Enabling Benchmarking Excellence

A JISC Funded Business Intelligence Project

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Executive Summary

This report examines the case study findings of the Enabling Benchmarking Excellence Project. These findings consider the business use of HESA information from both a user and provider perspective.

The project found that HESA is widely considered to be a useful source of information and good to work with. HESA's role as a point of commonality between Scottish and English Universities is seen as increasingly important. This is particularly due to the scale of recent changes to funding and student fees, which make the differences between the two regions more distinct.

HEIDI is generally viewed as a useful tool, but can be complex and time consuming to use. HEIDI's accessibility is becoming increasingly important as some institutions are moving towards a devolved structure. This devolved structure encourages academic departments to conduct their own benchmarking and performance monitoring activities. However, this can be inhibited by the nature of HEIDI, which is not considered to be user friendly for those who do not use it on a regular basis.

While the roll out of this study sector wide is viewed to be of huge benefit to current benchmarking practices, it has been questioned whether this needs to be a separate collection. Institutions anticipate that completion will involve a revision of the student record, and this could be completed by HESA, or alternatively, through a minor modification to the module record.

Key Thematic Findings

All Universities interviewed as part of this study had a structure of faculty or schools, followed by department, with some slight variations of this form. Each unit was reasonably discrete, although there was some duplication of cost centres across these. There were no large scale interdisciplinary faculties or colleges.

While prior to the study it was hypothesised that a specialist institution may have a different structure, and potential difficulty completing the template, this was not found to be the case from the partner institutions. Both SOAS and University College Falmouth participated in this pilot study, and both were found to have a structure of Faculties or Schools, followed by Departments. However, this does not eliminate the potential issue of this for when the collection is released to the sector. Thus, it is important that HESA provide suitable guidance, descriptions and definitions for the information they require. More detail on these is provided in the following section, 'Knowledge Resource'.

Template Completion

Template completion has been viewed as fairly straightforward overall. There appears to be a mix of approaches to the completion. These need to be examined as consistency is vital to ensure the business use of this collection. For instance, HESA needs to stipulate whether teaching or research information is provided, as well as an appropriate definition for the tiers.

Joint Programmes

Activity on joint programmes was generally divided 50/50 for 'and' programmes and according to the relevant proportion for a 'with' programme; for example, 30/70 or 60/40 etc. However, this will only create a difference if comparing at programme level. If the template is completed to a modular level then joint programmes will be taken account of in terms of the student's modular choice.

HESA Returns

There is a mix of approaches to the completion of HESA returns currently. Most institutions require the specialist department to complete the relevant return, such as finance for the finance return. The returns then may be checked by the central planning department, or, alternatively one of the specialist departments will take the lead and cross-check all the returns.

More institutions are moving towards a devolved structure, where academic departments are directly responsible for the relevant information that is included in the HESA return. Additionally, these departments are also increasingly undertaking their own benchmarking activities and benchmarking on the basis of specific subject groupings and department levels. This devolved nature appears to be increasing the need for more accessible and clear information to be provided to the sector.

HEIDI

HEIDI is considered to be an excellent tool and contains a large amount of data. However, usability can be an issue, particularly for infrequent users of the programme. For example, it is not always intuitive as to how the data you need is accessed. HEIDI terminology could be made more accessible for staff in academic departments who may not work with HESA directly – this is particularly important given the increasingly devolved nature of benchmarking activities.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking activities are often carried out by a central services department. However, there appear to be increasing moves to devolve benchmarking processes. Liverpool and Birmingham Universities are both examples where changes have been made to provide academic departments with the support needed to both provide accurate and timely data to central services and to conduct their own benchmarking activities. This study is viewed as being particularly useful as it will enhance the ability of academic departments to compare specifically against like institutions and departments. HEIDI is often a primary source of benchmarking information, but institutions also often use league tables, the national student survey and Unistats for benchmarking activities.

New ACCs

The new ACCs are viewed favourably for their addition to the humanities and social sciences. There is a view that more can be done, particularly to improve the ability to benchmark against professional services, such as information, computing and library offerings.

Dissemination

HEIDI was considered to be a good tool for dissemination, but not the only tool. This is because of the potential interest from academic departments who do not use HEIDI on a regular basis. Thus, other forms of dissemination should be examined to ensure high visibility of the findings.

In addition to this was feedback about how the information could be presented in HEIDI. It has been found that most institutions would like to see the data presented in two ways. The information should be available in its raw form, to allow institutions to use as they may wish. However, it is also viewed as very useful for the data to be embedded in HEIDI, for instance, as a hyperlink in the name of the institution. This way, whatever query you run in HEIDI, you would be able to click the hyperlink, and have that institution's mapping to the new Academic Cost Centres appear in a new window.

Furthermore, it may be beneficial for the information on departmental structures to be available to bodies other than higher education institutions and HE-sector bodies that operate on a not-for-profit basis. It seems likely that the compilers of league tables would be interested in this data in its own right, and may well see some potential for combining it with new data that will shortly become available through Key Information Sets. The development of league table methodologies has not been without controversy, and would seem prudent for HESA to proceed with caution and in dialogue with institutions.

Possible areas for future development and consideration

It has been suggested by some of our partners that further cost centre work could be done to expand the areas of professional services. In particular, more information about computing provision and library services would be beneficial.

Knowledge Resource

This section is a compilation of information that the sector is likely to find useful when providing the information required for this collection. Also included are some areas of further thought and future development that HESA may find useful. This 'Knowledge Resource' has been organised as a FAQ, based on questions that were raised by partners during the course of the study as well as anticipated questions that may occur once the collection is released to the sector, and information that we think HESA should specify to the sector, when rolling the collection out.

What is this collection for?

This collection aims to gather a set of data which details institutional organisational structures. HEIs organise themselves according to a variety of functional models. This can be an issue when attempting a detailed analysis of data. In particular, sector wide benchmarking is often not possible below the level of the HEI as a whole, due to the lack of information about these organisational structures.

This collection aims to overcome this barrier to benchmarking by gathering departmental information for all UK HEIs. This structural breakdown of academic units will then be mapped to HESA's new Academic Cost Centres. The collection will record the breakdown of each academic department into these new Cost Centres. In addition to this, the collection will also consider to what extent those proportions account for the total of each Academic Cost Centre. This will allow us to build up a detailed picture of the structure of each organisation.

This information will be provided by HESA in HEIDI, and will allow more meaningful analysis of HESA data and inform current benchmarking activities. This will allow HEIs to make more informed decisions.

What should my first step be, to complete the template?

As this collection is looking at HESA's new Academic Cost Centres, the first step every institution should take is to update their cost centres to reflect these new ones. For some areas, such as the sciences, there are very little, if any, changes to be made. For other areas, such as Humanities and Social Sciences, the cost centres have been disaggregated and institutions will need to update these subject areas accordingly.

What does department mean? / My institution doesn't have departments, what level should I complete to?

From our findings, we would really encourage HESA to provide a description of the information that they require to be completed, i.e. a description of what is meant by a department. From our study we would suggest the following could be incorporated into the guidance to support this.

The key aspect of this completion is to provide information, based on a structure of academic discipline. Not all institutions have the same titles for their structures, but they often provide similar functions. For instance, higher education institutions usually have a large grouping of similar subject areas under the title of faculty or college; for instance, the Faculty of Social Science or the College of

Humanities. Many higher education institutions will have between 3 and 6 of these more generic distinctions. While this higher level grouping is important, this collection is interested in a more specific structure, which is tailored to further define subject definitions and programme groupings. For this collection we are looking for the point where an institution may classify an area as 'French' or 'Middle East Studies', whether that's a Department, Subject, Team, or some other, similar classification.

In addition to this, our own experiences have led us to conclude that departments can be characterised in the following ways:

- A department is responsible for organising and delivering academic activity in a discrete subject, discipline or field of knowledge.

- A department will have a formal position within the institution's structure – it is likely to be separately identified on the institution's organisational chart, it is likely to have its own management structure and be led by a 'head' or 'director' etc, and it is likely to have some degree of budget responsibility.

- In larger organisations, a department can often form part of a larger structure (such as a faculty or school) which has been formed to cohere and link related subjects or disciplines.

How should I complete the two columns before 'Department'?

You can choose to complete these two columns with your larger institution structures. So for example, you may have Faculties as your largest structure, followed by Schools, and then the Departments. Alternatively, you may have Colleges and Institutes followed by Departments. You may not have structures for both columns, and instead your institution may simply have a Faculty followed by the Department. It is up to you to complete these two columns in a way that best fits your organisational structure.

Although these previous columns are optional, feedback from our pilot study has indicated a demand from the sector for this information to be completed and a willingness to provide it. Thus, we expect the majority of HEIs to opt in to this part of the completion. Those that do not opt in to this part of the collection may choose to do so, once they see what the sector does.

Given this, it appears important for HESA to provide a lot of positive information about the optional completion of these columns, to encourage as many institutions as possible to complete the optional tiers in the first couple of years of the collection.

What information should be used to complete the template?

Whether institutions should use student, staff or financial data should be specified. From our collection, institutions have adopted a student centric approach. What approach should be adopted needs to be clearly stipulated when the collection is rolled out to the sector as this will ensure a consistent approach to the completion, and that the information can be used for benchmarking purposes. Furthermore, some institutions have included research students, such as PhD students, and others have not, indicating that it may be a further distinction that should be clarified.

What do the two percentages mean?

This is an illustrative example of an extract from a potential template completion:

University	Tier 1	Tier 2	Dept	Proportion	ACC	% of ACC
University A	Faculty of Arts and Humanities	School of Modern Languages & Cultures	Russian	60%	Modern Languages	15%
University A	Faculty of Arts and Humanities	School of Modern Languages & Cultures	Russian	40%	Politics and International studies	5%

The proportion column indicates what percentage of activity in the department is part of the cost centre. So in this case, activity for the Department of Russian at University A is 60% Modern Languages, and 40% in the Politics and International Studies cost centre. Each department may go into one or many cost centres. However, the total of the proportions for the department should always add up to 100%.

The final column '% of ACC' or 'Percentage of Academic Cost Centre' refers to how much that department's activity contributes to the whole of that cost centre. This is another illustrative example of part of a completion:

University	Tier 1	Tier 2	Dept	Proportion	ACC	% of ACC
University A	Faculty of Arts and Humanities	School of Modern Languages & Cultures	Russian	60%	Modern Languages	15%
University A	Faculty of Arts and Humanities	School of Modern Languages & Cultures	Arabic	50%	Modern Languages	25%
University A	Faculty of Arts and Humanities	School of Modern Languages & Cultures	French	100%	Modern Languages	25%
University A	Faculty of Arts and Humanities	School of Modern Languages & Cultures	Italian	100%	Modern Languages	35%

In this example we can see that the Modern Languages cost centre, at University A, is made up of activity from the Russian Department (15%), Arabic Department (25%), French Department (25%), and Italian Department (35%).

It is possible for a cost centre to have 100% of activity associated with it from only one department, while that department may be related to more than one cost centre. See the following example:

University	Tier 1	Tier 2	Dept	Proportion	ACC	% of ACC
University A	Faculty of Arts	School of Film and Media Studies	Media	80%	Media Studies	100%
University A	Faculty of Arts	School of Film and Media Studies	Media	20%	Art and Design	40%

In this example, 80% of activity from the Department of Media is attributed to the Media Studies cost centre and 20% to the Art and Design cost centre. At University A, 100% of the Media Studies cost centre activity comes from the Department of Media, whilst only 40% of the Art and Design cost centre comes from the Department of Media.

Whether a cost centre is made up of activity from one or many departments, the total activity should add up to 100%.

How should I include Undergraduate and Postgraduate information?

Feedback from our partners indicates that a division between whether undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) information should be included. One way to do this would be for the column after department to be labelled as level and completed with either UG or PG. This will allow a greater breakdown of information, and mean that benchmarking activities can be specifically informed by UG or PG information as required.

What are the benefits of the provision?

Some institutions have indicated that at this stage they are unsure of what they will use the information for and what format they would like the information in. It is likely this will change once the first full collection is available for the sector. A suggestion for HESA is that a follow-up questionnaire could be disseminated to the sector, to gather further feedback on the use of the information and how institutions would like to see it presented. Some positive examples of how institutions are applying and using the information could be provided to the sector in order to further illustrate the benefits offered.

What will this information be used for?

It may be useful for HESA to collaborate with league table compilers in order to understand how this information may inform the methodology they adopt to compile this information. As this is departmental information, it is likely that some league table compilers may use the information in this provision and that it will affect the outcome of the rankings. It is particularly important for HEIs to be made aware of this, given that the provision of this information will be voluntary for institutions outside of England. These institutions should thus know that by choosing to provide the information the league table compilers will have a more complete understanding of their provision, and that this may affect them – either positively or negatively.

Do I need to provide this information every year?

If you are a university that is required to provide this data (it may not be mandatory to supply the data in different parts of the UK) - yes, as it will be necessary to reflect yearly changes in the volume of activity in departments (and therefore their mapping into ACCs), and any changes in organisational structures.   It is not anticipated that there will be any major changes year on year, once you have completed the first collection, any subsequent provision should be significantly reduced.

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Case Study Report

Introduction

The Enabling Benchmarking Excellence project aims to overcome the principal barrier to benchmarking activities in higher education; namely the lack of granular information, below the level of the institution as a whole. The Enabling Benchmarking Excellence project has set out to gather a set of metadata, detailing the structures of institutions in order to provide information about organisational structures, academic units and how these map onto HESA's new academic cost centres (ACC).

In addition to this aim, the project has also set out to gather information which examines the business use of HESA data, from both the providers and users of HESA information. Principally, the use of this information in HEIDI has been examined. In addition to which, suggestions have been garnered regarding the presentation of findings from this study, in HEIDI and elsewhere. This report consists of the key thematic findings from the interviews conducted with key members of staff.

Methodology

The staff interviewed had responsibility for completing the HESA returns, or/and for using HESA information. Additionally, the staff interviewed played a role in benchmarking activities and were often key users of HEIDI. Face-to-face interviews were conducted and ranged between 45 to 60 minutes in length. Conversations were recorded and then transcribed for analysis.

Please note it is important to maintain the confidentiality of participants, so only anonymous, paraphrased comments have been provided as illustrative examples.

Anglia Ruskin University

Key Thematic Findings

Anglia Ruskin University is structured by Faculties, which are divided into departments. There are four faculties.

Joint Programmes

HESA returns are completed on a modular basis for a joint programme. SITS allows students to be split into different cost centres if necessary. The CSD will set the course but the overriding factor is the modules that the student takes.

HESA Returns

Anglia Ruskin review cost centres annually. This helps to ensure that departments and subjects map to the correct cost centres. This is the most time consuming part of the HESA returns, and likely to be the same for the completion of this template.

The strategy department are responsible for the Student Return, finance complete the Finance Return and the HR department complete the Staff Return. The strategy department will then cross check, by reviewing the cost centres and ensuring the ratios are as expected.

The Student Return is perhaps the more dominant, but all are cross checked by the strategic planning department and Finance also cross checks the Student Return. The Staff Return is completed by HR, where staff are assigned to a cost centre. HESA information is sent to strategic planning for data quality checks.

HEIDI

HEIDI is used a lot, and is expected to be good for dissemination of these results. HEIDI provides a good level of the granularity of the data. There is a delay in the data provided but people are used to it, it is expected. Anglia Ruskin use HESA sets for benchmarking. HEIDI is useful for access to public information.

Benchmarking

The VC uses a group of peer universities for benchmarking. The main source of benchmarking information is from HESA but benchmarking is also used against KPIs and the NSS.

The NSS results and departments data quality and checking is important for internal practices. Data quality reports are due from January so they are not an issue by the time of the HESA return. Data quality reports are a new initiative.

University of Birmingham

Key Thematic Findings

Birmingham expects to fit within the 3 tier hierarchy of Colleges, which resemble Faculties, Schools and departments – although not all schools have departments. For example the Law school does not. Birmingham expects to complete the template to programme level.

Template Completion

The participants interviewed at Birmingham were only involved in the student completion however; they indicated that they expect the template to be completed in a similar way whether it was done on the basis of student, staff or financial information. In particular the Staff return would be similar as staff and students are connected – there are no students without staff connected to them, so they would expect that to be similar.

Completing the template by June should be manageable, although the information may not be as accurate as it is for the HESA returns as there will be less time to work on it.

In order to complete the template, Birmingham:

> 'reported the data at programme level, based on the cost centres held on our student records system against each programme. We simply reported all the cost centres allocated to each programme, and against each showed the department(s) to which the programme is assigned. Where a programme is allocated to multiple cost centres and/or departments, we did not attempt to map the cost centres to the departments.'

When rolled out to the sector, Birmingham expect to complete the optional tiers, as they have already done that for this collection, and so the information is available. They expect the information gained on the sector will justify the time they will spend on providing Birmingham's information for the collection.

Joint Programmes

The split for joint programmes depends on the programme the student is enrolled on. The programme will have one JACS code and the modules will also have a cost centre. It is the modules that are chosen which will determine the split to cost centres. Staff are assigned to a cost centre and the modules that they teach follow that cost centre. The Student Return may be somewhat dominant, certainly for the planning team more time is spent on the Student Return. However, that's partly due to the nature of their work rather than an indication of importance.

HESA Returns

The Student Return is generated through Banner. There are a series of jobs that can be run through Banner that will create all or part of the return. The staff member responsible will begin this after the Christmas holidays at the beginning of the New Year, when they will run a complete report. Until submission, the file will be analysed for errors and inconsistencies and when found they will check with the other departments. While Planning complete the return, the information itself is provided by the other departments and thus they will need to liaise to check the accuracy of the information. In addition, the content of the fields is constantly being analysed.

Planning also complete the HR return – although HR are involved in the completion. The Finance Return is completed by the finance department, and some things are cross referenced. Finance tends to have information sent to them for checking, rather than finance sending information out to be checked.

HEIDI

HEIDI lacks ease of comparison over a time period. Staff tend to bypass HEIDI and simply export the data and use Excel in order to compare and analyse the data. HEIDI makes it very difficult to compare data year on year as there may be a slight change in a variable name and that then means that the data won't populate for comparison. For example, JACS codes only go back until 2008 and so comparison further back is difficult. This means that they may make the decision to just buy the information as a data set from HESA rather than try to set up the comparison themselves. It is also difficult to cross reference variables in HEIDI. While you can do it, you can only do it for 2 or 3 variables at most. For instance, Birmingham often wants to look at how many students are doing French, German and Spanish at PGT level over the past few years. While HEIDI can do it, it's quite time consuming and thus Birmingham often purchase the information.

HEIDI is certainly one medium for dissemination but it shouldn't be the only place for dissemination, especially if the information is to appeal to those from departments outside the central planning department. Birmingham pick up most new changes from when HEFCE send around circulars which inform about changes, and perhaps this could also be an option for dissemination.

The information from this study could be presented as an interactive tool within HEIDI. For example, if you looked at the SSR for each institution you could click on an institution and a cost centre and see the proportion breakdown. If you were to view the information in table format, it would be useful if you could look up what different programmes come under the same cost centre. This would allow you to compare the programme offering and the size of staff etc. It would be most useful if you could simply click through to this information, as an interactive link, instead of having to look up the information separately.

Benchmarking

Principal benchmarking activities are carried out using HEIDI, UCAS and by purchasing data sets directly from HESA. The planning department have members of staff who sit in an academic department for 50% and 50% in the central planning department. They would take charge of departmental benchmarking but it would be done through their work with planning. Most academic departments are not trained with HEIDI and simply come to planning for their needs with that work. Some faculties like to see the information reduced to one graph on one piece of paper, while others prefer to have detailed data to break it down completely and then build it up again for themselves. Some managers simply don't have the time and want something that will very quickly present the information that they need to know.

Birmingham expects to use this collection to 'check the appropriateness of any cost centre analysis work which we undertook on sector data' and to '"sanity check" comparisons of sector data at a cost centre level.' Additionally, Birmingham 'considers the primary use of this data to be in the analysis of student numbers and would not anticipate using it to any significant degree in other areas'.

New ACCs

The new cost centres seem good – namely the humanities and social sciences are a big improvement. Education is quite a nebulous area for Birmingham and thus this cost centre perhaps doesn't capture the full detail necessary. Birmingham feel that further benchmarking for professional services information such as data on library and computer information services would be useful. In addition, international benchmarking is an area that Birmingham has to purchase information for. HEIDI doesn't allow much in terms of international students, the data is simply EU or rest of the world, more granular information has to be purchased from HESA.

Durham University

Key Thematic Findings

Durham University has a structure of faculties to schools and departments. Durham has 4 faculties, including the Business School.

Template Completion

The template was viewed as straightforward to complete. Initially, a database query was written, which extracted programme information with the field required for the JISC project. This was a simple query, which used the tables Durham already had and did not take too much manipulation.

From this query, Durham then imported into Excel, into a new worksheet. This then allowed Durham to do further calculations on the proportions needed for the project. Once Durham had the data in Excel, this is where Durham updated the cost centres, and split the generic cost centres into the new ones, and Durham added a new table with the overall percentage.

This spreadsheet was then used to create a pivot table with the overall totals.

Durham then created a formula, which would calculate the new percentage of the overall total. This formula referenced the pivot table total, and also used the programme proportion and calculated the percentage of the total cost centre. The information used to complete the template was all student information.

This took 2 hours to complete, however this was partly taken up by updating the new cost centres. As this will be an annual collection, Durham expect that the time taken to complete the information will reduce with experience.

Durham completed the template to programme level, but it would be possible to complete to modular level or department level. If the template was to be completed by the HR department based on staff information or by Finance based on finance information it would be more time consuming. The issue with Durham's current completion is that it is dependent on student information and thus takes account of teaching information and not research. This is explored in more detail in the section on HESA returns.

Joint Programmes

Durham has completed the template to programme level. Joint programmes are divided on a 50/50 split and allocated accordingly.

HESA Returns

Durham's HESA returns are lead by the Student Return; this is primarily as Banner has such high quality and detailed information. Each department is divided into cost centres and the percentage of student activity in each is allocated. These proportions are then sent to finance who use them to compile the Finance Return and look at funding information and finance will also send these proportions to HR for their completion of the Staff return. These proportions create an issue as they are not calculated on the basis of all activity, research and teaching, but solely on teaching. Thus, funding is proportionally divided into cost centres based on the percentages from student planning, which are calculated on the basis of teaching, even though the grants being examined are research grants.

In a similar way the completion of this template would be driven by the Student Return as the proportion per cost centre is attributed by the student numbers. This means that research activity is still not taken into account appropriately. Additional effects of this are that it could affect the institution's position in the league tables.

The strategic planning department undertake most work related to requests for HESA information, queries and benchmarking activities.

HEIDI
HEIDI is useful but viewed as complex and not as user friendly as it could be. When SPCU want to run a complex request in HEIDI, a report will be run and then extracted to Excel for analysis and comparison with other data. This is because this sort of work is easier in excel than in HEIDI.

A lot of the people who use HEIDI don't complete the HESA returns. These people are less experienced and could perhaps benefit from more of a guide to information. The idea of hints and tips to support usage as you go through would be beneficial, as well as a more general guide with regards to its use. A data definitions guide could be useful for the purposes of other departments who are using HEIDI.

If it was possible to make the information anonymous, it would be useful to know what sort of information is being used by other departments. This would help with internal training as finding the information you need is not always intuitive and can often be done in more than one way.

Benchmarking
Some academic departments will do their own benchmarking, looking at their comparison institutions. Other departments will approach SPCU to provide information.

Durham would find it most beneficial to have the information in both raw form, as well as embedded into HEIDI. While Durham completed the template using student information, they feel that it would be most useful to also have staff and financial information to enhance benchmarking in these areas as well.

Durham also believes that it will be most useful to also have information that distinguishes whether the information is for UG, PGT, or PGR. This will allow a greater understanding of the information, to ensure that you use it appropriately for benchmarking. Durham expects to complete the optional tiers when the collection is rolled out to the sector.

The information is expected to provide a more contextual understanding of institution structures, which will inform our current benchmarking activities and enhance decision making.

Edinburgh Napier University

Key Thematic Findings

Napier is structured by faculties and schools followed by subject groups and then modules. There are between 3 and 5 subject groups per school. There is a total of between 30 and 35 subject groups; this structure changes occasionally. The different sites of Napier are distinct faculties. Students are able to take different modules in different subject groups whilst on similar sounding programmes.

Template Completion

The Schools at Napier are structured into subject groups, which have subject group leaders which form the reporting structure within the school. Programmes are an external facing thing; programmes are what students apply for and what they graduate with, but from an academic point of view modules are organised in such a way that they end up being part of that programme. Students are enrolling on a programme into which the programme is a reality, but modules make sense as the base academic unit that is built up from. Thus it makes the most logical sense to Napier that they would complete the template based on modules.

Napier question the value of a comparison at programme level as programmes are made up of different modules and those modules cover different cost centres. While first year programmes can be quite static, in following years there will be electives and repeating students that will increase the variety of modules that are undertaken with regards to a particular programme.

Edinburgh Napier have described their approach to the template completion as:

> 'We are able to breakdown the HESA student FTE, matching the population of the Cost Centre Analysis prepared for the HESA return, to the level of the module/student instance calculating a weighted FTE per instance. From the module information we are able to identify the JACS Subject Code and therefore the HESA Cost Centre that we have attached to each module/student instance.

> Also from our module information we are able to organise our modules by Subject Group of which we typically have four or five per School. The Faculty and School structure used within the template is based on the Subject Group.

> Given the way we organise our curriculum there is no direct link between modules and programmes and it did not make sense for us to break the student FTE down to this level.

> For the benchmarking exercise we have excluded the Research Postgraduate students from the population as they are not attached to modules and therefore we have no link to Subject Groups.

> We mapped the student FTE to the new Academic Cost Centres using the existing HESA cost centres and the JACS subject codes attached to modules where the new cost centres have expanded out the subject areas.

The 'Proportion' field within the template represents the percentage of student FTE attached to each of our Subject Groups and how much of that FTE has been allocated to each of the new academic cost centres. This means that the total percentage for each of the Subject Groups is 100%.

The '% ACC' field within the template represents the percentage of student FTE attached to each of the new academic cost centres and how much of that FTE is split over our Subject Groups. This means that the total percentage for each of the new academic cost centres also equals 100%'.

Joint Programmes

Joint programmes are divided 50/50 for 'and' programmes and 30/70 or 40/60 for 'with' programmes. However, this is bypassed in favour of modules in the HESA returns. Modules only have 1 JACS code so this simpler to return. A modular completion means that how joint programmes are returned won't affect the completion. Some of Napier's courses are completed with partner institutions for both programmes and modules. Students will be on Napier's books for the whole time, and modules are on Napier's system but they are not physically at Napier until the final part of the programme. There is a franchise for students to FE colleges such as Stevenson College – it is franchise as they are always considered to be part of Napier. Thus, all these students would be included in the completion of this template.

HESA Returns

In terms of the Staff Return, staff are attached to a subject group which are attached to HESA cost centres. For the financial return, strategic planning give finance a breakdown of faculty, school, cost centre activity and modular activity. Distribution of activity to cost centre would be made by enrolled student numbers (FTEs) and based on historical data. The registry team is responsible for the Student Return, which is completed on the basis of weighted FTE, the % of student load.

The Staff Return is the most dominant and drives the Student Return as modules are divided into cost centres based on the cost centre that the module leader belongs to. The Staff Return will then drive the Student Return as students are allocated to a lead cost centre. The finance return is then driven by the FTE, thus student driven, which was staff driven. Once completed, the returns are sent back to strategic planning who ensure they are consistent. The strategic planning department is most involved in the Staff Return, and they are not involved in the check document for the financial return. Strategic planning do checks such as on staff-student ratios. Sometimes changes need to be made after one of the returns has been submitted so there is a bit of give and take and reverse engineering to the returns.

HEIDI

Napier feels that HEIDI assumes a low level knowledge which then restricts their ability to get more information out of it. The team find they want to use it more than they currently can, thus usability of HEIDI is an issue. Napier suggests it could be useful for there to be hints and tips as you use the site. This could point out other information you may be able to get out of the system. For example, when you run one report, a suggestion of other similar information on HEIDI that is available, and based on your recent report, could be useful. In addition, an API for HEIDI would be useful to use with Napier's MI system.

HEIDI has improved but is still frustrating as it's quite clunky to use. It is difficult to look at a few years of data at the same time and the system should probably be easier for this sort of work. Napier are often frustrated by the fact that all the fields are predetermined, as this means no analysis can be done on things that HESA haven't predefined. If there was a data queue you could do your own analysis splitting one variable by another, but you can't do that without creating hundreds of columns to try to identify things.

Napier agree that dissemination of study results via HEIDI seems reasonable and the only real option.

Benchmarking

For benchmarking Napier primarily uses league tables and other HESA data; primarily the Student Return. Occasionally the team will be contacted with a query from an academic department about the Staff Return, students, or research and other information for benchmarking and so they will provide the information for that, but other departments also do their own benchmarking. HEIDI is used quite a lot for this.

Currently there is no recognition of linking teaching on modules, it can be done on an internal level but at an external level it's too broad and too high level – thus it loses its usefulness. Unistats has been used for external benchmarking as it is sometimes easier to find what you are looking for – all that is needed is one excel document and the website. Napier uses this for non-continuation data, as this was not available through the HEIDI to allow them to compare Edinburgh Napier with (for example) Teesside. Performance indicators are not available through HEIDI below institution level, thus, subject level continuation information is not available on HEIDI.

Edinburgh Napier would like to see this information presented both in its raw form, as well as mapped into existing HEIDI data. Edinburgh Napier expect this information to be useful for:

> 'Given the current context I think that all these dimensions would be useful to benchmark. The primary use is likely to be to compare teaching provision; the use of cost centres or JACS as the 'common currency' has limitations and the benchmarking data (as per this project) may potentially assist with more accurate comparison of respective portfolios.

> Understanding how institutions are coding their provision is important in terms of funding in Scotland as the module/subject level information is used to help create the TRAC T subject facts which are then used to inform the SFC Price Groups against which our Main Teaching Grant will be validated for the next few years.'

And that it will inform current benchmarking practices as:

> 'As argued above, it may help with comparing academic portfolios. It may also help to provide a more detailed understanding of how competitors organise their teaching provision; combined with data on funding for teaching it may lead to new insights into the University's relative resource efficiency in delivering particular subjects.'

Feedback on this study

In terms of HESA's plans to roll this study out to the sector, Edinburgh Napier expect that they will be likely to complete the optional tiers for the template and state:

'Completing tier 1 (Faculty), tier 2 (School) and tier 3 (Subject Group) should present no problems in the future however we believe it would be almost impossible for us to break this information down further to tier 4 (Programme) given that it is based on module level data and the way in which we have organised our curriculum and systems.'

Edinburgh Napier also expect the time taken to complete the template to reduce now they have done so once. They state:

'In terms of time to complete the return, now that we have done it once and understand what is needed, I would estimate that it would take at most a day. This is dependent on us having prepared the file that contains the module/student instance data which can take 2 or 3 days to pull together however we use this file for other purposes and so it should be available. For someone doing this exercise for the first time I would say it would take a little longer.'

Edinburgh Napier also discussed the role of HESA in Scottish institutions and has stated that HESA are fairly involved with Scottish institutions but there are some shortcomings in the provision of data. For instance, Scottish qualifications go under the classification of 'other'. Most students at Napier have Scottish qualifications and fall into this category. This is not very useful and affects other issues, for instance, league tables are affected by entry tariff points and certain entry qualifications and Napier question how qualification title affects that. If league tables are just measured on people who come in with 'A' levels then Napier doesn't have many people who do that.

It is important that HESA stay as a point of commonality between the different institutions in the UK. While funding has always been different, now, with the fee changes, there are increasing differences between the universities of England and Scotland and this seems likely to continue. Key Information Sets (KIS), which give the students the ability to compare the subject offering across universities, are also important. Scottish institutions currently do not have to contribute to this collection. Napier believe that Scottish universities are increasingly trying to identify who their peer institutions are in England – while they can do this to some extent through HESA data sets, it is difficult to via KIS. Currently, there is no option for Scottish institutions to opt in for KIS although this may be changing.

In terms of HESA's performance indicators the participation indicator doesn't do anything for Scottish institutions as the measure doesn't work in Scotland. Participation rates put Napier on top, but this is widely considered to be wrong. The Scottish Government and the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC) for Scotland are interested in Napier's deprivation index but while it's conceptually related to the English one it is not comparable due to different needs. And yet, funding is based on this and so it is very important. Non-continuation data is also important as due to the importance of retention but the data has a lot of lag and so it is difficult to get a feel for the current population.

New ACCs and JACS
The New ACCs may make Napier wish to recode their cost centre requirements.

There is an issue with TRAC, with regard to the lack of agreed mapping between the cost centres and JACS. The strategic planning department is responsible for the subject coding for both programmes and modules. Programmes are coded in line with how they want the funding and modules coded in line with the internal structures and staffing structures to assist with the HESA returns.

Napier have a good relationship with HESA. They visit regularly and can call them when necessary. The new ACCs are good, however there is still more work to do as there are some areas that still need opening up. For example 40% of Napier's entire offering falls into 2 cost centres, about 20% in Nursing and 20% in code 27 Business and Management studies. In addition, the entire Business School (which is at the same level as the two other faculties at Napier) falls under the one cost centre (Business and Management studies).

Napier asks whether there is any move for an agreed mapping of JACS codes to cost centres. Napier have new price groups based on modular information that is based on the TRAC returns and if people are mapping their modular activity to different cost centres then it has a huge impact as to actual costs of subject areas and price groups. Napier speculates that the hole is fairly big using TRAC, however, Napier does not stand out if comparing themselves to the sector on price groups. The HESA data is used for HEFCE but for the FSC it is not directly used for teaching funding; instead it is the specific returns that Napier provides to the FSC which use something called funding subject groups. There are only 12 funding subject groups and Napier return the number of FTE they have in each one –based on the JACS subject code that's attached. So there is a disconnect between the old JACS code and at the moment they are unsure how HESA will get them to return the data that will allow them to use new price groups to calculate the funding Napier should get.

University College Falmouth

Key Thematic Findings

Prior to the information being received from Falmouth, it was hypothesised that being a specialist arts college, they may not fit the structure that is suggested by the template we sent Falmouth. However, on receiving Falmouth's completed information, it was found to fit this quite well. Falmouth has a structure of Schools, followed by departments. For this completion, Falmouth also went to a more detailed subject area structure. This level of information will be lost in the completion that HESA will roll out to the sector as department level is the only required field.

Template Completion

Falmouth completed the template by:

> 'Following the example Durham had provided, we extracted all our educational provision by School/Faculty, then by Department, then by the HESA JACS2 codes allocated to the named award. At present, Falmouth's provision is based on core modules with little modular selection outside of the main subject area e.g. if you are studying Fine Art, all your modules are related to Fine Art and nothing else, whereas our Media courses such as Film and Journalism may share the odd module but it tends to be 'owned' by the main award in terms of cost centre and both come under Media in the long run.'

Falmouth have also indicated that on the roll out of the collection to the sector:

> 'We would be unlikely to be in a position to provide extra tiers beyond the compulsory ones in the first instance.'

Benchmarking

Falmouth has completed the template on the basis of teaching information and has indicated that this is the information they would find most useful for benchmarking purposes. However, they are unsure at present what format they would like to receive the data in and how they would use it. This is likely to change once the information is available for the sector and institutions are able to get a more informed picture of the information that will come out of this study. Furthermore, Falmouth has also indicated that they are unsure of the value of the information versus the time required at this point. Once the first set of information is published and has become a part of their benchmarking toolkit, they will be in a better position to provide this.

University of Greenwich

Key thematic findings

The University of Greenwich has 3 schools, each on a separate campus. One of these schools is joined with the University of Kent. All schools are divided into departments which have a clear division of cost centres and JACS codes. The schools are quite large, but the departments are smaller.

Greenwich do not cost to programme level, only to department level as this is very accurate and they would lose the accuracy if they went further.

Template Completion
There is a yearly collection of information which would feed into this completion. Schools will be reviewed every 5 years and at this time departments could change which may affect the time taken to complete the template. A new VC could cause a restructure which would increase the work load to complete for the relevant year. In addition, the amount of work to complete the template could change at the whim of institutional change or student choice.

Completion is not expected to be too onerous as it wasn't when done for the funding council.

Joint Programmes
Greenwich divide joint programmes in half and students are allocated pro-rata. Costs are determined on the basis of the students. 'With' programmes are carefully allocated. Administration costs may not be as accurate as they are done on a 50/50 split, even though one department may take on all the administration costs for a particular student.

One of Greenwich's Schools is joined with Kent and in this instance students are split 50/50 based on random allocation (i.e. the first student to Greenwich, the second to Kent etc.). Academic staff are assigned to Kent and administration staff to Greenwich and then this is divided 50/50 for HESA returns. Programmes are also assigned to cost centres and can all be triangulated.

Who provides HESA Information
Greenwich has cognate departments and all members of staff are allocated to a cost centre. Modules are placed in the cost centre of the staff member. It is the allocation of staff which drives how the returns are completed. There is not much cross-institutional teaching. Staff time is considered to be the major component driving the return. The Finance Return is completed on the basis of teaching. An adjustment is made to the administration of a student doing a lot of modules outside of their area so that the administration takes this into account. Otherwise, activity will be associated with a teacher. Courses that are quite distinct will be singled out for different cost centres. This is shown through the JACS code where a distinction appears that won't appear through the departmental costs. The set up means that it can be proportional through division to administration and teaching of students.

There is a split between departments that is built into the reporting systems and schools must deal with this when adopting courses with multiple cost centres.

The Staff Return is completed on the basis of the modules that staff teach. Greenwich doesn't allocate staff to multiple cost centres.

HEIDI

The planning team have a high level of expertise with HEIDI although other departments have been trained to use it as well and have an understanding of it. Once completed, the HESA core return remains in strategic planning, only extracts will be sent out as part of business intelligence reports to the wider institution. The report will be embedded so it appears in Greenwich's own systems. The HESA system will be recorded with business objects and operational reports throughout the year and strategic reports less often. They await a business intelligence system – then the information will be more widely available but will still be checked by the strategy department.

University of Liverpool

Key Thematic Findings

Liverpool has recently undergone a major university restructure; this has meant it has halved its faculties from 6 to 3. Also of significance is that one of these faculties, health and life sciences has undergone a fundamental internal restructure – separated by institutes for learning and teaching and institutes for research.

From a planning perspective there are 4 planning units, but only 3 academic departments.

For each faculty there is an executive pro-Vice chancellor as well as faculty managers, which is a professional services member of staff. Thus, each faculty has an academic structure as well as a professional services structure. There is a head of school and a head of school manager who supports them. The aim is to work in collaboration, rather than having everything centrally driven. This member of staff (the school manager) will understand the faculty business and what's going on in the business which makes getting information easier as well as the communication of change such as the New ACCs and this new collection.

Template Completion

Liverpool completed the template by: '

> 'This was done by student activity (FTE) at module level. Each module has a department and a cost centre (or is split between several). Every registration on each module can be converted to an FTE through the credit points, which are then aggregated across the institution. So a cost centre which receives 40 FTE from Dept A and 60 FTE from Dept B will be split 40%:60% between the 2 departments. This also works the other way round, splitting departments by cost centres. In the case of non-modular activity, the mapping was carried out at programme level or, in the case of PGR students, by supervisor splits.'

In terms of HESA's planned roll out of optional tiers 1 and 2, and required completion of tier 3 'department' Liverpool think:

> The University of Liverpool will definitely complete the optional tiers, and we would like to see a further split between UG, PGT and PGR as these have their own distinct implications.

Further feedback on the completion was:

> 'The compilation of the table is not too onerous because most of the underlying data is required for internal activity mapping in any case. Therefore, even moderate usefulness would justify the process. Reviewing the submissions made by other institutions, we think that it would be very useful to the point of being indispensable to have a Tier 4 split between UG, PGT and PGR.'

Liverpool has recently undergone a major university restructure; this has meant it has halved its faculties from 6 to 3. If it wasn't for the restructure this completion would be a simpler task. Liverpool University has made a lot of change around areas of responsibility. They used to be very centrally focused; they have now diversified and devolved responsibility out. This devolved nature means that other areas are more involved in central planning and strategy activity. This has

increased the need for the data warehouse project that the university is also running. However, this devolved nature means that the central planning department can't simply complete the ACC mappings but must engage with the faculties and schools much more. Once these new systems are set up, the completion should be quicker and more accurate, it is only the first collection under the new structure that will be most affected.

The restructure has also meant that there has been a re-education of the staff to use the information and understand the level of granularity needed. The restructure has also increased the understanding of staff allocation, in terms of who is allocated where. If the MI project was already in place, and the data warehouse was complete then completion of this study's template would be far easier. However, as it's not set up, the data has to be extracted from different systems.

It is possible that system changes could cause an issue with completion for a particular year. Liverpool is currently adopting a new HR system which needs to be set up and structured in such a way that will allow HESA data to be captured. It is important that integrating a new system, won't result in an increased workload in a different area. Delays in completion could also be caused from key staff leaving if the team were dependent on the expertise of a key member and have become single person dependent. This was previously a potential issue at Liverpool, but the change in structure has lead to the development of two key people who are experts in each return as well as computing staff to provide technical support.

HESA Returns
The expert area completes the return. HR complete the Staff Return, planning complete the Student Return, and Finance complete the Finance Return. The returns are then sent to strategic planning for a cross check to ensure consistency, prior to them being sent to HESA. Liverpool has introduced cross checking procedures to ensure that the returns are linked.

HEIDI
HEIDI is very comprehensive, but lacks the ability to measure professional services and their contribution: for example library and IT services etc. It would be good if there were some more generic measures that would help this. In addition to this, Liverpool would appreciate HEIDI having more international data and international measures. HEIDI does not always display data well and invariably, Liverpool exports data from HEIDI and uses Excel to clean the data. It would be nice to be able to do that within HEIDI. In a similar way, it is not easy to merge two data sets and so Liverpool staff will export them to Excel to merge and complete pivot tables.

HEIDI has lots of data, and if you use it a lot then it's not a problem, but if you are new to the system, or only use it occasionally then there is a lot there to remember. It's not always intuitive to know how to access the data and to use it effectively, so in some ways, HEIDI is not very user friendly. HEIDI terminology could also be improved as it is difficult for staff who do not work with HESA returns to understand the terminology and relate to what it's referring to. This is a barrier that Liverpool has faced particularly in relation to its restructure as its aim is to devolve responsibility. This is a trend that is likely to continue and thus the importance of the information being accessible to members of academic departments is even more critical.

Although HEIDI could be good for dissemination, Liverpool also suggested JISC as a possible means. Liverpool has found the JISC toolkits to be very useful, and to contain a lot of information. However,

the danger could be that the information gets lost in the list of everything else. The information could also be disseminated on the general HESA website as that would be helpful for people who are not HEIDI users.

Benchmarking

The restructure at Liverpool has meant that departments are now encouraged to do their own benchmarking, for example, for the chemistry department to seek to compare itself against other chemistry departments, rather than the entire science faculty. All departments have access to HEIDI and are receiving training in how to use HEIDI. League table information is also used for benchmarking.

In terms of the collection, Liverpool would like to see a collection of metadata, as well as the information mapped into the data.

Liverpool expect that:

'the data will allow us to understand the teaching structure of various institutions more clearly. However, other than this we do not have a specific project in mind.'

'We expect that the information will be useful to inform such benchmarking, although the exact extent will depend on the details of the exercise and on the range of institutions against which such benchmarking is carried out. For example, it will be more useful in benchmarking against a smaller sample of institutions and those which are similar to Liverpool such as the Russell Group.'

New ACCs

The cost centres are good, but fall short in terms of the professional services. Liverpool requires their professional services area to do a plan and monitor performance in each area such as library and computing services. However, it is notoriously difficult to put the different areas together to measure professional services as a whole.

School of Oriental and African Studies

Key thematic findings
SOAS is structured by faculties, of which there are 3, and then departments. Some departments are then further divided into institutes or centres.

Template Completion
SOAS view this completion as fairly straight forward and expect the template to be completed within a day. SOAS expect a collection such as this to be largely similar over time – this is because it is similar to a previous collection of data by HEFCE which did not change significantly over time. While an organisational restructure, perhaps prompted by a new VC, could cause differences at faculty or department level, this is unlikely to change too much at programme level. Thus, students will still effectively be studying the same thing, under a different administration outfit. SOAS predict that if two institutions were to merge, the larger would be likely to dominate, and everything would need to be mapped through.

Strategic planning at SOAS questions whether this needs to be a separate collection. The information that is being collected could be gained through minor modification to the module record or an additional module record. SOAS expect that to provide the data they will extract from the student record, this is potentially something that HESA could do.

SOAS describe their methodology as follows:

1. We took a download of all module level data for each programme which includes the cost centre information (2011/12 data)
2. This was pivoted to show proportion of CC for each department & then adjusted to remove outliers
3. The data was then analysed by CC (% of column) to allocate the proportion of each Department to the CC
4. At UG level where two-subject degrees existed then the modules related to each department were re-coded manually so the CC could be split by department in a more meaningful way
5. In the case of PGT provision relatively easy as department-programme link mostly 1 to 1

The 2-way methodology for the UG process was the most onerous part of the data collection exercise & quite time consuming.

If HESA require the template to only be completed to department level, SOAS expect they will complete the previous 2 optional tiers. However, if on seeing the results from the sector they found that other institutions did not complete these, they may rethink their approach.

SOAS also believe that the division of information by UG and PG is valuable, and state:

'Yes absolutely, the PGT data was much easier for us to produce, because studies become more specialised at that level. Combining the UG and PGT data would render the information useless for most benchmarking purposes.'

Joint Programmes

SOAS programmes are nearly all joint programmes. There is a high degree of flexibility and nearly everything can go with everything else. Their statistics show that there is roughly 1 programme per 8 students enrolled.

For joint degrees, students will be assigned a home faculty. Students will be separated by faculty for admission statistics and then broken down to department, programme and module for a HESA return, this will then have to be built back up to gain a more realistic understanding of student allocation. SOAS courses are too flexible for the process to work any other way.

There is some occasion of students taking modules and courses from the University of London colleges. SOAS will only count those modules/courses for which they are the lead. If a course is led by another college then it is not included in SOAS's statistics, even if the student is enrolled as a SOAS student.

HESA Returns

HESA returns are largely completed by the specialist department; however the process begins with the strategic planning department who decide the cost centre division. For the Staff Return, HR allocates staff to a cost centre and this will be cross checked. Finance uses the old HEFCE guidance to complete the return. It is rare that staff in one department teach in another at SOAS. Each of the HESA returns is fairly separate. Any new programmes will be assigned a cost centre by strategic planning for the other areas to follow. Strategic planning will then check the returns once the departments have completed them, to ensure that they are consistent. Each return can have a knock on effect to others and so they try to communicate, however, one does not drive the others or dominate.

HESA returns can be onerous but have improved a lot over the past few years. The amount of information being returned has improved and the introduction of the XML return has helped this. There is a consistency in checks and there is a lot more information this year than last. HESA reconciliation is on file and data quality checking has improved.

SOAS have found that there can be a duplication of work between HESA and HEFCE. For instance, HEFCE ask for data and make requests for information that HESA is already collecting. HEFCE will often chase returns that HESA have requested and request information and chase for deadlines too quickly. This could be avoided if HEFCE chased HESA for the information rather than the individual institution.

HEIDI

SOAS find that HEIDI offers good access and it is fairly easy to use. HEIDI provides a good set of time series data for a lot of information. HEIDI is the only tool that enables sector wide benchmarking. This new data could be used to help drive key performance indicators for benchmarking. However there is an issue with the time lag of information which affects the ability to conduct meaningful benchmarking. In addition to this, SOAS find themselves often having to buy additional datasets from HESA in order to conduct effective benchmarking.

The metadata collected on this study is likely to be used by SOAS to compare against other institutions. SOAS already has a process for internal benchmarking. The data is likely to be used to

answer questions about whether the provision offered in an area is more or less expensive than another university.

HEIDI may not be the most appropriate means for dissemination depending on when the data becomes available, due to the previously mentioned lag issues.

Benchmarking

HR, Finance, registry and the central planning department use the information that HESA send back from their returns.

In terms of using the data from this study, SOAS feel that 'The raw form is quite useful, but mapping would also be helpful when trying to benchmark'. Additionally, while 'the data relates to teaching provision… it may be useful if it related to staff as well, simply to benchmark properly against other institutions' structures.'

New ACCs

SOAS expect that this study will show up further necessary work on the detail of the cost centres. SOAS has a lot of issues with the languages element of the cost centres such as where linguistics should fall. This is because SOAS has Arabic linguistics studies and not solely English linguistics. Languages granularity could be improved as it is often simply done by geography but with rather wide sweeping distinctions. There is also a lack of consideration of cultural studies. While there have been new ref-units supplied for the New ACCs there has not been updated information about the relevant JACS codes and this is necessary.

University of Sunderland

Key Thematic Findings
Sunderland is structured into faculties, followed by departments and then teams. Sunderland has 4 faculties and a Centre for Lifelong learning.

Template Completion
Sunderland don't expect the completion to take too long, the completion timeline will depend on when the data becomes available after the HESA returns are completed.

It is possible that some things may add to the time to complete the template in any given year. However, this shouldn't be too significant. For example, restructures are common at Universities and adjustments will always need to be made to take these into account but it shouldn't make too much of a fundamental difference.

Sunderland has described their completion methodology as:

> 'The internal structure of the University (faculty & Department & Team) was used to identify the first three tiers. To allocate the proportions to HESA cost centre, student numbers from the latest HESA student return were used.'

Joint Programmes
Joint programmes are divided based on major/minor or dual division – so 30/70, 50/50 or 70/30. 'We sell programmes, but we teach modules' – is the expression coined by the planning team. This means that while the programmes are what the students sign up to complete, it is the modules that form the crux of activity at the University.

HESA Returns
Sunderland have established a good relationship with HESA, with good two-way communication. In addition, Sunderland has set up a regional support group for financial queries related to HESA returns. This group meets to discuss how to code and present information. The meetings take place once a year and are completely confidential.

While HESA are able to provide good quality information the issue their work often comes down to is interpretation. An example of the importance of interpretation is that the HESA financial return looks at central computing spend. For some institutions the main ITS department are responsible for computing purchases across the university, for others it is the responsibility of the individual faculty or department. This difference will result in a different allocation of spending and when benchmarking you must be careful to ensure that you are comparing like with like. Hence, there is an issue of comparability across institutions and thereby with external benchmarking.

HEIDI
Sunderland views HEIDI as a good vehicle for dissemination. The delay in the availability of information is accepted and has been reducing. For instance, the data on performance indicators was made available very quickly in 2011. HEIDI is available in other departments, who are trained to use it, however, planning suspect that HEIDI is not used as much as it should be in these departments. HEIDI is used a lot by the facilities department.

Benchmarking

Sunderland's central Planning Department provides some central benchmarking and MI to other departments. This is primarily in the form of a summary paper and analysis that is formed from the league tables and disseminated to senior management. Otherwise, HEIDI is the primary source of information for benchmarking.

Sunderland expect to use the information provided from this collection to '(undertake) mapping and comparisons in relation to sector norms.' and that it will 'Provide an extra level of detail when undertaking comparisons.'

Additionally, Sunderland is interested in the provision of all data, staff, student and finance, for benchmarking purposes.

New ACCs

The new cost centres are very useful in terms of the extra granularity they provide. Areas like law were desperate for this as previously, it was linked with social studies. Thus, while Sunderland were able to calculate their SSR internally for law, it wasn't possible for external comparisons to be made.

Sunderland would like to see cost centre norms from HESA and the JACS codes they would expect to see with those cost centres. This is helpful as often faculties are unsure about cost centres and what cost centres are relevant for them, but they are more familiar with the JACS codes that apply to their areas. In addition, JACS codes have a description about what they mean and contain and this would increase understanding of what the new cost centres are and how academic departments should split their activity.