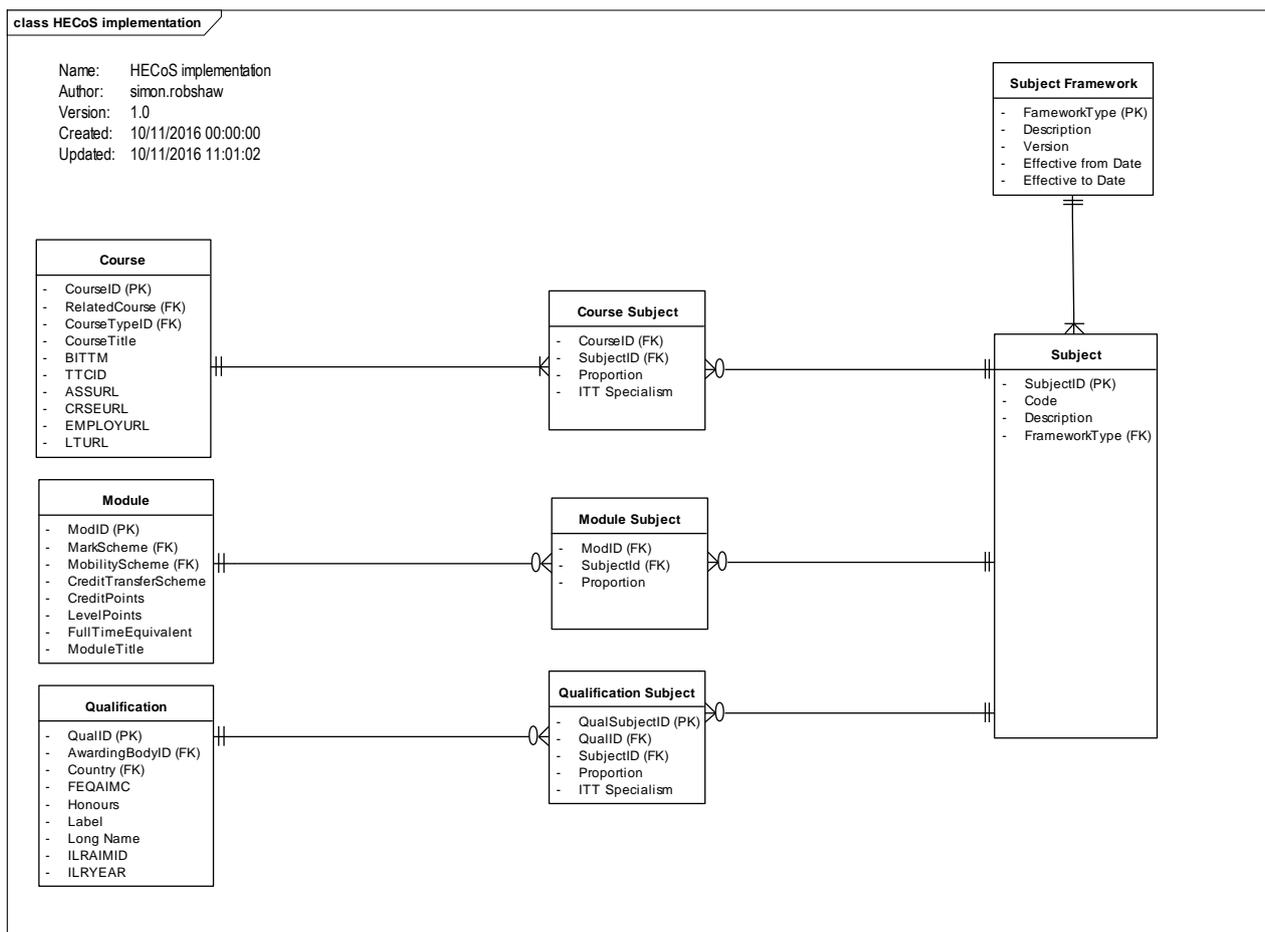


HECOS IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE AUGUST 2017

1. IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR HECOS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION DATA LANDSCAPE

HECoS (Higher Education Classification of Subjects) is a classification system for subjects, for which the primary use is in categorising the subject contents of a course. This is covered within the Higher Education Data Landscape Steering Group (DLSG) logical data model as follows:



The logical model is agnostic towards the coding frames that can be used to classify subjects within HE, as it is acknowledged that several frameworks are in use in various contexts, and the logical model must allow this to continue.

However, for each coding frame that is in use there needs to be an implementation standard to ensure all data collectors are using the same approach and to ensure consistency and comparability of data across the sector.

This is a guide for the use of HECoS codes by data consumers, and does not cover the maintenance and governance of the coding frame itself.

The HESA Data Futures Collection Design project has proposed a specific HECoS implementation, although this will only cover the structural implementation and not the validation of submitted data.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES OF HECOS ALLOCATION:

The allocation of HECoS courses will be performed by the course provider, or a delegated authority (particularly for franchised provision where the subject expertise may reside within the partner), as they are considered the authority on the content of the course. However, it will be necessary to have some mechanism to compare the allocation of codes between providers to ensure comparability is maintained. The approach to this will be governed through the Data Landscape Steering Group (DLSG).

The subjects of a course are definitional to the course, and therefore if the subjects materially change it is to be considered a new course.

Any aggregated use of HECoS codes should normally be done using the Common Aggregation Hierarchy. This can be downloaded in XLSX format [here](#).

2.1 Allocation rules

To ensure the consistency and comparability of the data across the sector it is important to standardise how codes are allocated in order to more accurately represent how the subjects contribute. The logical model allows subject allocation against 3 components and for each of these it is proposed to allow the following structure:

For each **COURSE** the number of codes that can be allocated is as follows:

At least 1 and no more than 5.

The course subject(s) should represent directly, or relate very closely to, the Qualification subject(s) associated with specific deliveries of that course.

For each **MODULE** the number of codes that can be allocated is as follows:

At least 1 and no more than 3.

The module subject(s) must represent the subject(s) taught in the module, and should represent directly, or relate very closely to, the Module Title.

For each **QUALIFICATION** the number of codes that can be allocated is as follows:

0 or at least 1 and no more than 5. 0 should be used to cover entry qualifications (i.e FE qualifications) which are not encompassed by HECoS and therefore would not have a subject allocation. It would be expected that there will be at least 1 subject allocated for each exit qualification.

The qualification subject(s) must represent directly, or relate very closely to, the wording on the qualification's official certificate of award. More than three qualification subjects would generally be regarded as exceptional.

While providers are given the option to describe a course, module or qualification using a maximum number of codes, it should be recognised that good subject coding is **economical**. The number of codes to describe courses, modules and qualifications should always be minimised in the interests of providing succinct information for intended users and for

consistency across the sector. Exhaustive or overly inclusionary approaches can result in occlusion rather than clarity.

In addition to the guidance above, subject coders should base their decisions on the academic subject taught or learned, rather than the pedagogical methods employed. While creativity and interdisciplinarity are encouraged, care is required to avoid over-use of codes, in cases where the distinction between subject and method is complex, such as for those in the following list:

- (100658) careers guidance
- (100962) research skills
- (101090) study skills
- (101221) enterprise and entrepreneurship
- (101277) work-based learning

Additional caution should be exercised in particular with the three codes that rely on personal learning in their definition:

- (101279) advice and guidance (personal learning)
- (101278) employability skills (personal learning)
- (101276) work placement experience (personal learning)

2.2 Subject proportions and course weighting

A Course may be given a balance indicator to denote the weighting of subjects in respect of the award structure, although this is not used to determine the allowable number or weighting of the individual subjects.

Percentages should not be derived from a detailed analysis of the contributions of subjects to individual students' programmes of study. They must instead be based on a broad assessment of the relative contributions of each subject, and be consistent with the guidance on economical coding and the relationship between qualification subjects and course subjects, above. No value less than 5% should be represented.

For each code allocated to a Course, Module or Qualification a proportion must be allocated. This proportion value is the amount of the total that this code represents and therefore the total proportion of HECoS codes allocated must add up to 100%.

3. ADDITIONAL ALLOCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF COURSES

There are a number of areas that have been identified where these basic allocation rules are not sufficient to meet the needs of the data consumers. It will be required that each of these conditions can be defined unambiguously (as in what defines a Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary courses), and where possible will not be defined through use of subject codes. For these situations, more specific rules are outlined below:

Note: these are based on the current HESA JACS guidance ([C16051 - Subject of course](#)) and will need reviewing and aligning with HECoS. This is also an area where specialist vocabularies may be defined and introduced. This area will need further engagement with stakeholders to define requirements, and this needs to be subjected to the appropriate governance.

3.1 Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary courses

There are a number of areas where specific rules are implemented in this space, including clinical and pre-clinical courses. It is expected that this need will remain, and rules derived from the current HESA guidance will be proposed.

3.2 ITT Specialisms

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) needs to be able to link ITT students in England to the intake target from which the NCTL has allocated numbers. In addition, only a subset of HECoS codes are appropriate for ITT programmes. The NCTL wants to ensure that only appropriate subjects are recorded.

Scotland and Northern Ireland use a separate list of school subjects and we will consult with them on whether they are in a position to adopt HECoS for their purposes.

It is envisioned that equivalent subjects to the JACS list specified in current HESA guidance will fulfil these needs, and we will publish further detail on this in due course. We will also publish guidance around the encoding of placement activity for these courses.

3.3 Interdisciplinary programmes

It is expected that interdisciplinary programmes can be classified using one or more of the following codes:

- (100392) applied science
- (101273) combined studies
- (101274) general studies
- (100314) humanities
- (101288) international studies
- (100391) natural sciences
- (101275) negotiated studies
- (101276) work placement experience (personal learning)

3.4 Degree Apprenticeships

The requirements for this will be confirmed with the appropriate authorities in due course. HE Course Deliveries (and associated Qualifications) that are components of a degree or higher apprenticeship should be coded in a way that is consistent with other similar (non-apprenticeship) courses delivered by the provider, and with the general guidance in this document.

3.5 Geographical constraints

There is a recognition that the requirements may differ dependent on the administration in which a provider operates, both in general and specifically for the scenarios above. Rules pertaining to individual administrations will be identified, and will be based on the current HESA guidance. However, as a point of principle, geographical constraints should be avoided where possible.

4. HESA STAFF RECORD

There is a requirement to migrate HECoS into the HESA Staff record to replace the usage of JACS in CURACCDIS – Current Academic Discipline. At present, providers can return a maximum of 3 JACS3 codes, this will be brought in line with the allocation rules (see 2.1):

For each **Current Academic Discipline** the number of codes that can be allocated is as follows:
0 or at least 1 and no more than 5.

Providers should be encouraged, for those staff working in more than 5 subjects, to return the 5 codes which best reflect the discipline.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on HECoS can be found on the HESA website:
<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/hecos>. Queries can be directed to hecos@hesa.ac.uk.