

Cohort A midpoint review

We are at the start of the seventh week of the new Graduate Outcomes survey and we've just passed our cohort A midpoint. We are immensely proud of what's been achieved so far; we have a fantastic survey, an engaging online platform and some really positive engagement from providers and graduates.

However, we have also experienced a number of teething issues that have had an impact on the current response rate. Whilst we expect to catch this up by the end of the cohort, we know that providers are keen to add some context to the response rates they're seeing in the provider portal. Sharing sector wide response rates at this early point in cohort A is not our preferred choice, but we understand that providers are keen to share internal KPIs which rely on a wider view. We're also sharing some highlights of the programme so far plus some challenges we've experienced along the way.

Headlines

We currently have just over 30,000 full responses which puts us just over 45% of the way to our overall target response rate required for cohort A (*cohort A has a 43% overall target response rate due to the high proportion of non-UK students).

Assessment of response rates against targets is a continuous process and not limited to the first cohort. Student distribution across the four cohorts is dissimilar and incomparable. While the overarching aim is to achieve the target response rates for the entire collection year, we see every cohort as an interim milestone.

There are a number of options that we are considering how to accelerate responses. The overall response rate alone will not be the sole measure of our success at the end of the collection year, as it will be viewed alongside the statistical quality of our engagement strategy. Otherwise we risk producing estimates that are of poor quality which in turn will affect their usability.

30,085
survey completions

Overall cohort response rate
19.5%

45%
to target

Figures as at 16 January 2019

Programme highlights



We went live as planned on Monday 3 December 2018 with over 152,000 graduates receiving an email, SMS or phone call during the first few weeks



The online survey is stable with no interruptions to the survey system



Anecdotal feedback shows that the contact centre is having engaging conversations with graduates and securing a good level of survey completion



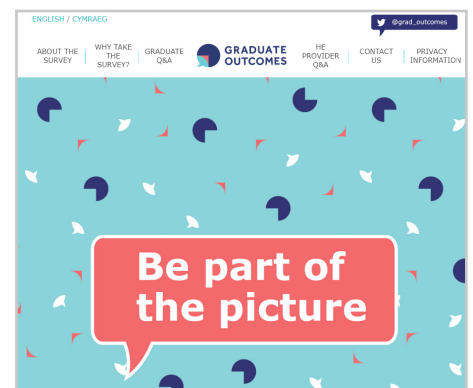
Opt-out rates are at expected levels and we have received no formal complaints to date



Although data quality from providers has been good, there have been some issues. It's vital that data is quality checked prior to sending to HESA



Providers are using the provided communications material and engaging well with the national communications activity provided by HESA



26,900 Graduate Outcomes website page views

Our continued focus in cohort A

Reminder communications

Over the Christmas break, we had expected to be sending out text message (SMS) reminders to all graduates who have not started or started but yet to complete. However, a problem with the system means that these SMS reminders were not sent until earlier this week (w/c 14 January). A related error is also currently preventing us from sending email reminders (although we expect this to be corrected before the next reminder is due). We are pleased to report that we are already seeing an upturn in online response rates following this release. You can view our outline [engagement plan](#) on the HESA website.

Call centre

The call provider also experienced an issue with their dialling software between Christmas and the New Year meaning that response rates from this method were also lower than expected. The provider has kept us informed throughout and put in place remedial action to ensure that this does not happen again. They have also increased the team size to catch up on response numbers.

Reporting

Delays in validating the results data feed to ensure that we are providing accurate information means that the new reporting tab in the provider portal is not expected to be ready until early February. The development of the functionality is progressing well and will be an area that we are constantly looking to expand where appropriate.

This has also meant that we are behind schedule with SIC and SOC coding. We expect to start supplying our SIC and SOC provider with the required data from next week (w/c 21 January). The reporting to providers will follow on in early February, with all coding to be on schedule for completion by the end of the cohort.

Another knock-on effect of the data feed issue means that, in some cases, we are reporting that contact details have failed when we still have credible contact methods. We are working to correct this but please be assured that where we have valid contact details, they are being used for surveying.



At this stage, we believe that all of the issues experienced with the texts, emails and the phone system have been **identified** and **solutions** either implemented or planned.

We are therefore optimistic about reaching the cohort A target. However, as a result of the problems with the online survey system, we do expect to have to capture more of the responses by phone than originally anticipated.