

NOTE OF HECOS/ATAS MEETING - FRIDAY 26 JANUARY 2018

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE, KING CHARLES STREET, LONDON SW1A 2AH

ATTENDEES

Andy Youell	Director of Data Policy and Governance, HESA
Charlie Hotchkiss	Data Policy and Governance Analyst, HESA
Kevin Curran	Head of Academic Technology Approval Scheme, FCO
Christina Matthews	Head of International Student Services, Aston University
Nigel Armitage	Scholarships and Compliance Officer, University of Leicester
Paul Norris	Senior Assistant Registrar, Cranfield University
Hong Sun	Visa and Immigration Team, Nottingham University
Clare Beckett	Director of Admissions and Recruitment, Staffordshire University
Lizzie Huckle	Head of International Student Support, Imperial College
Katherine Bevan	Assistant Academic Registrar, Queen Mary University of London

AIM OF MEETING

The aim of the meeting was to identify an approach to identifying courses that fall within the scope of the ATAS scheme, following the move from JACS to HECoS which takes place for the year 2019/20.

NOTE OF MEETING

The Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) is a counter proliferation tool used by HM Government for certifying foreign students from outside the EEA for entry into the United Kingdom to study or conduct research at post-graduate level in certain sensitive technology-related fields. ATAS is enshrined in UK Immigration law and obtaining an ATAS certificate is a prerequisite for any student wishing to apply for a visa to study an ATAS-applicable course. Since its launch in 2007, the ATAS scheme has used the Principal JACS codes (i.e. first two characters) to identify courses with subjects that fall within the scope of the scheme.

The meeting discussed various approaches for managing the adoption of HECoS for the ATAS scheme.

The meeting considered retaining the JACS code alongside the new HECoS codes so that the ATAS processes would not need to be changed in the short term. This was dismissed as being more burdensome in the long run and creating a danger that subject coding could diverge between the two processes.

The meeting considered and rejected the idea of defining ATAS in terms of full HECoS codes; these are too specific for the purposes of ATAS and can be particularly problematic for research degrees.

The favoured option was to use the third level of the Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH) to define the scope of ATAS in the future. Every HECoS code will map to one point in the CAH and there is a similar number of level 3 CAH codes to the number of Principal JACS codes.

The group discussed the issue of a course having multiple subject codes; in JACS implementations a course can have three subject codes and this figure increases to five in the HECoS implementation guide. A course with any of its subject codes on the ATAS list will fall into the scope of the scheme, irrespective of the proportion of the course that subject makes up. The ATAS application process currently requires a JACS Principal subject code to be entered; in the future this will be a CAH code.

The meeting considered the scenario of continuing students who were not in-scope of ATAS (in the days of JACS) subsequently coming into scope following the move to HECoS. It was agreed that the scheme would not force previously out-of-scope students to go through the ATAS process if the move from JACS to HECoS subsequently moved their course into scope. However, in the scenario where a student needs to update their visa or change their area of study, and a new ATAS certificate would ordinarily be required to reflect the change, then the new ATAS application would be based on the HECoS/CAH code for that course.

ACTIONS AND AGREEMENT

1. For the 2019 application cycle ATAS will be defined in terms of level-3 CAH codes.
2. FCO documentation should be updated to reflect CAH codes for the 2019 application cycle.
3. HE providers should publish the CAH codes for courses that fall within the scope of ATAS. Where a course has multiple subjects within the ATAS scope, the CAH code for the most significant subject should be published.
4. To assist usability, any reference to CAH codes in published material should be accompanied by the full CAH label text.
5. HESA will assist FCO in defining a list of CAH codes that, as far as possible, matches the current scope of the ATAS scheme.
6. Once the scope of ATAS is finalised, the CAH specification file on the HESA web site will have an ATAS flag added so that institutions can map their courses to the ATAS scope using HECoS and CAH codes.

FURTHER INFORMATION

HECoS resources (including the CAH) at HESA	https://www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/hecos
General HECoS helpdesk at HESA	hecos@hesa.ac.uk
HECoS mailing list	https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/HESA-HECOS
ATAS scheme	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academic-technology-approval-scheme
ATAS helpdesk	ATAS@fco.gov.uk