'Prosthetist / orthotist' from the listing under 'Search by profession'.
Physiotherapy	HCPC. Relevant courses are those at English providers listed at the HCPC approved programmes page by selecting 'Physiotherapist' from the listing under 'Search by profession'.
Podiatry	HCPC. Relevant courses are those at English providers listed at the HCPC approved programmes page by selecting 'Chiropodist / podiatrist' from the listing under 'Search by profession'.

Pre-registration courses in	Leading to registration with
Radiography (diagnostic)	HCPC. Relevant courses are those at English providers listed at the HCPC approved programmes page by selecting 'Radiographer' from the listing under 'Search by profession'. Providers will then need to distinguish between the two types of radiography according to the aim and content of their particular courses: after a search on Radiographer, the HCPC website distinguishes between these two types through a filter on 'Modality'.
Radiography (therapeutic)	
Speech and language therapy	HCPC. Relevant courses are those at English providers listed at the HCPC approved programmes page by selecting 'Speech and language therapist' from the listing under 'Search by profession'.
Dental hygiene Dental therapy	General Dental Council (GDC). Relevant courses are those at English providers listed on the Dental therapy and dental hygiene programmes page on the GDC website. Providers will then need to distinguish between the two types of programme, reflecting the courses they offer and the qualification aim of their students. Where a student has a single aim for a qualification in dental hygiene, they should be recorded under dental hygiene. Otherwise, they should be recorded under dental therapy (including where they are aiming for qualifications in both dental hygiene and therapy).

Guidance

Mode

9. The definitions of mode for Table 4 are in Annex D. The vast majority of students on pre-registration courses will undertake learning in the workplace, which can count towards full-time study and will therefore not meet the definition of a sandwich year out.

Examples

Example 1: Student who transfers between different types of pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course

10. A student started a pre-registration course in 'Nursing – children' in September 2025. The student transfers to a pre-registration course in midwifery in September 2026. The student is recorded against the profession 'midwifery' but is not recorded as a starter in 2026-27, as that is not the year that their previous pre-registration course started.

Example 2: Student who transfers onto a pre-registration nursing, midwifery or allied health profession course from one that is not

11. A student studied for a full-time bachelors' degree in biological sciences in 2024-25 and 2025-26, and completed the first two years of the bachelors' degree. However, in September 2026, the student transfers to a full-time pre-registration midwifery course at the same provider. The student is reported as a starter for 2026-27 in Table 4.

12. However, such a student transferring within a provider would not be reported as a 'new entrant', as they are studying at the same provider and at the same broad level.

Example 3: Student already registered with the NMC, who enrols on a pre-registration midwifery course in 2026-27

13. A student previously trained as a nurse (Nursing – child) and registered as a nurse with the NMC in 2024. The student starts a full-time pre-registration midwifery course in October 2026. The midwifery course is listed as a pre-registration course by the NMC.

14. As the midwifery course leads to a first registration for the profession 'midwifery', the student is recorded in Table 4 against the profession 'midwifery' as a starter in 2026-27, regardless of already being registered with the NMC as a nurse.

Example 4: Student starting a specialist nursing course in September 2026

15. A student previously trained as a nurse (Nursing – adult) and registered as a nurse with the NMC in 2024. The student starts a full-time undergraduate bachelors' degree in Specialist nursing – health visiting, at a provider's School of Health in September 2026. This course is listed as an approved course by the NMC with course entry requirements that specify applicants should have active registration on Part one or Part two of the NMC Register.

16. The student is not recorded in Table 4 because the course is post-registration. The Specialist nursing – health visiting course does not lead to a first registration for the profession 'nursing'. This course leads to registration on Part three of the NMC Register for specialist community public health nurses.

Annex I: List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
CAH	Common Aggregation Hierarchy
DDB	The designated data body. Jisc is the DDB for higher education in England. Previously the DDB was the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), now part of Jisc.
DfE	The Department for Education
DWP	The Department for Work and Pensions
DSA	Disabled Students' Allowance
ELQ	Equivalent or lower qualification
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency, now part of the DfE
EYTS	Early years teacher status
FHEQ	Frameworks for higher education qualifications of UK degree awarding bodies
FTE	Full-time equivalence
GDC	General Dental Council
HCPC	Health and Care Professions Council
HECoS	Higher Education Classification of Subjects
HERA	Higher Education Research Act 2017
HESES	Higher Education Students Early Statistics survey
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
HTQs	Higher technical qualifications
ILR	Individualised Learner Record
INSET	In-service education and training
ITT	Initial teacher training
NMC	Nursing and Midwifery Council
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OfS	Office for Students
PG	Postgraduate
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education or Professional Graduate Certificate in Education
PGR	Postgraduate research
PGT	Postgraduate taught
QTS	Qualified teacher status (non-fundable)
QTLS	Qualified teacher learning and skills (OfS-fundable)
SCS	Student course session
UCAS	formerly the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UG	Undergraduate

Abbreviation	Definition
UK ENIC	UK National Information Centre for the recognition and evaluation of international qualifications and skills



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