CURRICULUM CONSULTATION PHASE ONE
SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

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HESA

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INTRODUCTION

The Data Futures Curriculum consultation opened on 30 July 2019 and closed on 11 September 2019. In total we received 97 responses to the consultation; 95 from providers and 2 from other organisations (software suppliers in this case). This paper summarises the responses we received and where relevant makes our recommendations based on the results. These recommendations were made to our Statutory Customers and will be taken forward in the data model. Any next steps are actions on HESA to progress in the coming months.

The table below shows a breakdown of the responses received; providers split by country and also other organisations.

Figure 1: Breakdown of responses by country

Country	Responses (%)
England	78%
Scotland	14%
Wales	4%
Northern Ireland	2%
Software suppliers	2%

GENERAL FEEDBACK ON OPTION A AND OPTION B

Question 4. We are considering splitting the funding level field into two separate fields covering the level and length. Do you envisage any problems with this?

Figure 2: General opinion on splitting Funding Level field, based on free text responses

Response	% of total responses
Yes	4%
No	81%
N/A / unsure	15%

The majority of respondents didn't have any problems with this, though some mentioned that it would be important for HESA to engage with their software supplier on any changes, and to give providers enough notice to make this change. One provider asked for the code labels on the level field to be improved, and another for the benefits of making this change to be made clearer.

Those respondents who indicated they might have problems with this were generally talking about this requiring a change to their software system. One provider mentioned that this small change should be addressed later on and more substantive changes to the model should be considered first.

Recommendation 1: Split the Funding Level field out into a level field and a length field.

Question 5. Would your provider consider something to be a new Course if the Accreditation information was changed (either added or removed)?

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents who would consider something a new Course depending on Accreditation information

Response	% of total responses
Yes	27%
No	73%

One provider suggested moving the Accreditation field to the Student Course Session, as it is possible for this to be student specific within a programme. The way the Accreditation codes have been split in Data Futures currently is to put the Student specific aims on Student Course Session, and the Course relevant ones at the Course Delivery level (now to be Course). Therefore, we believe these cases have already been covered.

Question 6. Would your provider consider something to be a new Course if the Initiatives information was changed (either added or removed)?

Figure 4: Percentage of respondents who would consider something a new Course depending on Initiatives information

Response	% of total responses
Yes	28%
No	72%

One provider suggested moving the Initiatives field to the Student Course Session, as it is possible for there to be different values on the same course, e.g. Apprenticeships and Non-Apprenticeships. Again, we believe the Student specific initiatives are on the Student Initiatives field, so we believe this has already been covered.

Question 7. What would providers prefer for [Initiatives and Accreditation] data?

Figure 5: Percentage of respondents by provider preference
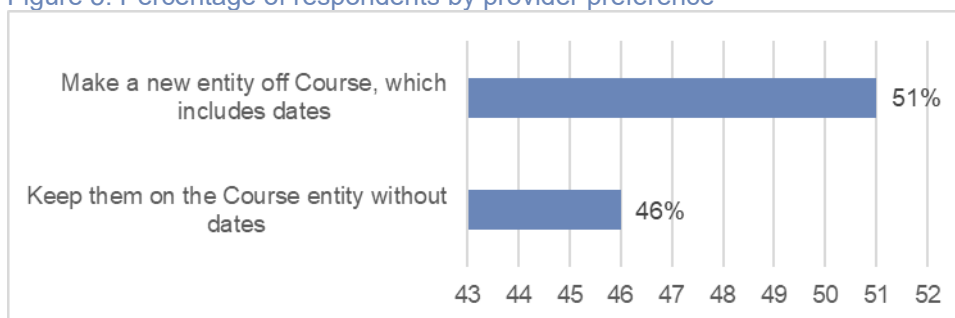
Recommendation 2: Make the Accreditation and Initiative fields, new entities sitting off Course to include start and end dates. This will make sure that whichever way the provider holds it in their system, they will be able to return it accurately in the record.

If providers believe the codes in the Accreditation or Initiative fields are at the wrong level currently (i.e. they are on Course and you believe it should be at Student Course Session level), please contact us to let us know.

Question 8A. We are proposing to continue to collect [Year of programme] for courses where there are clearly defined programme years. Do you have any such provision for which it is difficult to provide the year of programme?

Based on the free text responses, about half of respondents didn't have any problems returning the year of programme field currently. Half of respondents indicated one or more problems.

The majority of examples were around unstructured, part-time or flexible provision. The most common example given was for postgraduate research students. Postgraduate taught students also came up, in relation to examples where the years of progression are longer than 12 months. CPD courses and direct entrants were also mentioned by more than one provider. Other specific cases were: retaking years, distance learning, foundation years, modules straddling different levels, intercalating students, students switching mode and accelerated provision.

Question 8B. If we were to include flag fields, such as resits or direct entrants, would you be able to return these fields for students?

Figure 6: Percentage of respondents who would be able to return fields flagged as resits or direct entrants

Response	% of total responses
Yes	70%
No	21%
Not answered	9%

Question 8C. If you answered no, what are the reasons for this?

Most respondents who answered 'No' above indicated that they would need time to make changes to their system. They didn't want to have fields solely for reporting to HESA (as it would increase burden to maintain these flags) and indicated that there should be other ways to get this type of information, such as deriving the length of time from other dates and fields in the model. Providers also wanted clear definitions for each flag suggested.

A number of respondents indicated that because year of programme wasn't a concept that made any sense to some of their provision, that is why they would struggle to complete the suggested flag fields.

One provider suggested that they would like a flag to identify direct entrant students who were on the Aggregate Offshore Record and who are now in the UK population (i.e. the reverse of Location of Study code S in the current Student record).

A number of respondents who answered 'Yes' above also left comments. Some said they would prefer to continue using the year of programme field, and many wanting more guidance on the different flag definitions. Some providers suggested that year of programme was only collected for certain types of students (in question 8A above).

Next steps 3: HESA will explore the option of deriving the year of programme for providers – maybe just for structured courses. More consideration is needed with Statutory Customers before a decision can be reached.

Question 9A. Would you be able to return a sandwich flag on the Course entity?

Figure 7: Percentage of respondents who could return a sandwich flag

Response	% of total responses
Yes	91%
No	9%

Question 9B. If you answered no, what are the reasons for this?

Half of the respondents indicated that they don't offer placements on their courses. The majority of reasons given for not being able to return a sandwich flag, were that development would be needed in their system. The other comments were based on some misunderstandings about how we were suggesting providers could split up their courses. Providers wanted to return two courses where they have a sandwich course and a non-sandwich course and they thought we were suggesting this had to be the same course with a sandwich flag, which is not the case.

A couple of providers (who answered 'Yes' in 9A) mentioned their desire to keep their course differences aligned with Unistats.

Recommendation 4: include a sandwich flag on Course – to indicate where there is the potential to do a sandwich placement on this course. Providers may return placement and non-placement students on the same course, or as different courses, depending on their preference.

OPTION B SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Question 10. What would you prefer to return in dates for the Student Course Session?

Figure 8: Percentage of respondents by preference regarding Student Course Session
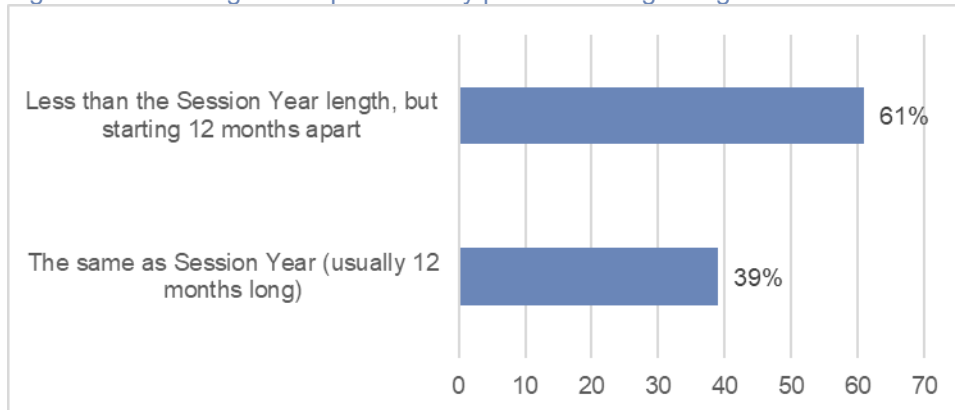
Question 11. Do you have any comments on this?

Respondents who selected the 'Same as Session Year…' option, generally indicated that this was how their system was currently set up or aligned with their business processes. Some said that this would mean less dates to manage overall and also that having a 12-month period was a useful concept. A couple of providers suggested that Session Years would be aligned to the current HESA reporting year – to be clear, this is NOT the case. Providers are able to start their Session Years at any point in the year.

The majority of respondents who selected the 'Less than Session Year...' option advised that this was their preference because it would more accurately reflect what was actually happening with that student. Many providers asked for some flexibility around the start and end dates, to account for term dates changing slightly. A few providers noted that having the same dates on Session Year and Student Course Session means that we would be duplicating data collection and therefore not gaining anything from having these fields with the same dates.

A number of providers queried the 12-month restriction on Session Years. A couple asked us to consider allowing postgraduate taught courses that might be more than 12-months to only return one Student Course Session and Session Year. A number of providers also said they might want to do both options – so we should perhaps make it clear that this should be read as, 'Less than or equal to Session Year…'

One provider asked about students who 'hop on and off courses at any time, sometimes more than once within an academic session, and will therefore straddle session years.' More guidance will be needed around this type of scenario.

Recommendation 5: Dates on the Student Course Session should be contained with the associated Session Year, i.e. less than or equal to the 12-months. More guidance and examples will be given, for the scenarios suggested in the responses.

Question 12. In Option B, are there any other fields providers think would sit better on the Session Year entity (as well as the start and end dates that are currently suggested)?

17.5% of respondents didn't answer this question and 66% of respondents said they had no further suggestions.

A number of suggestions were made, as shown in the table below.

Figure 9: Suggestions for fields that would sit better on the Session Year entity

Fields suggested for Session entity	Number of responses
Foundation Year	3
Funding Level	3
Study Abroad	3
Placement	2
Provider's own reference	2
Year of Programme	2
Initiative	1
Accreditation	1
Distance Learning	1
Length of course	1
Year of study in course	1
Location	1
Repeating student	1
Sandwich	1

Many of the suggestions above would introduce the duplication back into the curriculum data that we were trying to avoid in these proposals. It would also bring Session Year closer back towards the definition of a Course Session. Therefore, we will not be adding most of these suggestions.

There would need to be an identifier field on the Session Year entity anyway and this wasn't drawn up specifically on the diagrams in the consultation. Therefore, a provider's own reference field won't be needed, as the identifier field would allow providers to include their own identifiers anyway.

Recommendation 6: Add an identifier field to the Session Year entity.

SCENARIO 1: FULL-TIME STUDENTS

Question 13A. We are aware of situations where, for example, a student might be studying Mathematics, but due to studying certain modules is awarded a Mathematics with Statistics degree when they finish. Does your provider have any examples of this type of situation (i.e. the original course aim subject might be different from the awarded qualification subject)?

Question 13B. If so, how do you report these in your student record systems?

Question 13C. In these examples, at what point does the student diverge?

There were many examples given with different approaches across providers.

Several providers took the opportunity to highlight that flexibility, such as allowing students to specialise or alter their intentions, is a positive part of the student experience.

"Ultimately, learning at its most productive, is a creative and dynamic enterprise for each individual student, supported by their academic mentors. Restricting the potential student journey to suit the data model is counterproductive for the student, for the university in fulfilling its mission and, ultimately, for the community at large."

The table below summarises the examples given, and the approach taken at different providers.

Figure 10: summary of responses to questions 13A-C

Example	How is this recorded / when do students diverge?
If students do not meet the requirements for a specific specialist award, they may get a more generic award. For example, students following a European languages programme who encounter problems during the year abroad and do not meet the requirements to be awarded a language degree. These students can however still qualify for a European Cultures degree. Another example given was students gaining insufficient credit in a specialism and so gaining a more generic degree e.g. aiming for Physical Geography and leaving with Geography.	1. Students are transferred onto the relevant programme at the appropriate point i.e. when this decision is made. 2. Decision usually taken in the final year where there has not been sufficient subjects specialism in years one and two.
Generic foundation programme or 'common early years' where the student starts on a generic subject and moves to a more specific subject.	1. Treated as a course transfer, usually at the end of the first year.
Module choice allowing a student to specialise. For example: - A 3D design course where module choice allows for an award of 3D Design (Furniture Design). - A degree with the title 'Business and Management' where some students will gain this award, but many others will leave after the 1st or 2nd year to specialise in pathway options e.g. Business and Management with Law or Finance.	1. Recorded on completion of the qualification: the specific qualification is recorded on the certificate. 2. Recorded in the student's final year of study- they will have specialised by this point. 3. The student selects in their first year to continue on the specialism from their second year. 4. Degree programmes have students changing programme at the end of each year of study depending upon the specialism taken. 5. The final assessment board make a decision as to the focus of the modules taken, students are associated with a 'combined' subject and this is amended if they specialise.
Students start a course aiming for a certain level but then exit early and gain a lower level award. E.g. a PGR student originally aimed for a doctorate but left early with an MRes.	1. At the point the student leaves, they are given an exit award. This usually happens at a progression point e.g. end of year.

(continued) Example	*(continued)* **How is this recorded / when do students diverge?**
Students start a course aiming for a certain level but then continue on for extra years to gain a higher-level award. E.g. Student start with the aim of BEng but if they perform well on certain modules can transfer to the MEng enhanced UG version.	1. A progression decision is made at the end of the year 2. Handled as course transfers
If the accreditation requirement is not met, the award could be different from the qualification aim	1. Awarded a lower or interim award, no transfer necessary. 2. If before the end of the student's studies, the change is made to their route. If it occurs on completion, the route remains the same and only the award reflects the change.
Student gains an ordinary degree rather than an honours degree	
There are two possible award outcomes for the programme. E.g. medical practitioner programmes where students may pass the academic qualifications, but not pass the fit to practice elements.	
Student receives a different qualification title for award e.g. where they opt to complete a year abroad.	1. At the exam board 2. When the student opts to complete an optional element: this is treated as a transfer.
Joint honours courses where the breakdown of subjects change	1. Treated as transfers

A couple of providers asked if HESA intended to collect a course aim subject. They indicated that this would lead to many more qualifications needing to be returned as they can vary between students and asked that we consult if we planned to change this approach.

Recommendation 7: Include these cases in the guidance scenarios, and make sure they are all catered for in our suggested curriculum model.

SCENARIO 2: PART-TIME STUDENTS

Question 14. Which option would you prefer?

Figure 11: Percentage of respondents' preferred option to provide Mode
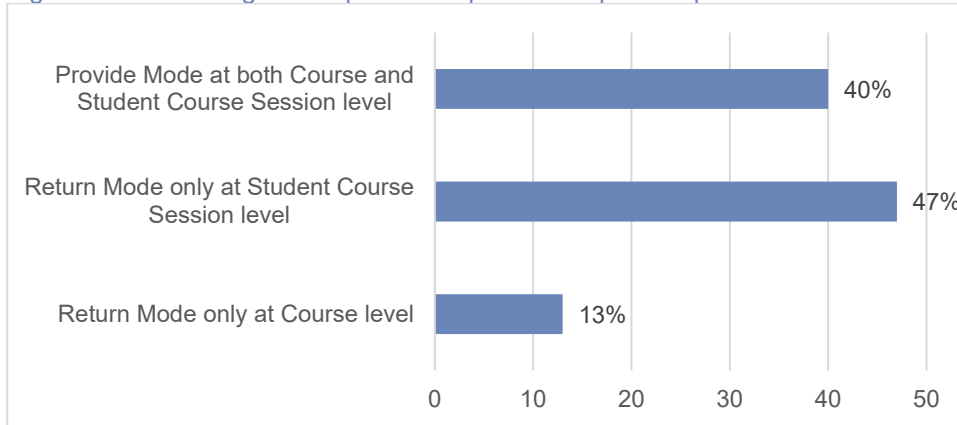
Recommendation 8: Return Mode at Student Course Session level only. Statutory Customers indicated that they didn't need this at Course level, so this level can now be removed from the model.

Question 15. Where providers have courses that can be done on a part-time or full-time basis, would you prefer to return full-time and part-time students linked to the same Course?

Figure 12: Percentage of respondents' preference to return students linked to same Course

Response	% of total responses
Yes	54%
No	46%

Recommendation 9: Due to Mode being returned at Student level only, courses that are part-time or full-time can now be linked to the same course, where providers think this appropriate. Providers can still return them as separate courses as they prefer.

SCENARIO 3: PLACEMENT STUDENTS

Question 16. Would providers be happy to return placement and non-placement students against the same course?

Figure 13: Percentage of respondents who would return against same course

| Response	% of total responses
Yes	63%
No	37%

Comments given on this question were around wanting the flexibility to do both options in the model, depending on the situation.

Recommendation 10: Allow providers to return placement and non-placement students linked to the same course.

SCENARIO 4: FOUNDATION YEARS

Question 17. If you have Foundation years, do you consider the Foundation year, the first year of their course, or do you set these up as separate courses?

Figure 14: How [applicable] providers set up Foundation years
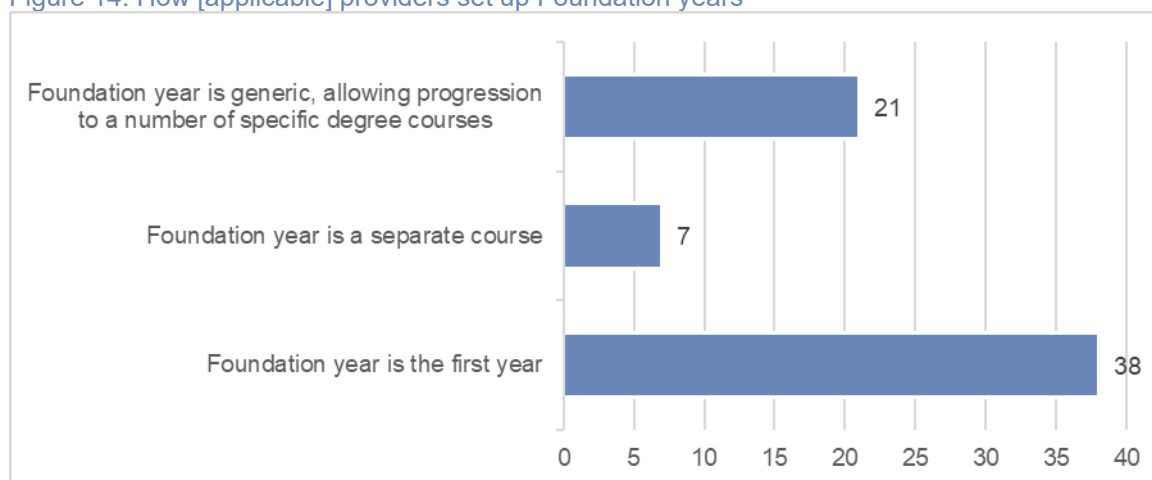
Many of the comments given on this question were to explain the specific scenarios of how Foundation years are delivered at their provider. Many providers also wanted to selected multiple options in the graphs above (this still just shows one option per provider).

Next steps 11: HESA need to give clear guidance on how Foundation years should be treated. Also need to make decisions on the request to return Foundation Years as being Year of Programme = 0 again. Once decisions have been made on Curriculum data and the Year of Programme field, return to decide on Foundation Years.

SCENARIO 5: RESITS

No specific questions.

SCENARIO 6: LATE STARTERS

Question 18. How do providers keep a record of which students start a course late?

Respondents gave a variety of answers. These were (based on the free text responses):
- Start date for Student – 39
- On Registration or Enrolment – 18
- Late start flag – 2
- Other – 5 (including: spreadsheet, ID cards, attendance model, marked as absent)

15 respondents indicated that they simply don't have a way of capturing this at the moment.

18 respondents indicated that a late starter wasn't applicable to their type of courses, many stated that if they don't start straight away, the student has to wait until the following year. However, a range of timeframes were given, which could be considered as a late starter, including: few days (1), 2 weeks (3), 3 weeks (5), few weeks, reasonable time.

Question 19. A new field would probably be required to enable late starters to be identified in option A. Do you envisage any problems completing such a field?

Figure 15 Percentage of respondents on whether a new field for Option A would cause any problems

Response	% of total responses
Yes	32%
No	68%

Question 20. Can you think of any other way we could understand when a student is a late starter?

Most respondents didn't have any other ideas for ways of collecting this data. Some suggestions were:
- Use an SLC web service to check if they have confirmed registration,
- Continue to collect a course delivery start date, or actual start and end dates,
- FTE for the year would reflect the late start on the full-time course – unfortunately this is incorrect, FTE would be '1',
- Allowing a reason code, e.g. Visa delay, financial issues, transfer from another provider.

The majority of respondents wanted a clear definition of what a 'late starter' meant and they wanted to understand the reasons behind needing to collect a late starter flag – in particular if this was required for all providers.

Recommendation 12: If we were to proceed with option A, include a late starter flag with a robust definition. This is not an issue with option B as late starters will be identified by having a start date after the Session Year start date.

SCENARIO 7: TRANSFERS WITHIN A PROVIDER

No specific questions.

SCENARIO 8: POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

No specific questions.

SCENARIO 9: DORMANT STUDENTS

Question 21. Do you know any other common scenario(s) of students going dormant that you think would not be adequately recorded by a particular option?

Providers gave a number of scenarios for consideration, these include:
- Programmes of indeterminant length where the student can have periods of dormancy between selecting modules (such as CPD or professional health care courses, fully flexible programmes)
- Students who could have short periods of suspense (such as PGR students, research students)
- Study breaks
- Repeat study at the end of the last year of the course
- Students who need to be back-dated as dormant (i.e. provider doesn't find out the student isn't attending until after the reporting period has ended)
- Students who have completed their studies and are awaiting confirmation of results (exam boards) which will not be available until the next Student Course Session

One provider raised a question around UKPIs where students who remain dormant for several years before resuming their studies are regarded as Leavers, which they believe to be incorrect.

A query was raised about how writing up students and those who have submitted their thesis and are awaiting their viva, will be handled in data futures.

There were many responses that showed a misunderstanding around what dormancy means in Data Futures – compared with the dormant MODE used in the current Student record where a student has to be inactive for the whole year. This is different in Data Futures, as the student is recorded as dormant when they are no longer actively studying – clearer guidance needs to be given around this and perhaps some indication of the period a provider should wait before returning a student as dormant.

Next steps 13: HESA to provide clear guidance on when students should be recorded as being dormant.

Question 22. Which idea for option A would you prefer to return for the full year of dormancy, starting in the middle of the year (Example 9ii/Becky)?

Figure 16: percentage of respondents' ideas for Option A
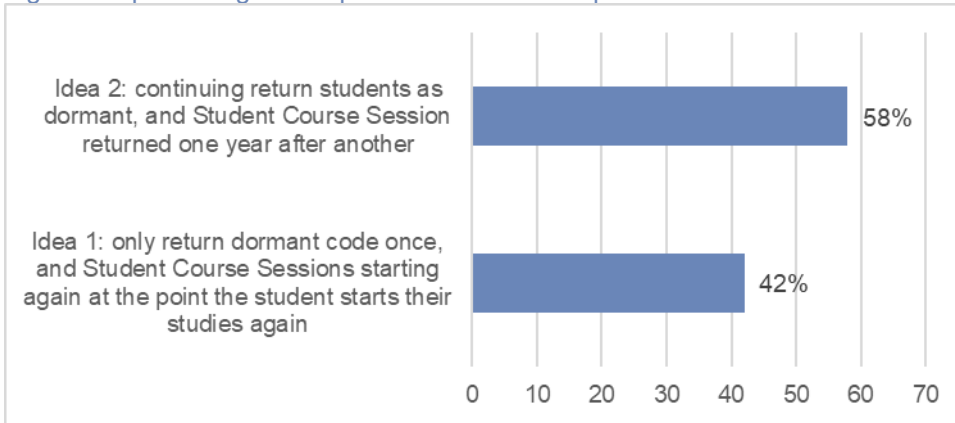
One provider stated that this shows some of the problems with option A when you are dealing with "non-standard" provision.

Recommendation 14: If we proceed with option A, allow dormant students to continue being returned as dormant every reference period.

SCENARIO 10: 15-MONTH CURRICULUM
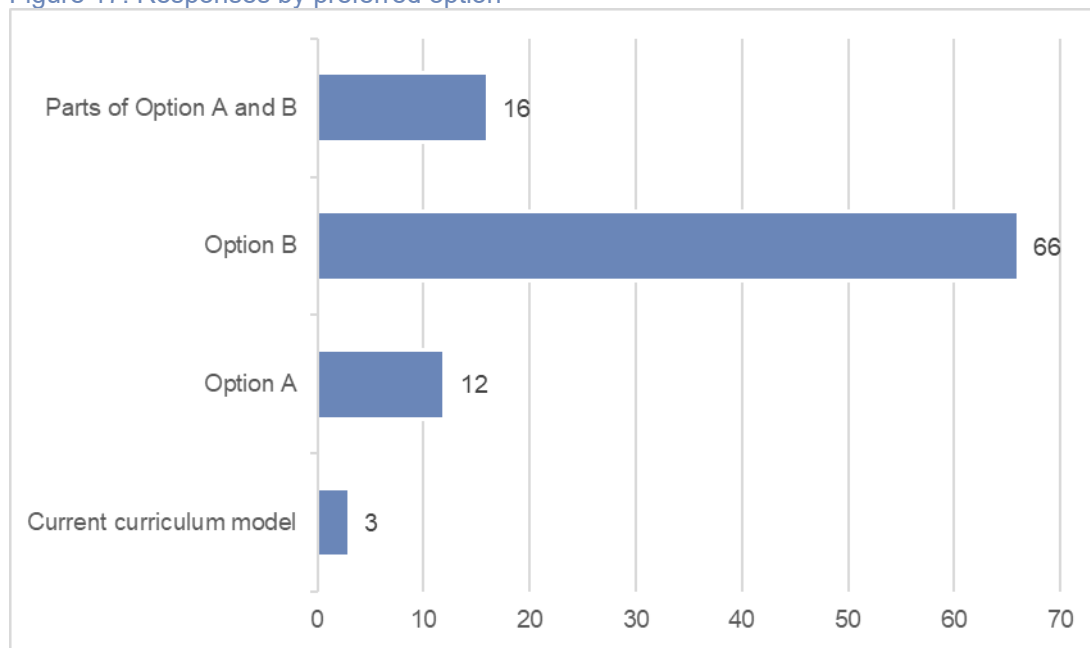
No specific questions.

SCENARIO 11: FULLY FLEXIBLE

No specific questions.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Question 23. Overall which option would you prefer to use?

Figure 17: Responses by preferred option

Question 24. Are there any scenarios that will be more difficult for the preference you have shown above?

Figure 18: Breakdown of scenarios potentially difficult against respondents' option preference

	Current Curriculum mode	Option A	Option B	Parts of Option A and B	Not Answered
None	1	7	24	3	0
Full time	0	0	0	1	0
Part time	0	0	1	1	0
Placement	0	0	0	1	0
Foundation	1	0	4	1	0
Resits	1	2	5	1	0
Late starters	1	1	5	3	0
Transfers	1	1	4	1	0
Postgraduates	0	0	16	8	0
Dormant	0	3	9	1	0
15-month curriculum	0	0	9	3	0
Fully flexible	1	0	25	10	0
Not answered	0	0	0	0	0

Question 24B. Please explain your answer(s) above.

For those that selected 'Current curriculum' no exceptions or explanations were given.

For those that selected 'Option A' the exceptions were mainly around Resits and Dormant students. Reasons given were around the lack of flexibility with the 12-month period, particularly for part-year dormancy. Many stated that this fitted with the way the data is held in their system.

For those that selected 'Option B' the exceptions were mainly around Postgraduate (most specified postgraduate research students) and fully flexible courses, though a number of others were also selected. Reasons given were around the very flexible nature of these types of courses, and year of programme not being a concept with this provision.

For those that selected 'Parts of Option A and B' the exceptions were again mainly around Postgraduate research students and fully flexible courses, for the same reasons as specified above.

Recommendation 15: Curriculum Option B should be implemented out of the A and B choices. Postgraduate Research students and fully flexible courses should be allowed to be returned using option A.

Question 25. Are there any other options on how curriculum data could be returned in the record, that providers would prefer instead of the two presented in this consultation?

One viable alternative – an amended option B – was suggested by two providers. If Session Year is just a chunk of time, why not have a structure that allows it to be independent of Course, i.e.
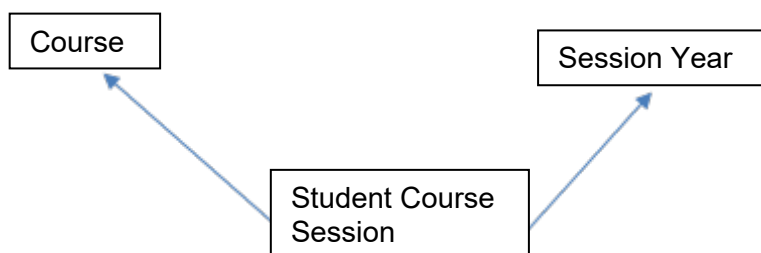
Some providers have suggested that dates are set up like this in their system, i.e. independent of the course themselves, and you attach a student to a Course and cohort dates.

One provider suggested another idea for recording an amalgamation of year of programme and some of the flag fields, i.e.
- F = Foundation
- 1 = year 1 undergraduate
- 2 = year 2 undergraduate
- S = Sandwich year
- P = Placement year
- 3 = year 3 undergraduate
- M = Masters

Other comments included: providers wanting to get rid of the 12-month restriction for certain courses (either longer, shorter or a mix of different year lengths); using credit accumulation instead of programme year for fully flexible and / or CPD courses; having a static HESA reporting year as now; having different models for taught and research courses as there are fundamental differences between them.

Recommendation 16: the amended Option B should be considered. Put this out to consultation with providers.

Next steps 17: The year of programme suggestion will be considered with the year of programme work mentioned already. We will not be able to remove the 12-month constraint in the model, but these comments will be passed onto Statutory Customers.

Question 26. Do you have any further comments on the curriculum consultation?

Many providers indicated that they will be very dependent on their software supplier and that it was crucial that we engage with them.

The timing of the consultation was mentioned by some, asking for it to be outside of peak collection times and not over the summer again. Providers signalled that any decision to change the model will be burdensome at this stage. However, many welcomed the effort that went into this consultation and appreciated the opportunity to give feedback, particularly as this was a result of the burden reported by providers earlier. Some asked for further consultations on curriculum and other areas of the model, stating that the face to face sessions were particularly helpful and also the number of scenarios that were prepared in advance.

Some providers said they found it difficult to comment on some areas of the consultation, as they have new systems, or some answers are dependent on each other. It was difficult to respond without knowing the bigger picture of how this will fit into the wider Data Futures structure.

Providers said that they require to manage data within their student records systems and the primary purpose is not for the delivery of statistical returns. The design of the curriculum model needs to reflect how providers actually manage their student records in real life.

A few specifically indicated that the removal of Course Delivery was a significant step forward and that Course Sessions don't provide any particular benefit for ease of reporting. However, some concerns were raised around new requirements being considered at this late stage (e.g. late starters).

Provision is now so flexible that is unlikely that any new model will fit all the current types of delivery and it is unlikely to anticipate future needs. Any model must be capable of development to suit the direction of travel in provision over the foreseeable future.

A number of respondents expressed unhappiness around continuing with a 12-month restriction in some way. Providers explained that the future of more flexible learning is not helped by continuing to force data into applied timeframes, it does not encourage providers to develop new courses away from the traditional models and does not help future proof the return. Questions were raised about how the current metrics would work with no fixed concept of a year. There were also more comments on where this concept doesn't work, such as for professional courses or postgraduate

research students. One provider said that even though it was a shame to be reverting to a year of instance, as Statutory Customers still require this, they didn't see a better solution.

There were a number of things that providers made comments on, or asked HESA to consider further, such as:
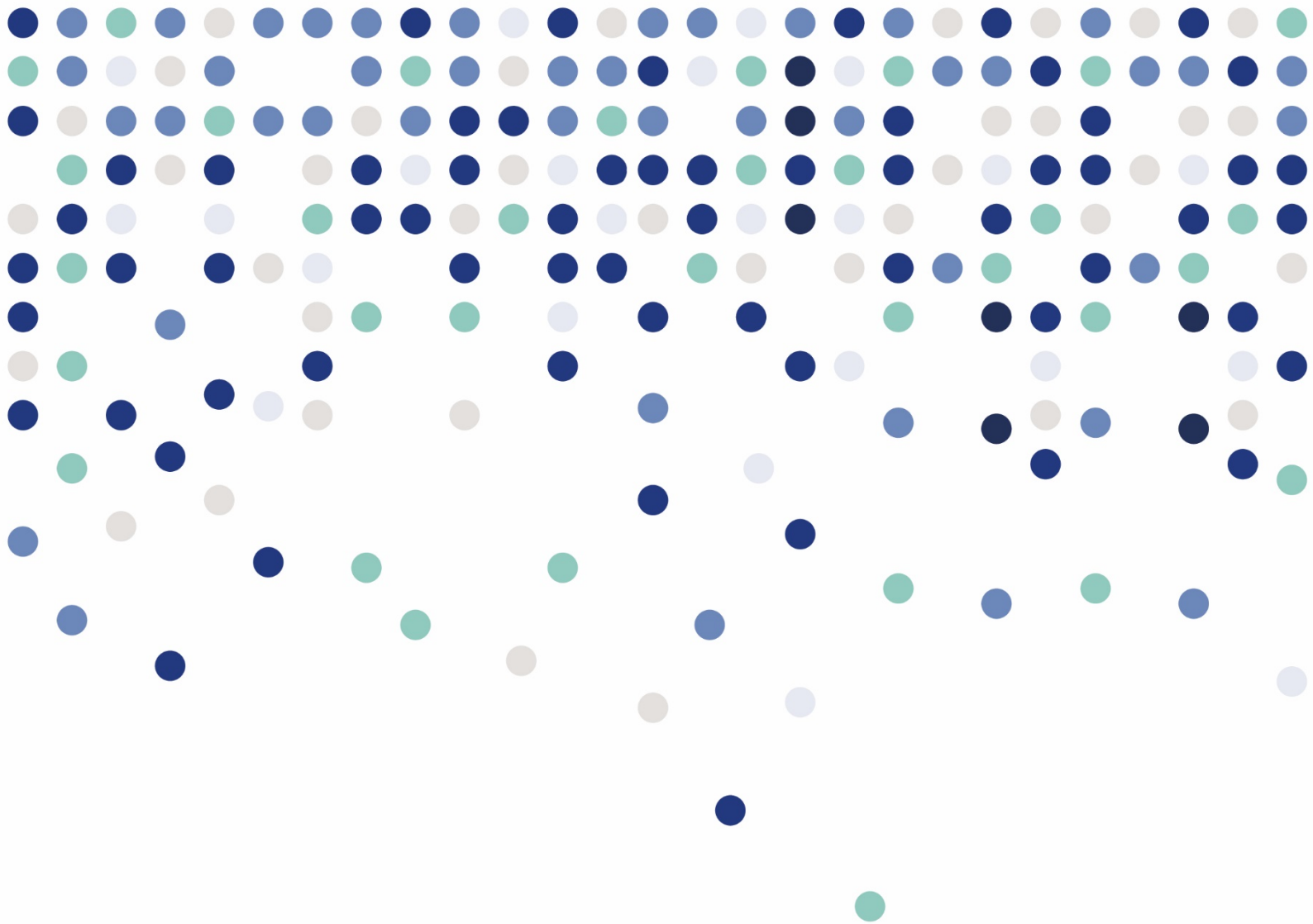
- Lots of respondents asked for more work and potentially consultation on recording foundation years of a course as year 0.
- Masters students who are studying for 12 months, with an exam board at 18 months. Prefer not to send dummy modules where postgraduate research programmes do not follow a modular model.
- How will Tariff be calculated in Data Futures?
- Might the foundation year scenario benefit from a new RSNSCSEND value of 'progressed from foundation year'?
- The creation of HECOS non-hierarchical coding system has led to a confusing hierarchical set of codes.
- Historic amendments to curriculum data – how will this work with three discrete, in-year returns?
- Clarity on dates that are now required in the model.
- Accreditation list, and should this match the Unistats list?
- Placements – need to understand more about what HESA will expect us to report.
- Funding Completion and details of when this needs to be sent – particularly when students move between Session Years.
- Could Scotland consider returning Closed course? (closed courses are excluded from NSS and we have to manually exclude them currently)

Respondents queried the purpose behind the collection of each data item and stated that this needs to be provided by the relevant Statutory Customer. Providers also asked for justification for why it needs to be three collections a year. Will all the data items be a priority in the first sign-off period?

Generally, providers would like more information on the principles guiding the Data Futures development, but there was support for HESA for taking time-out to make this a project that is an enhancement to a dynamic and innovative Higher Education sector. A number of respondents made comments around wanting to know when we will get to a stable model, but they also appreciated us making the effort to fix some of the current problems that providers have been reporting. Mostly providers indicated they wanted a stable model when the Data Futures project started up again.

Next steps 18: Address all comments raised.