

COHORT C MIDPOINT REVIEW

C17071 2017/18

JULY 2019

HESA



Graduate Outcomes

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SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in the Graduate Outcomes survey and welcome to our cohort C midpoint review. We are now in week 7 of cohort C.

SECTION 2 - OUR MIDPOINT COHORT C FINDINGS

As at 17 July, the overall cohort C response rate is **35.8%** which is broken down into target groups in the table below:

Main target group	Response rate target	Current response rate
UK domiciled, full-time	60%	38.0%
UK domiciled, part-time	60%	37.6%
Research funded	65%	46.9%
EU domiciled	45%	35.5%
Non-EU domiciled	25%	27.5%

We are at the halfway point in data collection for cohort C and we have already achieved our target for overseas graduates. We are also over halfway towards the Home domiciled target. While we are optimistic that we will get much closer to the target by the end of fieldwork period, we are conscious that the sample becomes increasingly tired towards the later stages and the graduates become harder to reach. To counter this effect, we will be targeting those graduates who are least likely to respond, based on their characteristics. This is explained further in [section 3](#).

REMINDER - NEW SECTOR LEVEL SURVEY RESPONSE RATES REPORT

On 1 July, we launched a new report available within the [provider portal](#), that will allow providers to view the current sector level survey response rates for a cohort. This means the above information is available on demand in the portal to users that hold the Graduate Outcomes Survey Results role.

This report will display sector response rates at cohort level, which includes the data of all providers in the population for Graduate Outcomes. As per all data in the provider portal, it is a continual feed so it will be updated regularly, including data supplied after a cohort is closed.

We hope this new report shares useful data to allow providers to reflect on distribution of response rates, by different groups, in the wider sector.

SECTION 3 - OUR MIDPOINT UPDATES

The [end of cohort B review](#) outlined some of the changes we've implemented into cohort C. This section provides an update and some additional issues we're working to address within this cohort.

EMAIL BLACKLISTING

As noted in previous reviews, during cohort B we experienced some issues with the delivery of emails to graduates due to key providers (e.g. Gmail, Office 365) blacklisting our IP address. We have been working closely with Confront to identify both immediate and long-term solutions. In the short term, we've made some changes to the setup of our IP address and staggered the deployment of email invitations over a longer period in the first week of cohort C. We're delighted to report that this effort has been working well and we are seeing an improvement in the health of our IP address as a result.

In the longer term, HESA determined that the best course of action is to engage with a third-party company who provides expertise in managing the sending of emails. This issue must be fully resolved in readiness for cohort D where we will be dispatching approximately 5 million emails over the fieldwork period.

Two potential systems were identified, and following an internal review, the decision has been taken to engage with MailJet who have extensive experience of email delivery management and will work with HESA to ensure the engagement strategy aligns with best practice for email delivery.

It is highly likely that the existing engagement strategy (that details timeframes for delivery of emails and SMS to graduates) will need to be significantly updated to align with the best practice advice for ensuring email delivery from MailJet. Ideally, we need to move to an almost continual delivery of emails which keeps the IP addresses 'warm' with internet service providers which reduces the likelihood of them being blacklisted.

We are currently working through legal terms and anticipate implementing MailJet by mid-July. It will take 2-3 weeks to 'warm-up' the IP addresses and integrate MailJet into Conformat, we anticipate testing the system during cohort C with full go live at the start of cohort D.

UPDATE ON CALL QUEUE PRIORITISATION

Next month, we will introduce a new functionality on the call management system that aims to reduce non-response bias by prioritising graduates who are less likely to respond to the survey. Having developed a good understanding of non-respondent characteristics from the surveys conducted so far, we will undertake a form of targeted calling.

We will evaluate the effectiveness of this approach at the end of cohort C, prior to roll-out in cohort D. It is expected to reduce the gap between engaged graduates and those that are hard to reach; thereby improving the precision of our survey estimates.

SECTION 4 - NEXT STEPS

NEW CONTACT DETAILS E-LEARNING MODULE

We are pleased to share a new e-learning module which provides an introduction to the Graduate Outcome Contact Details record and includes an overview of the data collection process. The course is ideal for colleagues who are new to the Graduate Outcomes Contact Details record and will cover key data items, validation, submission and the onward use of data. This will also be of particular use to providers who only have graduates in cohort D and therefore are supplying data to HESA for the first time, for use in September 2019. [Visit the e-learning module.](#)

REMINDER - COHORT D 2017/18

At the end of May, we opened the [provider portal](#) for submission of contact details for cohort D. The deadline for approval is 16 August 2019 and full details of the deadlines can be found in the 2017/18 [data collection schedule](#). The provider portal user guide is available to support you with the submission of contact details. There are also a number of other important guidance materials in the [coding manual](#) to help you with your submission.

This deadline also applies if you are an English FEC and you have made changes to your graduates' contact details in the provider portal. If you've made no changes, no further action is required.

RESPONSE RATE STRATEGY

The response rates achieved in cohort B and at the midpoint in cohort C, demonstrate multiple factors at play including the changes to the survey and engagement strategy and call priority working well and telephone interviewers becoming more comfortable with the survey. In cohort B, we hit two targets and we're closing the gaps on others. However, we still have some issues to resolve and we are maintaining our focus on continuous improvement.

Above and beyond this effort, we still have a way to go to meet the overall response rate target, the Home target and we are concerned about the current online response rates. Whilst increasing overall survey completion is key, we must focus particularly on tactics to increase online completions. This will ensure the cost of running the survey is kept at a minimum.

To focus our efforts, we have established a new workstream to focus on innovative ways to improve online response rates. We have established nearly 70 different initiatives which have been prioritised giving us our areas of focus for the coming months. As and when these are delivered, we'll update providers in our regular communications.

Update on incentives

We have taken feedback from the sector and assessed the internal requirements to implement **incentives** versus the potential impact on response rates. Due to this, and the other initiatives we have deemed higher priority, work to roll out incentives to increase online responses has been deprioritised. We will review this decision in the next collection.

Despite this, we strongly recommend that providers do not create their own incentives. Depending on the type of population breakdowns a provider may have, incentives could bias the results in favour of that population group. For a centrally run survey like Graduate Outcomes, incentives must be rolled out across the entire population so that all respondents are treated equally.

Suggested graduate contact plan

As we continue to work together to build brand awareness for Graduate Outcomes, it's vital that providers carry out the suggested communications activity in the period between the end of the course and surveying, for each collection. On 17 July, we provided updated guidance on this activity in the form of a [graduate contact plan](#) which outlines the three recommended communications and when to send them, by cohort. We look forward to your feedback on this improved guidance.

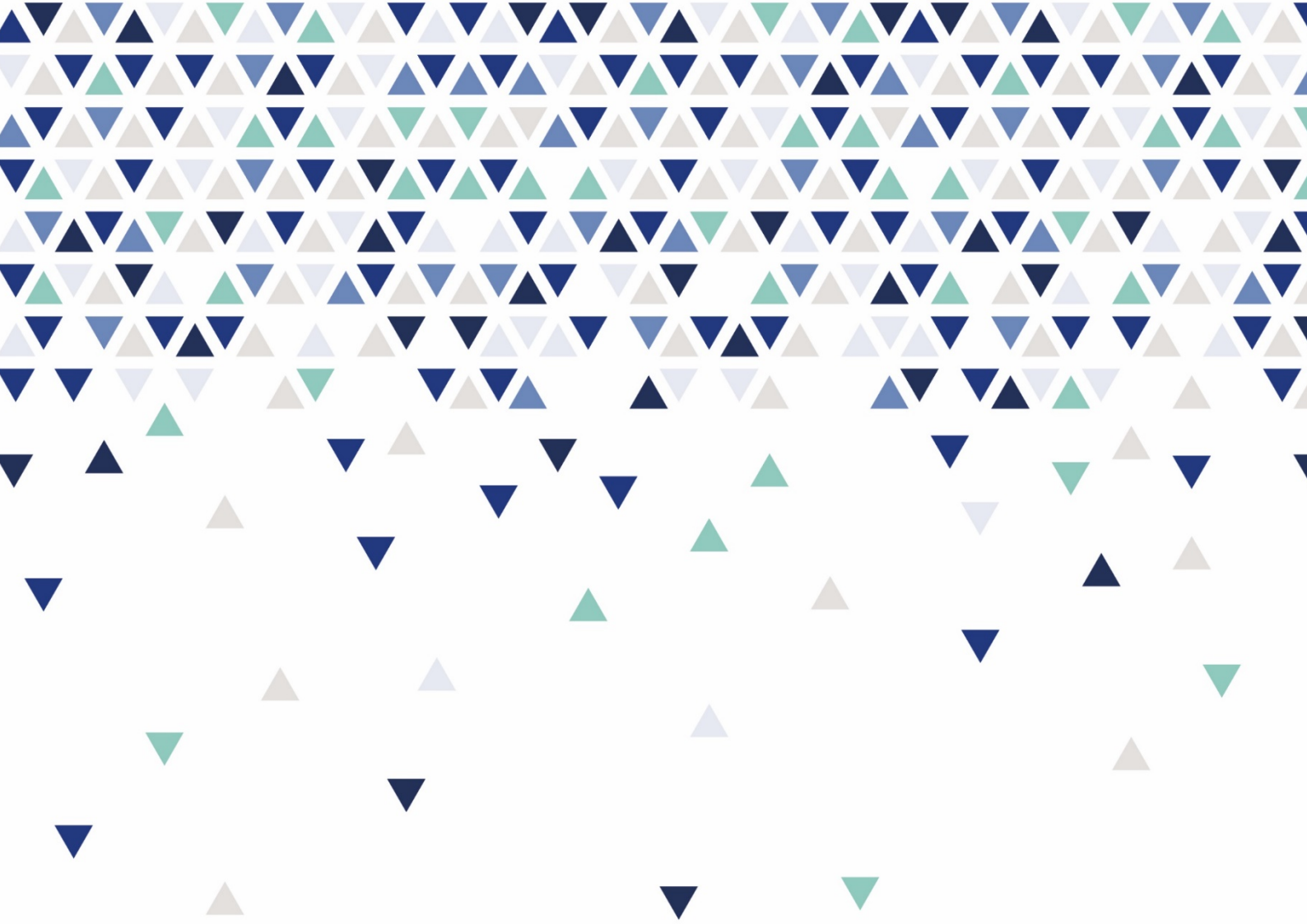
C18071 GRADUATE OUTCOMES CONTACT DETAIL RECORD 2018/19

On 12 July, we issued the first release of documentation for the Graduate Outcomes Contact Details record 2018/19. This includes the schema, field specifications, guidance and the data collection schedule. Visit the [C18071 coding manual](#) and the [revision history](#).

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT GRADUATE OUTCOMES

Website: www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/outcomes
Graduate website: www.graduateoutcomes.ac.uk
Twitter: https://twitter.com/grad_outcomes
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/graduate-outcomes>

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