
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE

Kevin Brennan MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

30 June 2015

Dear Mr Brennan

SCHOOLS WORKFORCE STATISTICS

Thank you for your letter dated 27 May regarding statements made by the Secretary of State for Education in an interview on 18 May, which you suggested might have referred to unpublished official statistics.

The Statistics Authority has made enquiries with officials at the Department for Education (DfE), who have assured us that the Secretary of State was not referring to any unpublished official statistics. DfE informed us that the School Workforce survey statistics, which will be published on 2 July, have not yet been fully prepared. DfE confirmed that the Secretary of State was instead referring to internal forecasts based on initial teacher training data from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

The Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, defines official statistics as produced by Crown bodies, or non-Crown bodies specified in secondary legislation. Currently, UCAS is outside the scope of the legislation and therefore the statistics it produces are not covered by either the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, or the statutory arrangements for pre-release access to official statistics. There was therefore no breach of the Code or of the pre-release access rules in this case. We will discuss with DfE, UCAS and other departments whether UCAS should be included in the Official Statistics Order in future, so that its statistics would be classified as official statistics. In the meantime, the Authority encourages voluntary adherence to the Code of Practice as far as possible, including in cases where the numerical information is provided by an organisation not currently designated as a producer of official statistics.

While in this case the UCAS figures are not official statistics, I recognise that public statements about numbers that are not already in the public domain may give rise to concerns that the pre-release access rules have not been followed. The Statistics Authority's long-held view is that the current arrangements for pre-release access, whereby Government ministers and officials have privileged access to official statistics before they are made available to Parliament or the public, are deeply unsatisfactory. It remains my view, and the view of the Board of the Statistics Authority, that official statistics should be available at the same time for everybody and that pre-release access should be ended.

I am copying this letter as yours.

Yours sincerely



Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE