

HECoS Implementation guide

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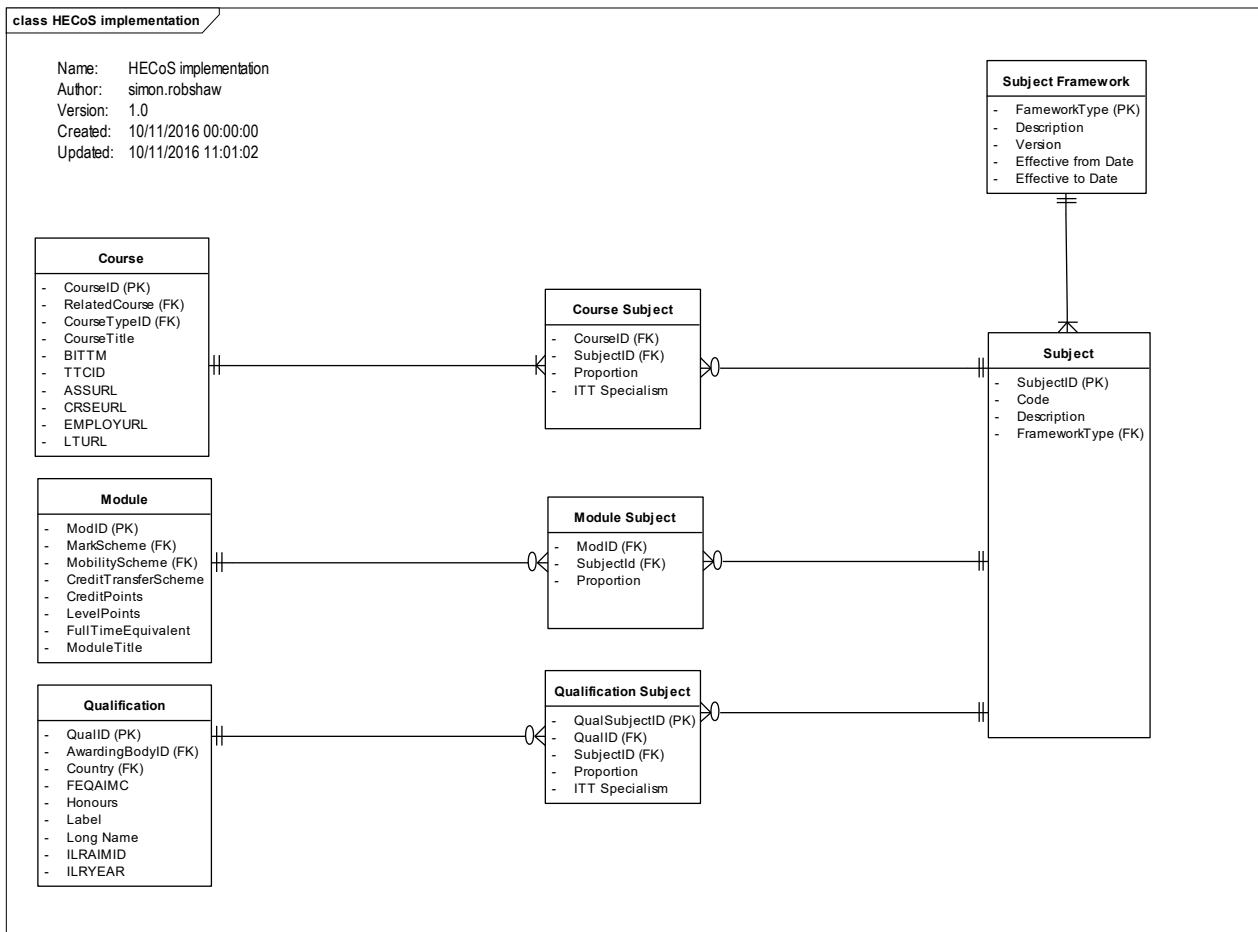
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1. IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR HECOS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION DATA LANDSCAPE

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 suppliers and 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.

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 the basic allocation rules described above are not sufficient to meet the needs of the data users. It will be required that each of these conditions can be defined unambiguously, and where possible will not be defined through use of subject codes. For these situations, more specific rules are outlined below:

3.1 Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary courses

There are a number of areas where specific rules are implemented for clinical, pre-clinical and postgraduate courses for professional practice.

Postgraduate courses in England and Northern Ireland in Price Group A

For providers in England and Northern Ireland, valid entries 100267, 100266 and 100494 can only be used for postgraduate taught students if:

The course bears very high costs comparable to the clinical unit of resource, or
A substantial proportion of the staff teaching time contributed to the course is provided by medically or dentally qualified university funded clinical academic staff, who hold honorary contracts with the NHS. This includes general practitioners.

The course is normally taught in a clinical environment.

For providers in England and Northern Ireland, valid entries 100267, 100266 and 100494 can only be used for research students if focus of their research is in a clinical environment and the lead supervisor should be a clinical academic.

Dental courses

Valid entries 100275 and 100266 must only be used for pre-clinical and clinical dentists: other courses must use either 100268 (dentistry), 100128 Dental technology, or 100283 Dental nursing.

Medical, Dental and Veterinary students:

Providers in England, Wales and NI:

For undergraduate medical and dental courses where students move from pre-clinical to clinical subjects in later years of the course, this should normally be recorded as one course for all years of the instance. CourseSubject.SBJCA should in this case be returned as joint clinical/pre-clinical ie both 100276 and 100267 or both 100275 and 100266. It may, in some cases, be appropriate to return this as two separate courses where there is a clear separation between the two parts of the course. In these instances, this should first be agreed with HEFCW, DfE (NI) or OfS as appropriate.

Providers in Scotland:

For undergraduate medical and veterinary courses where students move from pre-clinical to clinical subjects in later years of the course, this must be recorded as separate courses for the pre-clinical and clinical years of the instance.

3.2 Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Specialisms

At providers in England and Wales students identified as being initial teacher training students must be returned using this subset of HECoS. These requirements may change annually. Further details are given in the HESA coding manual guidance for the [SBJCA field](#).

We have worked with the Department for Education (DfE) and have confirmed a mapping document which providers must use to determine which codes need to be allocated to their ITT course. This will come into effect initially in ITT-C19053 and finally Data Futures.

[Download the ITT allocated HECoS codes](#)

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.

Trainee teachers may also study other subjects related to their subject specialism. In most analyses, it is generally preferred to treat ITT students as being wholly based within the applied field of education, except where non-ITT subject knowledge enhancement is a central component of their studies. To reflect this general preference:

- **Where the ITT course being followed is a PGCE**, the percentages of HECoS codes that relate to teacher training are scaled-up so that together, they sum to 100% of a full person equivalent (FPE). Any HECoS codes for non-teacher training subject specialisms have been returned are ignored.
- **Where an ITT course is not a PGCE**, the FPE is allocated equally between two groups: first the group of HECoS codes that relates to teacher training, and second to any other non-teacher training HECoS codes for subject specialisms that have been returned. The proportions that have been returned for these two groups are scaled so that each group equals 50% FPE. Where no non-teacher training HECoS codes for subject specialisms have been returned, 100% FPE will be comprised of HECoS codes relating to teacher training.

In cases where an ITT course has not had any HECoS codes relating to teacher training returned for it, we replace the appropriate proportion of FPE with the default administrative teacher training HECoS code 200001. HECoS code 200001 is not a part of the HECoS vocabulary, and reflects the existence of non-standard allocation, where present.

Further detail about the allocation of subjects can be found in the [HECoS implementation guide](#). The logic behind the derivation of FPE values for subjects of study can be found in the relevant [derived field specification](#).

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

HE Courses (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

HECoS is now used in the HESA Staff record to describe the Current Academic Discipline (CURACCDIS).

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.

We note that this update now requires integration into the DLSG Logical Model, and this will be undertaken as a point release to this guide.

5. AGGREGATED USES OF HECOS

Any aggregated use of HECoS terms should normally be done using the Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH). This provides standard groupings that provide consistent aggregation for analysis across a wide range of use-cases. The CAH can be applied to both HECoS and JACS subjects allowing for consistent analysis across both coding frames, providing some continuity in subject analysis through the transition from JACS to HECoS. CAH can be downloaded from the HECoS webpage.

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 liaison@hesa.ac.uk