FURTHER GUIDANCE ON RETURNING FULL-TIME EQUIVALENCE (FTE) DATA

CONTENTS

PROVIDERS IN ENGLAND, NORTHERN IRELAND AND WALES

Providers in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will record FTE on a per reference period basis. Each year is split into 3 reference periods:

Reference period 01: 1 August- 15 November
Reference period 02: 16 November-15 March
Reference period 03: 16 March- 31 July

The ReferencePeriodStudentLoad entity records the FTE for a StudentCourseSession in a given reference period. One ReferencePeriodStudentLoad entity is returned for each reference period that a StudentCourseSession spans. The FTE recorded in the ReferencePeriodStudentLoad entities would therefore total to give the full FTE for the StudentCourseSession.

The ReferencePeriodStudentLoad entity contains the following fields:

-   REFPERIOD: This records the reference period (01, 02, 03) that the FTE is applicable to e.g. the reference period running from November-March would be 02.

-   YEAR: This records the year that the reference period is applicable to, based on the first calendar year of a year running from August-July. For example, the reference period running from 1 August 2020-15 November 2020 would have 2020 recorded here. The reference period running from 16 March 2021-31 July 2021 would also have 2020 as it is one of the three reference periods that makes up the 2020/21 August-July year.

-   RPSTULOAD: This records the student FTE for the StudentCourseSession in the reference period (identified by the two above fields).

Examples

Student one

Student one is on a three-year programme, where each StudentCourseSession runs from September-June.
They would therefore have three StudentCourseSessions, one for each year of their programme, and each StudentCourseSession would span three reference periods.

Three ReferencePeriodStudentLoad entities would be returned per StudentCourseSession, one for each reference period, this is shows in the final row of the diagram above.
The ReferencePeriodStudentLoad.REFPERIOD and ReferencePeriodStudentLoad.YEAR fields indicate which reference period the FTE is being recorded for, and so are a unique combination of year and reference period for each StudentCourseSession.
The ReferencePeriodStudentLoad.FTE field records the student's FTE for that reference period. The sum of the FTE returned for each StudentCourseSession adds up to 100 to reflect the student's full-time activity in each year.

Student two

Student two is on a two-year programme where each year runs from January-December. They would therefore have two StudentCourseSessions, one for each year of their programme and each StudentCourseSession would span four reference periods.

Year 1: 2019/20		Year 2: 2020/21			Year 3: 2021/22	
RP2	RP3	RP1	RP2	RP3	RP1	RP2
Student course session 1				Student course session 2		
RP: 2 Year: 2019 FTE: 20	RP: 3 Year: 2019 FTE: 35	RP: 1 Year: 2020 FTE: 35	RP: 2 Year: 2020 FTE: 10	RP: 2 Year: 2020 FTE: 20	RP: 3 Year: 2020 FTE: 35	RP: 1 Year: 2021 FTE: 35 / RP: 2 Year: 2021 FTE: 10

Four ReferencePeriodStudentLoad entities would be returned per StudentCourseSession, one for each reference period, this is shown in the final row of the diagram above.
The ReferencePeriodStudentLoad.REFPERIOD and ReferencePeriodStudentLoad.YEAR fields indicate which reference period the FTE is being recorded for.
In this example, reference period 2 of the 2020/21 year spans both StudentCourseSessions and so the FTE undertaken in this reference period would be split between the two.
Two ReferencePeriodStudentLoad entities are therefore returned for this reference period (with the same combination of REFPERIOD and YEAR), one associated with each StudentCourseSession.

PROVIDERS IN SCOTLAND

Providers in Scotland will record a predicted FTE for each StudentCourseSession and then an actual FTE once the StudentCourseSession has ended.

Relevant fields:
- StudentCourseSession.PREDICTEDSTULOAD: records the predicted FTE for the full StudentCourseSession. This should be updated throughout the StudentCourseSession where applicable.

- StudentCourseSession.STULOAD: records the actual FTE for the StudentCourseSession once it has ended

- StudentCourseSession.EXPECTEDENDDATE: records the expected end date for the StudentCourseSession. This should be updated throughout the StudentCourseSession where applicable.

The actual end date for the StudentCourseSession would be recorded in StudentCourseSession.SCSENDDATE. A StudentCourseSession.SCSENDDATE must be returned for all StudentCourseSessions that have ended, not just at providers in Scotland.

Examples

Student 1

Student one begins studying on a full-time, full-year StudentCourseSession. The student leaves the provider part way through the second reference period.

The below table shows the information that would be recorded in each reference period:

Field	Reference period 1	Reference period 2
StudentCourseSession.PREDICTEDFTE	100	100
StudentCourseSession.EXPECTEDENDDATE	2021-06-01	2021-06-01
StudentCourseSession.STULOAD	Not returned	50
StudentCourseSession.SCSENDDATE	Not returned	2021-02-01

The predicted FTE is returned as 100 at the start as the student is expected to complete the full year. The expected end date also reflects the fact the student is expected to study for the full year.
The actual STULOAD and end date are not returned until the StudentCourseSession has ended and so are not returned in reference period 1.
When the student withdraws, the StudentCourseSession is closed with the SCSENDDATE reflecting the date they withdrew and the STULOAD recording the actual FTE completed by the student in the StudentCourseSession.
As the actual end date and STULOAD have now been returned, the predicted FTE and expected end date do not have to be updated.

Student 2

Student two begins studying on a part-time, full-year StudentCourseSession. During the second reference period the student indicates that they will be taking an additional module to the number originally expected.
The below table shows the FTE information that would be returned in each reference period.

Field	Reference period 1	Reference period 2	Reference period 3
StudentCourseSession.PREDICTEDFTE	50	75	75
StudentCourseSession.EXPECTEDENDDATE	2021-06-01	2021-06-01	2021-06-01
StudentCourseSession.STULOAD	Not returned	Not returned	75
StudentCourseSession.SCSENDDATE	Not returned	Not returned	2021-06-01

At the start of the StudentCourseSession the student is expected to complete half a full-time year's study and so the predicted FTE is returned as 50.
In the second reference period, they take on an additional module and so the predicted FTE is updated to reflect the student is now expected to undertake more activity.
At the end of the StudentCourseSession, this is confirmed with the actual STULOAD recording the higher value of 75.
The student's change in intentions does not affect the expected end date and so this is the same in each reference period. This therefore indicates that, from reference period 2, the student is expected to complete more activity but over the same period of time.
The student finishes when expected and so the actual end dates aligned with the expected end date.

GENERAL GUIDANCE

The below provides general guidance on returning FTE information that applies to all providers. Where the guidance refers to the total FTE for a StudentCourseSession, this would be:

- The total of all ReferencePeriodStudentLoad.RPSTULOAD values for the StudentCourseSession for providers in England, Northern Ireland and Wales

- The StudentCourseSession.STULOAD for providers in Scotland.

General notes

A student's full-time equivalence (FTE) represents the provider's best academic judgement of the full-time equivalence of the student for each StudentCourseSession/reference period.

All activity required to be undertaken should be accounted for when determining the FTE for a StudentCourseSession. This includes learning in the workplace, such as professional placements, and compulsory modules that do not attract credits. These activities should be considered part of the activity for the course and for full-time students FTE should remain based on a comparison between the planned duration of the course compared to the standard duration for courses of the student's mode and level at the provider. For example, students on a health and social care masters, studying a 180 credit masters but with additional work-based learning over two full-time years should be returned with a total FTE of 100 for each StudentCourseSession.

All students following a course would initially be assumed to have the same FTE. An adjustment should be made at individual student level if a student did not actually follow the whole course academic year, e.g. because they left halfway through. We would typically expect that this adjustment reflects the number of weeks of activity undertaken in comparison to the number expected for the reporting year. A more precise calculation is not required. For example, a full-time student who withdraws having studied for 12 weeks when 24 weeks of activity were planned should be returned with an FTE of 50.

Full time students

Full-time, full year students, studying at the normal level of intensity for their level of course at the provider, would normally be returned with a total FTE per StudentCourseSession of 100. For providers operating a credit-based system we would generally expect that for undergraduate courses an FTE of 100 is recorded for a student studying 120 credits in a year.

Full-time students who are studying at a higher intensity and are therefore expected to complete their course more quickly than usual for their qualification aim should be returned with an FTE higher than 100.
For example, students on an accelerated degree programme which is studied over two years, rather than the usual three, would normally be expected to have a STULOAD of 150 for each StudentCourseSession. These students would have a mode of accelerated (StudentCourseSession.SCSMODE = 03).
Similarly, students retaking modules with attendance (i.e. repeating the teaching and learning), in addition to the normal load of modules for their course year should have a higher FTE to reflect this.

It is not generally expected that the majority of students on a course had a STULOAD in excess of 100 in a year, unless the course is expected to be completed over a shorter period than is normally expected for similar courses of this qualification aim. Where this is the case providers should be prepared to explain and evidence their approach to determining STULOAD.

Full-time students who are studying at lower intensity should similarly be returned with FTE lower than 100 to reflect this. For example, students on a degree programme which is studied over four years rather than the usual three would normally be expected to have an FTE of 75% in each StudentCourseSession.

Part-time students

The FTE for part-time students should be determined as a proportion of an equivalent full-time course.

Providers operating a credit points system should use the number of credit points studied from in the StudentCourseSession or reference period for a part-time student compared with the number of credit points that may be obtained from a year of a related full-time course to determine the FTE.
For example, a full-time undergraduate degree comprises 120 credits in each year of study and the part-time equivalent comprises 90 credits. The FTE for the StudentCourseSession of the full-time student studying for the whole year should be 100 and for the StudentCourseSession for the part-time student should be 75.

Where providers do not use credits, the expected time taken to complete the course in comparison to an equivalent full-time course can be used to determine the FTE.
For example if there is a course leading to a certain qualification which normally requires three years of study for a conventional full-time student, and if that same qualification can be gained by part-time students in five years, the STULOAD returned for part-time students on the course would generally be 60 for each StudentCourseSession.

Flexible provision

For students who study at their own pace, rather than during a set timeframe or structure and therefore determine their own intensity of study, it is not appropriate to assume that all students on the same course have the same FTE. Instead the FTE should be determined based on the number of credits studied within the reference period or StudentCourseSession in comparison to a full-time course. For providers operating a credit based system, we would expect this to be in comparison to 120 in a year for undergraduates or 180 credits for postgraduate masters.

Students who repeat part of a course

For students who repeat part of their course, the sum of all FTE over their Engagement would be greater than usually seen for students studying for the same qualification aim.
For example, a student studying a three-year, full-time degree would usually have three StudentCourseSessions, each with a total FTE of 100 and so a total FTE of their Engagement of 300.
If the student had to retake a year, they would have an additional StudentCourseSession with a total FTE of 100 meaning the sum of all FTE for their Engagement would be 400.

Where a student retakes exams only, this does not affect FTE so this guidance only applies where the student retakes study with attendance (i.e. repeating the teaching and learning).

Students who interrupt study

If a student interrupted study this would be recorded in the SessionStatus entity and the FTE recorded must be reduced to reflect this.
For providers in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, the FTE recorded for each reference period should reflect the study the student has undertaken in that reference period. If the student interrupted study part way through a reference period, the FTE would be reduced to reflect this. If the student was inactive for the full reference period during an open StudentCourseSession, the FTE would be recorded as 0.

For providers in Scotland, the predicted FTE would have been recorded at the start of the StudentCourseSession. If the student suspends part way through the StudentCourseSession:
- If the StudentCourseSession remains open, the predicted FTE would be reduced to reflect that the student will no longer complete as much study as expected.
- If the StudentCourseSession is closed, the actual STULOAD would record the activity the student completed before suspending

If the student were to suspend and recommence study within the same StudentCourseSession, the STULOAD would reflect the combined total of activity undertaken prior to suspending and following recommencing study.

Students on a full year placement

StudentCourseSessions representing a full year's placement (StudentCourseSession.PLACEMENT = 01), should have a total FTE of 100. The load on these students for the purposes of some analysis will be reduced to 50 or 0 and the Office for Students will assume an FTE of 50 for funding calculations.

Collaborative or franchise arrangements

Where returning StudentCourseSessions that involve franchise or concurrent collaborative arrangements (i.e. where a student is supervised by more than one provider at the same time), the FTE recorded should not be reduced to reflect this. For example, a full-time, full-year StudentCourseSession where the teaching is franchised out to a partner for the whole year would have a total FTE of 100 (if within scope of the return). The delivery organisation(s) for the StudentCourseSession would be recorded in StudyLocation (England) or ModuleDeliveryRole (Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales).

Incoming and outgoing exchange students

The FTE recorded for incoming and outgoing exchange students should not be reduced. For example, a full-time outgoing exchange student would typically have a STULOAD of 100 for a yearlong StudentCourseSession, as would a full-time incoming exchange student. To avoid overstating FTE, the FTE for incoming exchange students will typically be discounted in analysis, however, by collecting the FTE for exchange students it will be possible to identify any imbalance.

Postgraduate research students

For postgraduate research students where there is no teaching input and an unspecified time for completion, comparisons should be made with the provider's norm for the full-time course, ignoring any extended writing up period.

For example, a provider has a PhD programme where the normal pattern of full-time study is three years of full-time study (FTE = 100 each) and one year of writing up (FTE = 10). Comparisons when assessing the FTE of part-time PhD students should be made with reference to the formal three years full-time study, ignoring the writing up year.

A PhD student with six years part-time study would therefore have a total FTE for each StudentCourseSession of 50.

Where the student is writing up for a full, yearlong StudentCourseSession, the total FTE for that StudentCourseSession should be 10. Where the student has only been writing up for part of the StudentCourseSession, the FTE should be adjusted to reflect the amount of time spent writing up, and other activity in the year. For example, a student who studies part time at a 50% intensity for 6 months of the StudentCourseSession and is then writing up for 6 months of the StudentCourseSession, should have an FTE of 30 (50*6/12 + 10*6/12).

Students transferring

Where a student transfers between courses at the same provider, they would have one StudentCourseSession returned for each course they engage with.

The FTE recorded on each StudentCourseSession would relate to the student's activity for that StudentCourseSession only.

For example, if a student transferred having completed half of their full-time year of study, the first StudentCourseSession would be closed and the total FTE for that StudentCourseSession would be 50.

A new StudentCourseSession would be created associated with the new course. The FTE data for the second StudentCourseSession would reflect the activity on that StudentCourseSession following the transfer.

Early years ITT students

For students undertaking early years ITT courses, if it is not possible to record their actual FTE, the DfE have indicated that it is permissible to return 100 as the total FTE for a yearlong StudentCourseSession.

Students studying primarily outside the UK

For students studying primarily outside the UK, the FTE must reflect only that part of the course undertaken in the UK. Time outside the UK is indicated in the StudyLocation.PRINONUK field. Therefore, if a StudentCourseSession has StudyLocation.PRINONUK = 01 with a StudyLocation.STUDYPROPORTION of 100, the total FTE for the StudentCourseSession would be 0.

Students with two Engagements

If a student has multiple Engagements, the FTE recorded for the StudentCourseSessions associated with each Engagement would relate to the activity for that Engagement only, not the combined activity of multiple Engagements.