

Summary of October 2012 business of the Performance Indicators Steering Group

Business of the Performance Indicators Steering group was undertaken electronically during November 2012 and January 2013. Ten of the fifteen members of the steering group provided a response in respect of the October 2012 PISG business.

1. Minutes of the previous meeting

1.1. All members who provided a response in respect of the October 2012 PISG business accepted the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

ACTION: HESA to publish the January 2012 PISG minutes on their website alongside the PIs and related content.

2. Recommendations from the technical group

2.1. All members who provided a response also endorsed the recommendations made to them by the Performance Indicators Technical Group. These are detailed below, along with associated actions arising from the PISG's acceptance of the recommendation:

2.1.1. The PISG were invited to note that the PISG and the PITG have at previous meetings discussed the publication of an explanatory note and statement which were intended to outline a number of changes, as well as the key areas of the PISG's and the PITG's consideration over the last year (such as the incorporation of A level subject information in the PI benchmarks). The PISG accepted the PITG's recommendation to publish a more comprehensive statement on the HESA website.

ACTION: HEFCE and HESA to draft such a statement/note for circulation to members of the PITG and the PISG.

2.1.2. The PITG had recommended an approach to the publication of the low participation neighbourhood indicators in 2013, 2014 and 2015, which was based on an update to the POLAR methodology employed by those indicators having recently become available. The PITG had reported that they could find no grounds on which to recommend the continued use of POLAR2 in preference over the new POLAR3, but felt that additional information was necessary to aid understanding of the change and its effects. For the 2013 publication the PITG had recommended:

- + Providing the LPN indicators for the current cohort (entrants in 2011-12) on the basis of the POLAR3 methodology;
- + Including supplementary, institution level tables that provide the LPN indicators for the previous two cohorts (entrants in 2010-11 and 2009-10) on the basis of the POLAR3 methodology;
- + Providing a supplementary, institution level table showing the LPN indicators for the current cohort on the basis of the POLAR2 methodology;
- + Including appropriate explanations of the data available and its interpretation.

The PISG accepted the PITG's recommendation to implement use of POLAR3 in the LPN indicators and the associated recommendations.

ACTION: HESA to publish the LPN indicators, supplementary tables and additional information as proposed, in the 2013, 2014 and 2015 publications.

2.1.3. The PITG had recommended that the suppression limits used by the PIs should be amended to align with Unistats, and suppressed on the basis of the denominator being less than 22.5, rather than the current limit of 20. The PISG accepted the PITG's recommendation.

ACTION: HESA to implement use of a suppression limit of 22.5 for the denominators used to calculate percentages in the 2013 publication of the PIs.

ACTION: The PITG to consider the suppression limits and approaches used in the PIs in more detail and provide advice to the PISG based on their assessment of the risks of the PIs compromising data protection.

2.1.4. Modifications to the 2011-12 DLHE questionnaire have resulted in a need to redefine the concept of 'activity' in respect of employment or study outcomes for use in the employment PIs. With no means to replicate the previous categorisations, the PITG had recommended use of a mapping that HESA had developed following consultation with a review group consisting of statutory customers and experts (given in PITG paper 12/05). The PISG accepted the PITG's recommendation.

ACTION: HESA to implement use of their proposed activity categorisations in the 2013 publication of the employment PIs.

2.1.5. Following changes made to the qualifications included in the UCAS tariff the PITG had recommended making use of the standard tariff calculation (XTARIFF) in the PIs wherever possible. It was noted that there would be some impact on the PI benchmarks as a result of incorporating new inclusions, but that the extent of the impact would not be known until the data became available. The PISG accepted the PITG's recommendation.

ACTION: HESA to implement use of the tariff calculation (XTARIFF) in the 2013 publication of the PIs, and to provide evidence to the PITG and the PISG on the impact of the newly included qualifications.

2.2. In light of OFFA's recent expansion of their analytical capabilities, the PITG had recommended that the PISG agree to adopt a principle whereby, if an organisation was represented on the PISG (as per the terms of reference), and had or gained technical expertise within that organisation then they should be invited to join the technical group. The PITG had noted that this would likely lead to OFFA and the NUS receiving an invitation for a technical representative to join the PITG. On advice from the Chair of the PISG, this matter would be considered at the next meeting of the PISG.

3. Review of the Performance Indicators

3.1. The PISG were invited to note that a draft tender document had been drafted by the secretariat, inviting proposals to undertake a fundamental review of the Performance Indicators. The draft tender was shared with members of the group representing the four UK funding bodies, and members whose organisations had precluded themselves from bidding to undertake the review by requesting sight of the tender document.

- 3.2. Feedback received from members in relation to the tender document requested:
- 3.2.1. Greater clarity in respect of the management and oversight of the review process.
 - 3.2.2. Greater clarity in respect of the UK-wide perspective that should be maintained: make clear that the review should genuinely take account of the views of stakeholders in all four devolved administrations, and that the review should seek to understand but not necessarily address particular policy concerns of individual nations.
 - 3.2.3. Recognition of the changing nature of the HE landscape, particularly with respect to HE provision operating in Further Education Colleges and alternative providers with designated courses.
 - 3.2.4. Questioning of how the PIs complement (or otherwise) other UK-wide approaches to the measurement of institutional performance or profile.
 - 3.2.5. Seeking further information on how the competing needs of stakeholders may be addressed.

ACTION: Secretariat to modify the tender document to account for the suggestions and requests of the PISG.

3.3. In a subsequent mail to PISG members on 14 January 2013, the management of the review process was clarified as follows:

- + HEFCE were commissioning this fundamental review on behalf of the PISG. The fundamental review would be 'owned' by, and would report to, the PISG. Via the PISG secretariat, the PISG would receive a final report.
- + Assessment of tenders and awarding of the review would be undertaken by an appointment panel consisting of three or four representatives from the PISG or the PITG.
- + The review would be steered by a project steering group. The Chair of the appointment panel would be the Chair of the project steering group, with other members of that group being nominated by the PISG. The project steering group would include members of the PISG and/or the PITG as well as (potentially) other representatives from PISG member organisations.

3.4. The tender document was finalised on the basis of the feedback received from PISG members, and was issued on 31 January 2013.

4. Delegated authority with regard to technical business

4.1. The steering group were invited to note that the PITG would be asked to consider two items by correspondence during December 2012. On account of the timings of decisions to be made (in relation to the timings of the 2013 publication), the PISG were asked to delegate authority to the Chair of the PISG to endorsing the anticipated recommendations made by the technical group in respect of these items. All members who provided a response agreed to the delegation of authority to the Chair of the PISG in respect of the two items detailed below.

4.2. A technical change which would mean that the employment PIs published in 2013 would be defined on the basis of a new DLHE population. The change was explained in paper PITG12/06.

- 4.2.1. All PITG members who provided a response during December 2012 supported the move to the new standard DLHE population, XPDLHE02.
- 4.2.2. Members of the PITG noted that at present some of the population considered by the non-continuation PIs to have continued or qualified, were not being included in the population considered by the employment PIs. This was felt to have provided a potential loophole whereby a good continuation outcome (such as the award of an HE-level diploma) was not then judged in terms of future prospects. The move to the new DLHE population would align the definitions for table series T3 and E1, and remove this potential loophole.
- 4.2.3. The PITG also reiterated the need to reference and explain (as far as possible) the impact of the changes within the 2013 publication of the employment indicators. An indication of the impact of the change at an institutional level should be provided to the PITG when 2011-12 data became available, particularly in respect of concentration in institutions of the newly included other undergraduate qualifications.

4.3. The PITG recommended that the employment PIs published in 2013 be defined on the basis of the new standard DLHE population, XPDLHE02, and that the 2013 publication of the employment PIs include a reference to this change. The Chair of the PISG accepted the PITG's recommendation.

ACTION: HESA to publish the 2013 employment PIs on the basis of the new standard DLHE population.

4.4. In response to section 3 of the June 2012 PITG minutes, HESA have considered the options with respect to a note outlining known issues relating to the WP indicators for institutions in Scotland and highlighting the availability of measures prepared by Scotland. Their proposed approach was described in paper PITG 12/07, and the suggested wording is given below.

The POLAR low participation measure is based on a UK wide classification of areas into participation bands. The relatively high (in UK terms) participation rate in Scotland coupled with the very high proportion of HE that occurs in FE colleges means that the figures for Scottish institutions could, when viewed in isolation, misrepresent their contribution to widening participation. Therefore, low participation data has not been produced for institutions in Scotland from 2007/08.

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) produce their own indicators relating to young full-time Scottish domiciled undergraduate entrants, showing proportions from the most deprived datazones and also from social classes NS-SEC 4-7. These measures are produced and published independently of 'Performance Indicators in HE in the UK'. The Performance Indicators Steering Group bears no responsibility for the SFC measures but has recognised that they may provide some contextual information for interested readers. The measures are available from the SFC website ^{FOOTNOTE}.

Footnote:

http://www.sfc.ac.uk/statistics/higher_education_statistics/HE_performance_indicators/Participation_indicator_for_Scottish_HEIs.aspx

4.4.1. All PITG members who provided a response had supported the provision of a reference to the known issues relating to the WP indicators for institutions in Scotland and for signposting the equivalent SFC publication. However, all respondents had also expressed concerns regarding the inclusion of the suggested link to the SFC's publication.

4.4.2. In particular, PITG members had expressed concerns about the detail of the web page that was proposed to link to, on account of the proposed web page containing an alternative presentation of an NS-SEC indicator, and openly criticising the PIs and their methodology in this respect. The PITG noted that the PIs already contained this measure and that it was not clear why the restriction to those domiciled in the home nation was necessary or fair to the rest of the UK. It was suggested that if the restriction had value, because more affluent students were more prone to move, then this was something that should be considered for the PIs. PITG members were clear that they had no objections to linking to the datazone-based data on account that this was simply looking at a different geography to POLAR.

4.5. The PITG recommended that the wording proposed by HESA and given above be included in the 2013 publication of the PIs, subject to the removal of the current proposed link and its replacement with a direct link to the publication of the datazones-based data (rather than to the summary page). The Chair of the PISG accepted the PITG's recommendation but with the removal of the words 'but has recognised that they may provide some contextual information for interested readers'.

ACTION: SFC to provide a direct link to the publication of the datazones-based data to HESA.

ACTION: HESA to publish the approved reference (given below) to the known issues relating to the WP indicators for institutions in Scotland within the 2013 publication of the PIs, including the direct link to the datazone-based data to be supplied by the SFC.

The POLAR low participation measure is based on a UK wide classification of areas into participation bands. The relatively high (in UK terms) participation rate in Scotland coupled with the very high proportion of HE that occurs in FE colleges means that the figures for Scottish institutions could, when viewed in isolation, misrepresent their contribution to widening participation. Therefore, low participation data has not been produced within the Performance Indicators for institutions in Scotland from 2007/08.

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) produce their own indicators relating to young full-time Scottish domiciled undergraduate entrants, showing proportions from the most deprived datazones and also from social classes NS-SEC 4-7. These measures are produced and published independently of 'Performance Indicators in HE in the UK'. The Performance Indicators Steering Group bears no responsibility for the SFC measures. The measures are available from the SFC website ^{FOOTNOTE}.

Footnote:

[Amended link direct to the datazone-based SFC data.](#)

5. Proposed publication dates

5.1. In accordance with Official Statistics requirements, the dates for the 2013 publication of the Performance Indicators needed to be made available via the HESA website at least one month in advance of publication. In an email to PISG members on 14 January 2013, the PISG were asked for their approval (or otherwise) of the proposed publication dates detailed below:

- Thursday, 21 March 2013: Release of Tranche 1 – the widening participation and non-continuation PIs (tables T1 to T7)
- Thursday, 4 July 2013: Release of Tranche 2 – the employment and research PIs (tables E1 and R1)

5.2. Members of the PISG were invited to note that the proposed release of Tranche 2 was dependent on the publication of HESA's statistical first release (SFR) relating to the 2011-12 destinations of leavers from higher education (DLHE) survey going ahead as planned at the end of June 2013. Thursday, 11 July would serve as a reserve publication date for Tranche 2 in the event of a delay to the publication of the 2011-12 DLHE SFR.

5.3. The PISG approved the proposed 2013 publication dates.

ACTION: HESA to publish the 2013 Performance Indicators according to the agreed timetable.

6. Date of the next meeting

6.1. The PISG would next meet following receipt of the final report of the fundamental review of the performance indicators, likely in mid-July or early-September 2013, with dates to be agreed by correspondence.