

GRADUATE OUTCOMES COHORT D REVIEW

C18071 2018/19
JANUARY 2021

HESA



Graduate Outcomes

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SECTION 1 - CLOSING OUR SECOND YEAR

I am pleased to be closing the second year of Graduate Outcomes with an increase in response rates, moving us closer to our 60% target response rate despite the challenging backdrop of 2020. The teams working behind the scenes at HESA and within providers across the UK have worked incredibly hard to deliver the survey throughout and I sincerely thank everyone who has played their part.

Responses from 380,974 graduates provided an overall collection response rate of 48% and a 'home' response rate of 52.8% in year two (vs 46.9% and 51.6% respectively in year one). You will find more 2018/19 collection response rates and engagement statistics on page 8.

This update provides an overview of the final cohort of the year two Graduate Outcomes survey which launched on 1 September 2020 and closed on 31 November 2020.

Each collection cohort helps us to refine our processes and to continually improve and the same is true of data dissemination. HESA is now busy working to prepare the 2018-19 data for delivery in the Spring, alongside the recoded SOC data (to the SOC2020 framework) from 2017-18.

We are currently in week 9 of cohort A for the 2019/20 collection and are pleased with early response rate indicators. Please note, as previously communicated, this review is the last cohort specific update we will send out in its current format, but we will of course keep you up to date via the provider portal, the Weekly Update and other channels where needed.

As in previous years, we're not standing still on Graduate Outcomes and are progressing with a range of development plans. These include considering the impact of the pandemic on our outputs, continuing to make improvements and to boost response rates by way of a short review of the survey with key stakeholders, and looking at ways we can reduce the cost of the survey in line with the efficiency targets that HESA has been set. More on these themes as they develop this year.

As always, if you have any queries, please do get in touch.

Rob Phillpotts
Managing Director, Statutory Services

SECTION 2 - COHORT D AND INITIAL 2018/19 COLLECTION FINDINGS

RESPONSE RATES

As at Tuesday 1 December (based on the previous day's surveying), we had received responses from 381,073 graduates providing an overall collection response rate of 48.0% and the 'home' response rate of 52.8%. For cohort D, this was a response rate of 48.9%.

The breakdown by target group can be found in the table below:

Main target group	Target	Cohort D response rate	2018/19 collection response rate	2017/18 collection response rate
UK domiciled, full-time	60%	53.5%	54.2%	52.2%
UK domiciled, part-time	60%	46.3%	52.3%	48.7%
Research funded	65%	56.5%	59.1%	58.0%
EU domiciled	45%	47.8%	48.0%	46.1%
Non-EU domiciled	25%	26.8%	31.0%	29.4%

Please note, all response rates and results published prior to the final release of data in 2021 are provisional.

With respect to response rates, the second year of Graduate Outcomes has been more successful than the first. For all the key target groups, response rates increased by at least 1 percentage point, with the highest increase seen in the UK domiciled part-time group (3.6% points). To have achieved this amidst a pandemic is indicative of the strong foundations underpinning the survey. However, whilst we are a step closer to the targets, we recognise that more needs to be done to close the gap completely.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Email and SMS messages

Email delivery rates continue to be extremely high in every round of invitations, ranging from 97-99%. SMS delivery rates have also remained high at 89.6% for the first SMS invitation (utilising all available UK mobile numbers). Completion via SMS link is responsible for 40% of all the online survey responses received during cohort D.

Delivery rates are not directly correlated with response rates. Open rates are a more useful indicator of the likelihood of online survey participation. We do not have data for SMS open rates, but we have information on email open rates. It has been observed that open rates for emails reduced in cohort D, compared with previous year, resulting in an overall lowering of online response rates. The online response rate in cohort D this year was 19.5%, compared with 22.3% in the previous year. A similar difference was also observed in cohort C, but not in cohorts A and B. While it is not possible to categorically attribute this observation to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is possible that a significant increase in our online activity for most essential tasks has had a negative impact on an individual's motivation to participate in what might seem like a non-essential online activity. We are however seeing positive signs in online uptake in the first cohort of year 3, alleviating immediate concerns of a downward trend.

A more tangible explanation for low open rates, and therefore low response rates, can be obtained if we consider the type and quality of email addresses in the sample. Of all the graduates in cohort D, 1.2% did not have an email address. Of all the UK domiciled graduates 7.4% were either missing an email address or a mobile number, therefore reducing their chances of being contacted to complete the survey online. Our research suggests that online response rate is much higher when both modes of contact are available (email and SMS). A review of contact details by providers is currently underway and is likely to explain why some providers might have a lower response rate compared with others.

Some graduates do not respond to any of the reminder emails. Of all the graduates with an email address, at least 2% had only a “.ac.uk” address, which has so far proven to be least reliable in contacting graduates. For graduates with just one email address, it takes 3-4 emails on average to achieve a complete response, with a third of all online respondents doing so after the first invitation. There is a clear indication that UK domiciled graduates require fewer reminders to complete the survey than non-UK graduates.

Telephone interviewing

There are numerous indicators suggesting that the telephone interviewing component of Graduate Outcomes is firmly established and delivering successful outcomes for the project. Responses to the telephone survey increased by 9% in cohort D and 14% across the whole year. This not only recovered the deficit in online response rates in the last two cohorts but also brought the overall rates closer to the target.

More people tend to refuse to take part in the survey over the telephone than they do online. While the percentage of refusals remained similar in the first three cohorts, across the two years, the rate halved in the final cohort.

Although landline numbers tend to perform worse than mobile numbers generally, in cohort D this year the completion rate on landline numbers was higher than expected. More graduates being at home because of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, has meant that landline calls have generally been more productive.

For the first time in the survey, we adopted a more focused data collection strategy aimed at UK domiciled graduates. During November, we stopped calling non-UK graduates (except those with scheduled appointments) to focus our efforts on the group that is of greatest interest to the sector. Similarly, for the purpose of case prioritisation (an exercise aimed at reducing non-response bias), we exclusively targeted the UK domiciled graduates.

Towards the end of a cohort, we start observing signs of the sample becoming tired with low call pick-up and response rates. However, cohort D was unusual with sufficient ‘live’ sample still available in the final few weeks of the field period. Unfortunately, to keep the survey costs within the subscription limits, we had to ask our contact centre to significantly reduce call volumes in the final few days. Online data collection continued right through to the end of the 3-month period.

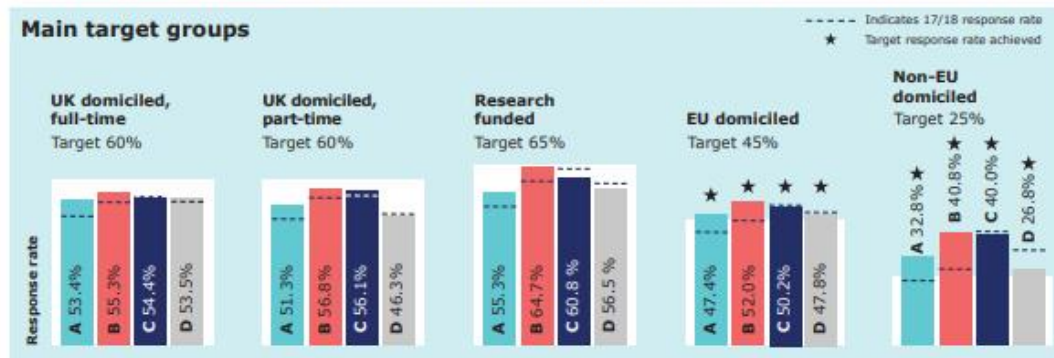
SECTION 3 - INFOGRAPHICS
COHORT D RESPONSE RATES AND ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS
[VIEW ALL INFOGRAPHICS](#)



Cohort D

Opened on **Tuesday 1 September 2020** and closed on **Monday 30 November 2020**.

Response rates All response rates and results published prior to the final release of data are provisional due to the nature of the live data feed and the fact we are carrying out continual quality assurance.



48.9%
Overall cohort D response rate

269,650
completed responses

Partial responses 20,631
These are graduates who answered at least the first question but did not complete the survey. Actively encouraging completions forms a key part of the engagement strategy.

The top 3 questions where graduates drop out of the survey are:

- Q. What activities were you doing in the census week?
- Q. What was your job title during the census week?
- Q. What is the name of the company/organisation that you were working for?

Mode of completion:

Providers in cohort D **433**

Phone **60%** Online **40%**

Desktop **33%**
Mobile **67%**

Engagement statistics

5 rounds of email invitations sent 6 rounds of SMS messages sent

Average number of phone calls needed for a completed survey response. This includes responses started online as well as by phone. **3**

Unique page views of the Graduate Outcomes websites (to 30 November 2020)
graduateoutcomes.ac.uk

English website: **326,120**
 Welsh website: **1,649**
 @grad_outcomes followers: **1,173**

Best time of day for completions

Phone **6-7pm** Desktop **4-5pm** Mobile **4-5pm**

Best day for completion
Wed

Average time taken to complete

Phone **14 minutes, 47 seconds** Online **8 minutes, 32 seconds**

Due to changes in the way we calculate duration, plus minor changes to survey questions, we will not be comparing to year one.



2018/19 COLLECTION RESPONSE RATES AND ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS

[View all infographics](#)

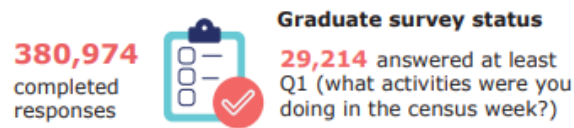
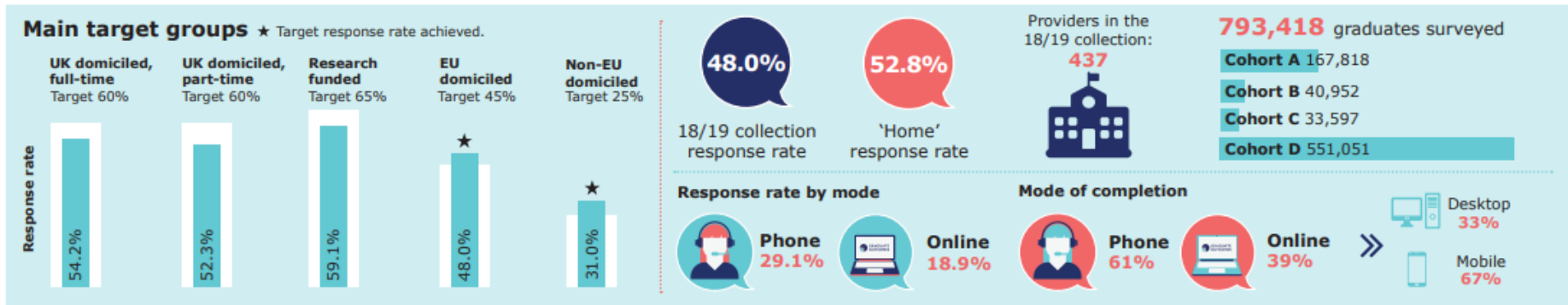
2018/19 collection

Opened on **Monday 2 December 2019** and closed on **Monday 30 November 2020**.



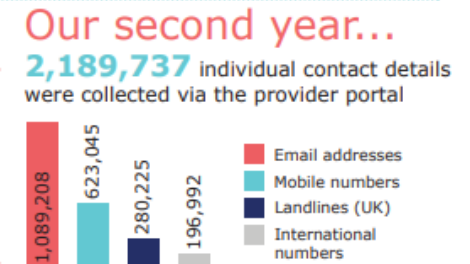
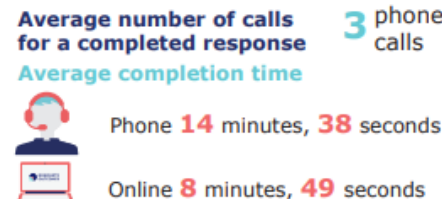
Response rates

All response rates and results published prior to the final release of data are provisional due to the nature of the live data feed and the fact we are carrying out continual quality assurance.



- Top 3 survey drop out questions:**
- Q. What activities were you doing?
 - Q. What was your job title?
 - Q. What was the name of the company/organisation you were working for?

Engagement statistics



SECTION 4 - UPDATES FROM COHORT D

Graduate communications

We have reflected upon the 'direct to graduate' communication channels we utilise for Graduate Outcomes. Alongside the official www.graduateoutcomes.ac.uk website, we currently use Twitter and LinkedIn to promote the survey and to provide legitimisation.

Each channel presents a great opportunity, both for providers to share and engage with Graduate Outcomes content via their own channels, and for HESA to enhance brand awareness among our target graduate populations directly. An initial social audit during cohort D has shown that less than 15% of official provider accounts are following us on Twitter and that LinkedIn is our fastest growing channel. It is now our intention to refocus our social media engagement and to launch a new Facebook channel to facilitate further engagement in early 2021.

An additional optional survey question was added to the thank you page of the online survey from cohort A (1 December 2020), asking respondents 'How did you hear about the Graduate Outcomes survey before today? Please select all that apply.' This will help us to shape future activity around the key touchpoints identified upon the completion of a successful response.

In line with these efforts, towards the end of cohort D, Neha Agarwal (HESA's Head of Research and Insight) shared our first graduate facing blog post, '[Why is it important that you participate in the Graduate Outcomes survey, now more than ever?](#)', to help graduates understand the wider context the survey.

We would like to deliver more graduate focused content in 2021 and welcome input on potential topics to cover. Please email communications@hesa.ac.uk.

SECTION 5 - MODIFICATIONS FOR YEAR 3 (2019/20)

The following modifications have been made to the survey for year 3 (cohort A):

Salary and currency

It was agreed with the Graduate Outcomes Steering Group (GOSG) that the collection of salary data based on international currencies was no longer required for use. Therefore, international currencies have been removed from the survey with only two options: United Kingdom pounds (£) and 'other' currency included.

Due to this change, salary will only be asked of graduates who select United Kingdom pounds (£) as their currency.

Research bank questions

A subset of the questions in the research questions opt-in bank has been updated following a request from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

The following questions (short names) have been removed from the survey – COLLSUBSAME, KNOWSKILDEV, WRKOWN as they were no longer required to be collected.

Four further questions have also been updated – COLLOUT, COLLSUBDIFF, INTLMOB, PLCINTSHP. These have all had their question wording updated, with the last two (INTLMOB and PLCINTSHP) having their valid entries updated.

Further information on all the changes specified above can be found on the [19072 Graduate Outcome results coding manual](#) under [revision history](#) and [data items](#).

SECTION 6 - THE NEXT STEPS FOR THE 18/19 COLLECTION

Dissemination

Now that the data collection is complete, we move onto a number of processes to prepare the data for the release. This includes the quality assurance of SIC and SOC coding by our data classification supplier Oblong and the ONS (Office for National Statistics), providing the quality assured datasets, the production of statistical outputs and finally the dissemination.

The 2018/19 provider data delivery will be 31 March, followed by the 2018/19 statistic releases in Mat. The final [data release dates](#) will be shared via the website as soon as we are able to do so (but no later than 4 weeks prior to release).



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT GRADUATE OUTCOMES

Website: www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/outcomes
Graduate website: www.graduateoutcomes.ac.uk
Twitter: https://twitter.com/grad_outcomes
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/graduate-outcomes>

If you have any queries regarding this update, please email liaison@hesa.ac.uk or call +44 (0) 1242 211 144.

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