Higher Education-Business and Community Interaction Survey

Dear Colleague

As you are aware the HE-BCI Survey is the main vehicle for measuring the volume and direction of interactions between UK HEIs and business and the wider community. HEFCE has collected data via the Survey on behalf of the UK Stakeholders' Group for each academic year from 1999/2000. These data are invaluable as management information, in policy development and, more latterly, as metrics driving the allocation of public funds to further develop HEIs' infrastructures in this area.

While the Survey has been successful in these aims, the nature of its collection during these developing years has led to necessary changes and improvements. It has always been understood that, in the long-term, this requirement would be best met through the embedded processes of HESA; hence HESA has been a member of the HE-BCI Stakeholders' Group from the beginning. Given the now stable nature of the return a decision has been taken to transfer collection to HESA, thereby aligning it with other UK-wide collections.

HEFCE, acting on behalf of the UK funding bodies, has now instructed HESA, as its agent, to administer this data collection from 2008/09. The HE-BCI Survey will therefore be collected in parallel with the HESA Finance Statistics Return (FSR). By incorporating the HE-BCI Survey into the HESA finance record it is hoped burden will be reduced through use of a common process. It is further hoped that the integration of the HE-BCI Survey with the FSR will allow for cross-checks to be made between the two during data collection, thus improving data quality.

The FSR with HE-BCI Survey data collection in 2008/09 will consist of a web form and two spreadsheets: HE-BCI data (Part A) is a qualitative questionnaire that will be collected via a web form, HE-BCI data (Part B) is a set of quantitative data which will be collected in a spreadsheet, and the FSR return will be submitted, as currently, via a spreadsheet. Institutions will submit the return, with all three elements completed, to HESA by 23 December each year. For the first implementation HESA guidance and definitions have been developed and extended to cover HE-BCI; this is an ongoing process and it is expected that supporting documentation will evolve over time. For reference, the operational documentation in support of the 2008/09 collection can be found at www.hesa.ac.uk/c08031.

You might be interested to know that a report based on the most recently available HE-BCI data, collected for academic year 2007/08, has recently been published on HEFCE's website at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs. It is envisaged that in future HEFCE will continue to produce an annual HE-BCI report, including analysis and policy commentary, working closely with HESA and the UK Stakeholders' Group, with data also being available from HESA.

The purpose of this communication however is to ensure that the sector is fully informed that following the transfer of collection of the HE-BCI Survey from HEFCE to HESA, institutions will make returns to HESA for the 2008/09 reporting period onwards.

Yours sincerely

Director of Operations

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