

Office for
Students



2024-25 Student numbers technical document

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Summary

1. This document describes the algorithms applied to the 2024-25 Student (24056) record and Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data to determine a provider's higher education and further education student numbers. These numbers will be used by the Office for Students (OfS) for regulatory purposes, for example calculating OfS registration fees, and assessing applications for degree awarding powers and university title.
2. Some providers submit data to both the OfS's designated data body (DDB) and the Department for Education (DfE). Student engagements meeting either of the criteria listed below should be reported to both:
 - a. Students on higher and degree apprenticeships for whom you receive direct funding from the DfE (PROGTYPE 20, 21, 22, 23 or 25).
 - b. Students on higher education engagements (Level 4 or above) who are financed by Advanced Learner Loans.

We would expect all other student engagements to be returned to either the DDB or the DfE, but not both. For those providers that return both the DDB and ILR data, the student engagements listed above will be excluded from their ILR data to avoid double counting.

3. This document is aimed at readers with in-depth knowledge of the data. Readers are advised to have a copy of the Student record coding manual and ILR specification for the relevant year, and the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) Register Data Extract Specification to hand when using this document. Throughout the document, fields taken or derived from the Student (24056) or ILR records are shown in capitals.
4. We will document any changes or corrections to the algorithms in this document on the OfS website.¹

¹ See [Student numbers for regulatory purposes - Office for Students](#).

Changes

Changes from 2023-24 the student numbers method

5. This section describes any changes to the algorithms from the 2023-24 student numbers method. Any changes after initial publication will be listed here.

Changes from the 2023-24 DDB student numbers method

6. There have been no changes to the algorithms.

Changes from the 2023-24 ILR student numbers method

SNEXCL16

7. We have updated the wording for this algorithm to reflect the variety of aims that are recorded with LEARNAIMREF = ZPROG001. This change has been made to the document for clarity and it does not impact the outputs produced.

SNEXCL64

8. We have updated this algorithm for the value of COMPSTATUS to change from 4 in previous years to 3 now. Previously, ILR records returned to DfE with COMPSTATUS = 3 and WITHDRAWREASON = 40 had the value of COMPSTATUS changed to 4 by DfE. This was replicated by previous versions of SNEXCL64. The algorithm has been updated to reflect the fact that DfE are no longer making this change to the value of COMPSTATUS.

SNLEVEL

9. We have updated the wording for this algorithm to reflect the variety of aims that are recorded with LEARNAIMREF = ZPROG001. This change has been made to the document for clarity and it does not impact the outputs produced.

SNREL_TEF

10. OFSQAIM has a new value of MEDVETDENT, and we have added it to this algorithm.

Note on terminology

11. The algorithms below apply to two different data collections, each of which has a different structure. In the Student (24056) return, the fields that we use are associated with a student engagement. In the ILR return, the fields that we use are associated with a course.
12. Below, we use the generic term 'record' to refer to either a student engagement or a learner-course combination, depending on the data source.
13. The year '20Y1-Y2' below refers to the academic year starting on 1 August 2024 and ending on 31 July 2025.

20Y1-Y2 fields used to create the student number outputs

14. The fields used to generate the student numbers outputs are listed in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1: Student fields used in the student number calculations

Entity	Name	Description
Engagement	UKPRN	UK Provider Reference Number
Engagement	SID	Student identifier
Engagement	NUMHUS	Engagement number
Engagement	ENGSTARTDATE	Engagement start date
Engagement	ENGENDDATE	Engagement end date
Engagement	INCOMINGEXCHANGE	Identifies if the student is an incoming exchange or visiting student
Engagement	ENGPRINONUK	Identifies if the student is spending the majority of their Engagement outside the UK
Course	PREREQUISITE	Identifies PGR courses for funding purposes.
Engagement derived field	Z_ACT_CYC	Marker for student active (includes writing-up) within the cycle
Engagement derived field	Z_LEVEL	Student's course level for the engagement
Engagement derived field	Z_STULOAD_CYC	Total student load for the engagement across the cycle

Table 2: ILR, Learning Aim Reference Service and Ofqual fields used in the student number calculations

Source	Field	Description
ILR	COMPSTATUS	Degree of completion of the learning activities leading to the learning aim
ILR	LEARNACTENDDATE	Learning actual end date
ILR	LEARNPLANENDDATE	Learning planned end date
ILR	LEARNSTARTDATE	Learning start date
ILR	STULOAD	Learner FTE
ILR	PLANLEARNHOURS	Planned learning hours
ILR	PRIORLEARNFUNDADJ	The proportion of this learning aim still to be delivered
ILR	PROGTYPE	The type of programme which the learner is undertaking
ILR	UKPRN	UK Provider Reference Number
ILR	WITHDRAWREASON	The reason why the learner has withdrawn from the learning aim
LARS	LEARNAIMREF	Learning aim reference
ILR	AIMSEQNUMBER	Learning aim data set sequence
LARS	LEARNAIMREFTITLE	Learning aim title
LARS	LEARNAIMREFTYPE	Learning aim type
LARS	NVQ_LV	Notional NVQ level

Source	Field	Description
LARS	NOTIONALNVQLEVELV2	The detailed learning aim level on the NVQ scale
Ofqual	TOTAL QUALIFICATION TIME	The total time a learner may typically be expected to expend in achieving a qualification
Ofqual	MAXIMUM GUIDED LEARNING HOURS	The maximum number of hours a learner can be expected to be taught or instructed by their tutor or teacher to complete the qualification
Ofqual	TOTAL CREDITS	The total credits required to obtain the qualification

Description of derived fields

15. The derived fields used to generate the student numbers outputs are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Description of derived fields for recreating tables

Derived field name	Description	Paragraph
SNSOURCE	Identifies the source of the record	16
LEARNDELFAM_ADL1	Advanced Learner Loan indicator	18
SNDDBILRFLAG	Identifies providers that return both Student and ILR data	19
SNEXCL1 – SNEXCL256	Student number population exclusions	20 - 28
SNEXCL	Reason(s) for exclusion from student numbers population	29
OFSQAIM ²	Broad category of higher education	XX
SNLEVEL	Identifies record as higher or further education	31
SNLEVELNUM	Level of higher education record	32
SNTITLEHRS	Max learning hours in course title	33
SNTITLECREDITS	Max credits in course title	34
SNPRIORLEARNADJ	Adjustment for prior learning	35
SNQUALHOURS	Total hours course is expected to take	36
SNENDDATE	Last day studied in academic year	37
SNAYDAYSSTUDIED	Number of days studied in academic year	38
SNVHOURSPERDAY	Average study hours per day over course	40
SNHOURSPERAYR	Total hours studied in academic year	42
SNHESTULOAD	Student load for higher education record	43
SNHEENGLEVSTULOAD	Student load per engagement (for DDB data) or level (for ILR data)	44
SNHEENGLEVSTULOADADJ	Capped student load per engagement (for DDB data) or level (for ILR data)	45
SNTOTHESTULOAD	Higher education student load per student	46
SNTOTHEFTE	Higher education FTE per student	47
SNFEPLANLEARNSTULOAD	Further education student load calculated from PLANLEARNHOURS	48
SNNUMFERECORDS	Number of non-excluded further education records per student	49
SNFESTULOAD	Student load for further education record	50
SNTOTFESTULOAD	Further education student load per student	51
SNTOTFEFTE	Further education FTE per student	52

² OFSQAIM is derived on the basis of the detailed_level field using the algorithms documented in 'Technical algorithms for student outcome and experience measures', available on the OfS website at [Documents describing our measures and definitions - Office for Students](#).

Derived field name	Description	Paragraph
SNREL_TEF	Undergraduate higher education provision relevant to TEF	53
SNHEENGLEVSTULOAD_TEF	Student load per engagement (for DDB data) or level (for ILR data) relevant to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)	54
SNHEENGTELEVSTULOADADJ_TEF	Capped student load per engagement (for DDB data) or level (for ILR data) relevant to TEF	55
SNTOTHESTULOAD_TEF	Higher education student load relevant to TEF per student	56
SNTOTHEFTE_TEF	Higher education FTE relevant to TEF per student	57

Derived fields for calculating total higher education FTE

SNSOURCE

16. This field identifies the source of the record.

Value	Definition
DDB	Record taken from the Student record
ILR	Record taken from the ILR

17. Where an algorithm cannot be applied in the same way to each SNSOURCE, this will be indicated in the description of the algorithm.

LEARNDELFAM_ADL1

18. For ILR records only. This field contains the value of LEARNDELFAMCODE where LEARNDELFAMTYPE = ADL.

SNDDBILRFLAG

19. This field identifies providers that returned Student data to the OfS's DDB and ILR data in the academic year 20Y1-Y2.

Value	Definition
1	Provider returned both DDB and ILR data for the academic year 20Y1-Y2
0	Provider did not return both DDB and ILR data for the academic year 20Y1-Y2

SNEXCL1

20. This field identifies records that start after the academic year of interest.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Excluded	(SNSOURCE = DDB and ENGSTARTDATE > 31 July 20Y2) or (SNSOURCE = ILR and LEARNSTARTDATE > 31 July 20Y2)
0	Included	Otherwise

SNEXCL2

21. This field identifies records that finish before the academic year of interest.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Excluded	(SNSOURCE = DDB and ENGENDDATE < 01 August 20Y1 and ENGENDDATE is not BLANK) or (SNSOURCE = ILR and LEARNACTENDDATE < 01 August 20Y1 and LEARNACTENDDATE is not BLANK)
0	Included	Otherwise

SNEXCL4

22. This field identifies records that have been inactive for the reporting year.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Excluded	SNSOURCE = DDB and Z_ACT_CYC = 0
0	Included	Otherwise

SNEXCL8

23. This field identifies incoming exchange students and students who are primarily outside the UK for their engagement.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Excluded	SNSOURCE = DDB and (INCOMINGEXCHANGE ≠ BLANK or ENGPRINONUK = 01)
0	Included	Otherwise

SNEXCL16

24. This field identifies apprenticeship standard, T Level and traineeship 'wrapper' programme aims.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Excluded	SNSOURCE = ILR and LEARNAIMREF = ZPROG001
0	Included	Otherwise

SNEXCL32

25. This field identifies higher apprentices in the ILR that have been returned by providers that also submit DDB data.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Excluded	SNSOURCE = ILR and SNDDBILRFLAG = 1 and PROGTYP = 20, 21, 22, 23, 25
0	Included	Otherwise

SNEXCL64

26. This field identifies a record which has been closed to correct an incorrect LEARNPLANENDDATE.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Excluded	SNSOURCE = ILR and COMPSTATUS = 3 and WITHDRAWREASON = 40 and LEARNACTENDDATE = 01 August 20Y1
0	Included	Otherwise

SNEXCL128

27. This field identifies records which we believe relate to teaching provision rather than registered provision. This will be identified if two records returned by two providers for the same student are found to have the same LEARNAIMREF, the courses start within 31 days of each other and the UKPRN for one record matches the PARTNERUKPRN of the other record. The record with missing PARTNERUKPRN will then be flagged.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Excluded	SNSOURCE = ILR and the student appears to exist in another provider's ILR.
0	Included	Otherwise

SNEXCL256

28. This field identifies students on higher education engagements financed by an Advanced Learner Loan that have been returned by providers that also submit Student (24056) data.

Value	Description	Definition
1	Excluded	SNSOURCE = ILR and SNDDBILRFLAG = 1 and LEARNDELFAM_ADL1 = 1 and NOTIONALNVQLEVELV2 = 4, 5, 6
0	Included	Otherwise

SNEXCL

29. This field indicates whether the record will be included in the calculation of student numbers.

30. This field contains the exclusion reason(s) for the engagement. It is calculated as $(1 \times \text{SNEXCL1}) + (2 \times \text{SNEXCL2}) + \dots + (256 \times \text{SNEXCL256})$.

SNLEVEL

31. This field identifies whether the record is of higher education or further education.

Value	Description	Definition
HE	Record of higher education	SNSOURCE = DDB or (SNSOURCE = ILR and LEARNAIMREF $\neq$ ZPROG001 and NOTIONALNVQLEVELV2 = 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, H)
FE	Record of further education	LEARNAIMREF $\neq$ ZPROG001 and not above
BLANK	Apprenticeship standard, T Level and traineeship 'wrapper' programme aim	LEARNAIMREF = ZPROG001

SNLEVELNUM

32. This field indicates the level of study for higher education records, using the sector recognised standards as set out in condition of registration B5.³

SNSOURCE = DDB

Value	Description	Definition
8	Records at Level 8	Z_LEVEL = D0003, D0004, E0000, E0001, E0002, E0003, E0004, L0000
7	Records at Level 7	Z_LEVEL = L0001, L0002, L0003, M0002, M0003, M0004, M0006, M0007, M0008, M0009, M0010, M0011, M0012, M0013, M0015, M0016, M0017, M0018, M0020, M0021, M0022, M0023, M0024

³ See [Sector-recognised standards - Office for Students](#).

Value	Description	Definition
6	Records at Level 6	Z_LEVEL = H0003, H0004, H0005, H0006, H0007, H0008, H0009, H0010, H0012, H0013, H0014, H0015, H0016, H0018, H0019, H0020, I0001
5	Records at Level 5	Z_LEVEL = I0002, I0004, I0005, I0006, I0007, I0008, I0009, I0010, I0012, I0013, J0000, J0001, J0002, J0003, J0004, J0005, J0006, J0007, J0010, J0011, J0012
4	Records at Level 4	Otherwise

SNSOURCE = ILR

Value	Description	Definition
8	Records at Level 8	SNLEVEL = HE and NOTIONALNVQLEVELV2 = 8
7	Records at Level 7	SNLEVEL = HE and NOTIONALNVQLEVELV2 = 7
6	Records at Level 6	SNLEVEL = HE and NOTIONALNVQLEVELV2 = 6
5	Records at Level 5	SNLEVEL = HE and NOTIONALNVQLEVELV2 = 5
4	Records at Level 4	SNLEVEL = HE and NOTIONALNVQLEVELV2 = 4, H
BLANK	Records not Level 4-8	Otherwise

SNTITLEHRS

33. For ILR records only. This field identifies the maximum number of hours per record as extracted from the course title on the Learning Aim Reference Service (LARS). For example, the value of SNTITLEHRS for the course listed as 'Non regulated SFA formula funded provision, Entry level, Medicine and Dentistry, 389 to 580 hrs, PW B' would be 580.

SNTITLECREDITS

34. For ILR records only. This field identifies the maximum number of credits per record as extracted from the course title on the LARS. For example, the value of SNTITLECREDITS for the course listed as 'Innovation code, Entry level, Medicine and Dentistry, 3-5 credits' would be 5.

SNPRIORLEARNADJ

35. For ILR records only. This field identifies the funding adjustment for prior learning expressed as a decimal value.

Value	Definition
PRIORLEARNFUNDADJ/100	PRIORLEARNFUNDADJ > 0
0	PRIORLEARNFUNDADJ = 0
1	PRIORLEARNFUNDADJ = BLANK

SNQUALHOURS

36. For ILR records only. This field determines the total number of hours the course associated with the record is expected to take.

Value	Description	Definition
TOTAL QUALIFICATION TIME × SNPRIORLEARNADJ	Source of hours is TOTAL QUALIFICATION TIME	STULOAD = BLANK and TOTAL QUALIFICATION TIME ≠ BLANK, 0
MAXIMUM GUIDED LEARNING HOURS × SNPRIORLEARNADJ	Source of hours is MAXIMUM GUIDED LEARNING HOURS	STULOAD = BLANK and MAXIMUM GUIDED LEARNING HOURS ≠ BLANK, 0 and not above
(TOTAL CREDITS × 10) × SNPRIORLEARNADJ	Source of hours is TOTAL CREDITS	STULOAD = BLANK and TOTAL CREDITS ≠ BLANK, 0 and not above
(SNTITLEHRS) × SNPRIORLEARNADJ	Source of hours is SNTITLEHRS	STULOAD = BLANK and SNTITLEHRS ≠ BLANK and not above
(SNTITLECREDITS × 10) × SNPRIORLEARNADJ	Source of hours is SNTITLECREDITS	STULOAD = BLANK and SNTITLECREDITS ≠ BLANK and not above
BLANK	Unknown qualification hours	Otherwise

SNENDDATE

37. For ILR records only. This field determines the end date to be used when calculating the number of days studied (SNAYDAYSTUDIED) in the academic year 20Y1-Y2. Used only where SNQUALHOURS will be used to calculate the FTE of the record.

Value	Description	Definition
LEARNACTENDDATE	Learner completed learning activities in 20Y1-Y2	LEARNACTENDDATE ≠ BLANK and LEARNACTENDDATE ≤ 31 July 20Y2
31 July 20Y2	Learner is still studying at the end of 20Y1-Y2	Otherwise

SNAYDAYSTUDIED

38. For ILR records only. This field determines the number of days studied in the 20Y1-Y2 academic year.

39. Calculated as the numbers of days between SNENDDATE and either 1 August 20Y1 or LEARNSTARTDATE, whichever is later. Used only where SNQUALHOURS will be used to calculate the FTE of the record.

SNVHOURSPERDAY

40. For ILR records only. This field calculates the average number of hours that would be studied each day for the duration of the course.

41. Calculated as SNQUALHOURS divided by the number of days between the LEARNSTARTDATE and LEARNPLANENDDATE. Used only where SNQUALHOURS will be used to calculate the FTE of the record.

SNHOURSPERAYR

42. For ILR records only. This field calculates the total number of hours studied in the academic year for each record. Used only where SNQUALHOURS will be used to calculate the FTE of the record. We cap SNHOURSPERAYR at the value of SNQUALHOURS for the course.

- $SNHOURSPERAYR = \min ((SNVHOURSPERDAY \times SNAYDAYSTUDIED), SNQUALHOURS)$.

SNHESTULOAD

43. This field determines the STULOAD for each higher education record. When using DDB data each record relates to an engagement. When using ILR data, a record refers to a learner-course combination.

Value	Definition
Z_STULOAD_CYC	SNSOURCE = DDB and SNEXCL = 0

Value	Definition
STULOAD	SNSOURCE = ILR and SNEXCL = 0 and SNLEVEL = HE and STULOAD ≠ BLANK
$(\text{SNHOURSPERAYR} \div 540) \times 100$	SNSOURCE = ILR and SNEXCL = 0 and SNLEVEL = HE and STULOAD = BLANK and SNQUALHOURS ≠ BLANK
25	SNSOURCE = ILR and SNEXCL = 0 and SNLEVEL = HE and SNQUALHOURS = BLANK
0	SNEXCL > 0 and SNLEVEL = HE
BLANK	Otherwise

SNHEENGLEVSTULOAD

44. This field determines the total STULOAD for each higher education engagement.⁴

Value	Definition
SNHESTULOAD	SNSOURCE = DDB
Sum of SNHESTULOAD across all records for each unique combination of student (LEARNREFNUMBER) and level (SNLEVELNUM)	SNSOURCE = ILR

SNHEENGLEVSTULOADADJ

45. This field calculates the capped student load for each higher education engagement.⁵

- $\text{SNHEENGLEVSTULOADADJ} = \min(\text{SNHEENGLEVSTULOAD}, 150)$.

SNTOTHESTULOAD

46. This field is the total student load per student including any capping, calculated as the sum of SNHEENGLEVSTULOADADJ per student.

SNTOTHEFTE

47. This field calculates the total higher education FTE per student including any capping, calculated as $\text{SNTOTHESTULOAD} \div 100$.

⁴ The ILR data does not include the concept of an 'engagement'. For the purpose of calculating SNHEENGLEVSTULOAD we treat a level of study in the ILR data as analogous to an engagement.

⁵ The ILR data does not include the concept of an 'engagement'. For the purpose of calculating SNHEENGLEVSTULOADADJ we treat a level of study in the ILR data as analogous to an engagement.

Additional fields required to calculate total further education FTE

SNFEPLANLEARNSTULOAD

48. For ILR records only. This field converts PLANLEARNHOURS to student load for calculation of further education FTE.

- $SNFEPLANLEARNSTULOAD = \max(((PLANLEARNHOURS \div 540) \times 100) - SNTOTHESTULOAD, 0)$.

SNNUMFERECORDS

49. For ILR records only. This field identifies the number of records per student with SNLEVEL = FE and SNEXCL = 0.

SNFESTULOAD

50. For ILR records only. This field determines the student load that falls within the student numbers population for each further education record.

Value	Definition
$SNFEPLANLEARNSTULOAD \div SNNUMFERECORDS$	SNEXCL = 0 and SNLEVEL = FE and PLANLEARNHOURS $\neq$ BLANK
$(SNHOURSPERAY \div 540) \times 100$	SNEXCL = 0 and SNLEVEL = FE and SNQUALHOURS $\neq$ BLANK and not above
10	SNEXCL = 0 and SNLEVEL = FE and not above
0	SNEXCL > 0 and SNLEVEL = FE
BLANK	Otherwise

SNTOTFESTULOAD

51. For ILR records only. This field calculates the sum of SNFESTULOAD across all records for the student. This is capped at a maximum of 150 per student.

SNTOTFEFTE

52. This field determines the total further education FTE.

Value	Definition
$SNTOTFESTULOAD/100$	SNSOURCE = ILR
0	SNSOURCE = DDB

Additional fields required to calculate total undergraduate higher education FTE relevant to TEF

SNREL_TEF

53. Identifies undergraduate provision relevant to TEF.

SNSOURCE = DDB

Value	Description	Definition
1	Provision in-scope for TEF	SNEXCL = 0 and (Z_LEVEL = C0000, C0001, C0002, C0003, C0004, C0005, C0006, C0007, C0008, C0009, H0003, H0004, H0005, H0006, H0007, H0008, H0012, H0015, H0018, H0019, H0020, I0001, I0004, I0008, I0009, I0012, I0013, J0000, J0001, J0002, J0003, J0004, J0005, J0006, J0007, J0010, J0011, J0012, M0002 or (Z_LEVEL = H0016, I0010 and PREREQUISITE ≠ 02))
0	Provision not in-scope for TEF	Otherwise

SNSOURCE = ILR

Value	Description	Definition
1	Provision in-scope for TEF	SNEXCL = 0 and OFSQAIM = FIRST, ENHANCED, MEDVETDENT, FDBC, OTHL6_Q, OTHL6_CC, OTHL6_U, HND, DET, FOUDEG, DIPHE, DTLLS, OTHL5_Q, OTHL5_CC, OTHL5_U, HNC, CERTED, UNICERT, HIGHCERT, CTLLS, PTLLS, CET, OTHL4_Q, OTHL4_CC, OTHL4_U, OTHHE_Q, OTHHE_CC, OTHHE_U
0	Provision not in-scope for TEF	Otherwise

SNHEENGLEVSTULOAD_TEF

54. The total student load relevant to TEF for each engagement.⁶

Value	Definition
SNHESTULOAD	SNSOURCE = DDB and SNREL_TEF = 1
0	SNSOURCE = DDB and SNREL_TEF ≠ 1
Sum of SNHESTULOAD across all provision relevant to TEF records (SNREL_TEF = 1) for each unique combination of student (LEARNREFNUMBER) and level (SNLEVELNUM)	SNSOURCE = ILR

⁶ The ILR data does not include the concept of an 'engagement'. For the purpose of calculating SNHEENGLEVSTULOAD we treat a level of study in the ILR data as analogous to an engagement. This means that for each row of data in the individualised file relating to ILR data, SNHEENGLEVSTULOAD_TEF shows the student load relevant to TEF for that student at that level of study, regardless of whether the given row of data contains student load relevant to TEF

SNHEENGLEVSTULOADADJ_TEF

55. The capped student load relevant to TEF for each engagement.⁷

- $\text{SNHEENGLEVSTULOADADJ_TEF} = \text{Min}(\text{SNHEENGLEVSTULOAD_TEF}, 150)$.

SNTOTHESTULOAD_TEF

56. The total student load relevant to TEF per student, including any capping.

Value	Definition
Sum of SNHEENGLEVSTULOADADJ_TEF per student.	SNSOURCE = DDB
Sum of SNHEENGLEVSTULOADADJ_TEF across each unique combination of student and level.	SNSOURCE = ILR

SNTOTHEFTE_TEF

57. The total FTE relevant to TEF per student including any capping, calculated as
 $\text{SNTOTHESTULOAD_TEF} \div 100$.

⁷ The ILR data does not include the concept of an 'engagement'. For the purpose of calculating SNHEENGLEVSTULOADADJ_TEF we treat a level of study in the ILR data as analogous to an engagement.



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