
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Jonathan Waller
Higher Education Statistics Agency
(by email)

18 December 2018

Dear Jonathan

HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT STATISTICS – UK SUMMARY

As you are aware, we recently completed a compliance check of your Higher Education (HE) Student Statistics against the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). I am pleased to confirm that these statistics can continue to be designated as National Statistics.

HE Student Statistics¹ were designated as National Statistics following [an assessment in 2010](#). Since then, the statistics publication has been redesigned. In light of this redesign and developments in the HE system over the past 8 years, we decided to review the public value, trustworthiness, and quality of these statistics.

When looking at the value of these statistics, we identified many strengths. We welcome the move to presenting the statistics in html format, which has modernised the way users engage with the statistics. Users can now personalise tables and graphs to focus on the data of interest to them in an intuitive way. In addition, we welcome the way you have responded to user feedback about the redesigned output, for example by improving the accessibility of the underlying data.

We were also pleased to hear that you plan to make further improvements to the statistics, which will be enabled through the [Data Futures project](#). This project is working to increase the frequency of data provided to HESA and in time this should lead to more-timely statistics about students in HE Institutions.

We discussed a [Good Practice Team](#) Review of your statistics, which identified possible improvements in the language and format of your publication to make it more accessible to less expert users. We welcome your intention to review your publication in light of these comments.

We also reviewed your pre-release access (PRA) arrangements. We discussed the current risk to the trustworthiness of these statistics with significant numbers of people in 10 different organisations having access to these statistics under the PRA Order. We also discussed the PRA arrangements that you have with the Devolved Administrations. We welcome your plans to reduce the number of people to whom PRA is granted, and to apply the [UK-wide PRA Order](#), in particular limiting access to 24 hours prior to publication, consistently across all organisations.

Whilst reviewing the quality of these statistics, we were reassured by your collaborative approach to quality assurance, and by your published [Student Record Quality Report](#). We noted that this was difficult to navigate to from the publication and you have agreed to look into this.

Thank you for engaging effectively with us during this short review. If you wish to discuss any part of this letter please let me know.

¹ Previously titled 'Higher Education Student Enrolments and Qualifications Obtained at Higher Education Institutions in the UK'

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Pont', with a horizontal line underneath.

Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead