

Performance Indicators Technical Group

Minutes of the Performance Indicators Technical Group held at 11.00am on Friday, 25 November 2011 at Northavon House, Bristol

Present:

Members:	Jonathan Waller	Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) [Chair]
	Gordon Anderson	Scottish Funding Council (SFC)
	Suzie Dent	HESA
	Hannah Falvey	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)
	Kathryn Heywood	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
	Jovan Luzajic	Universities UK, Universities Scotland, Higher Education Wales, Guild HE
	Allan Nesbitt	Department for Education and Learning, Northern Ireland (DELNI)
	Richard Puttock	HEFCE
	Daniel Walker	UCAS
	Chris Williams	Welsh Government
Secretariat:	Alison Brunt	HEFCE
	Mark Gittoes	HEFCE
Observing:	Mark Taylor	BIS

1. Welcome from the chair

1.1. Following introductions, the chair welcomed members to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting of the PITG (30 June 2011)

2.1. The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

3.1. At their June 2011 meeting the group had requested one revision to the wording of its terms of reference. Members were invited to note that this modification was made, and that the performance indicators steering group (PISG) had agreed the terms of reference for both the PISG and the PITG at their meeting in July 2011. Details of the membership and terms of reference for both groups were now published on the HEFCE website.

4. Feedback from the July 2011 PISG (PISG minutes)

4.1. JW invited members to note that many of the PISG's discussion points from their July 2011 meeting would be covered in more detail later in the meeting on account of their relating to agenda items of this PITG meeting. They included the contextual information and commentary published alongside the PIs; initial analysis to inform development of a review of the PIs; and discontinuation of table T6 (module completion rates).

4.2. The PISG had discussed the role and relevance of the PIs and the PISG in the context of changes to the HE sector. They had noted that while increased information and resources had become available to users in recent years in relation to the performance of the HE sector, the PIs remained valuable and meaningful measures that had a secure future and a continued role. They had acknowledged that there were limitations of the PIs but also scope for future development.

4.3. Advice was required from the PITG to the PISG in respect of the current development priorities: commentary published alongside the PIs; a review of the PIs; and incorporation within the PIs of HE provision delivered by FECs and other alternative providers. Given that issues in relation to the latter were still emerging, it was proposed that the PITG would recommend to the PISG to postpone consideration of incorporation of HE provision delivered by alternative providers until greater clarity on the HE regulatory framework was available.

Action: The PITG to recommend to the PISG postponement of consideration of the incorporation within the PIs of HE provision delivered by FECs and other alternative providers.

Action: The PITG to revisit the issues relating to the inclusion of alternative providers at a later meeting of the group, once the HE regulatory framework became clearer.

5. PITG communications policy

(PITG 11/05)

5.1. The requirement for a communications policy to manage processes for communication between the PITG and the PISG, and for onward publication of PITG evidence, papers and minutes, was highlighted at the last meeting of the PITG. It had been considered at the July 2011 meeting of the PISG and a policy had now been drafted.

5.2. The group noted that the policy captured the role of the chair of the PITG and their responsibility to relay appropriate information between the two groups in both directions. The ability to provide an accessible narrative of PITG considerations was also highlighted, and members noted that the PITG minutes had worked effectively in this respect.

5.3. In regards to other forms of representation that the PITG may choose to provide to the PISG on a case-by-case basis, the group noted that consideration of the papers and/or statistical evidence would need to include whether or not it was most appropriate that these representations were in original draft form or modified following discussions of the PITG.

5.4. JW noted that the issue of transparency in relation to the operation of the PISG and the PITG was a particular feature of the PISG's discussion of communications. It was intended that the policy reflected this, and gave rise to the agreement to publish papers and minutes of both the PISG and the PITG meetings. Exceptions to this would include papers that included confidential or sensitive material, or related to policy in development or work in progress, and the policy outlined the appropriate channels for approval of publication. The publication of PITG papers would be implemented from this meeting onwards: the group noted that papers from their earlier meeting preceded the decision, and that this approach aligned with the PISG's implementation of the policy.

5.5. Members accepted the communications policy that had been drafted.

Action: PITG to agree at their next meeting the papers from this November 2011 meeting that were and were not exempt from immediate publication.

6. Benchmarks and A level subject information: further analyses (PITG 11/06)

6.1. MG introduced the paper and noted that the PISG had previously requested advice from the PITG before they took a view on whether or not the current PI benchmarks took sufficient account of institutions' admissions requirements, particularly with regard to the A level subjects entrants held. At their June 2011 meeting the PITG had considered an initial analysis that was based on the most frequent A level subject combinations for different HE subject areas at highly selective institutions. At that time the group felt unable to provide a fully appropriate and informed response to the PISG and that further analysis was required before they would be in a position to do so. This paper presented extended analysis that had resulted from the group's discussion at their previous meeting.

6.2. The alternative methods presented in the paper were discussed, and the group considered some of the contextual information that the paper provided in relation to the effect of these methods on institutions' benchmarks and the qualification on entry benchmarking groups. Members agreed that none of the methods that the PITG had now explored had had a material effect in terms of any of the contextual information considered. Minimal changes could be observed in the breakdowns of the qualification on entry groupings that were provided, and the significance markers would remain unchanged for a majority of institutions. At the very most ten institutions in the sector would change significance should any of the methods be adopted: only one institution (at most) would see their significance move to be 'above' from the state shown by the existing location-adjusted benchmarking method.

6.3. It was felt that the key qualities (i.e. be associated with what is being measured) that should be possessed by factors accounted for in the benchmarks could not be provided by any of the methods. Indeed, the group agreed that the only material effect of any of the methods considered would be an unnecessary increase to the number of benchmarking groups, and potential volatility arising from these groups being smaller in size, as well as additional complexity in the benchmarking method. This would be detrimental to the benchmarks.

6.4. The group noted that though equivalent analysis had not been undertaken that related precisely to Scottish Highers, these qualifications involved students studying a larger number of subject areas and were less constrained than A levels. As such members were confident that inclusion of subject area information would be even more complex and effects on benchmarks would be equally minimal.

6.5. Members felt that the group had undertaken a thorough analysis of a range of methods, and covered sufficient ground to have developed a good understanding of the issues relating to the inclusion of A level subject area information in the benchmarks. It was on this basis that the group agreed that they were not able to support any introduction of A level subject area as a factor within the benchmark calculations. They were now happy to make a recommendation to the PISG that reflected this.

Action: The chair to provide a definitive response to the PISG at their next meeting recommending that A level subject area information should not be included in the PI benchmarks for the reasons outlined above.

6.6. The PITG agreed that the minutes of their meeting would help present the case supporting their recommendation, but that an additional paper to the steering group would ensure transparency in relation to this issue. Members felt that the paper should seek to clearly present the disadvantages of including A level subject information in the PI benchmarks, include coverage of the distribution of benchmarking group sizes and present a limited selection of the contextual information that best demonstrated the effects of including the information.

Action: HEFCE and HESA to draft a paper for the PISG to present the case for their recommendation more fully.

7. Initial analysis of the WP and research Performance Indicators (PITG 11/07)

7.1. MG introduced the paper and noted that the PITG had been asked to highlight to the PISG any known issues and emerging context relating to the Widening Participation (WP) and Research PIs to inform the development of a review of the PIs.

7.2. The process for a review of the PIs, including any consultation required, would be established by the next meeting of the PISG and information that the PITG was able to provide on the issues that may need to be addressed would be welcome. Further expectations of the PITG in terms of their contribution to any review process were not clear, but may become more so once the process manifested itself.

7.3. Members noted that the PISG would need to be alert to the Official Statistics requirements in their development of any review: in particular they should seek to provide appropriate coverage in terms of users and usages. A review should therefore be very clear on its purposes and objectives. The group also recommended further thinking around the most appropriate form for any review to take. A rolling review process may be more able to capture current positions and usages, but a more comprehensive review process may be better able to address issues that span the different groups of indicators and capture a complete picture of how users engage with the PIs. Workload implications should be borne in mind in relation to either review process.

Action: The PITG chair to seek clarification on the chosen review process, and the likely nature of further input required from the PITG, within discussions of this area by the PISG at their next meeting.

7.4. In preparing the PITG paper, the secretariat had sought to interpret some of those issues with which they were familiar, intending for the PITG to consider them further, highlight additional issues, and ensure UK-wide perspectives. Members felt that the paper covered the known historical issues comprehensively and would provide useful information to the PISG.

WP indicators

7.5. In relation to the WP indicators, UCAS noted that NS-SEC was recognised as an ongoing issue and that solutions were still being sought to address the high levels of unknowns in these data. To ensure that any review of the indicators was appropriately focussed, members noted that there were key questions that would require clarification from PISG. The priorities of the WP indicators in terms of what they are intended to measure would need to be determined: were they seeking to measure educational and/or social disadvantage?

7.6. If educational disadvantage was the intention members believed that a review would need to address the potential for the low participation indicators to make use of updated POLAR data, or the potential to improve linking of data regarding the schools that students previously attended. If social disadvantage was the intention of the WP indicators, members noted that the PISG had previously considered the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and rejected its use for a number of reasons that remained valid. It may therefore be more challenging to ensure that a review dealt effectively with issues in this area.

7.7. The group discussed the issues highlighted in terms of emerging context, and again believed this to be a comprehensive account. In particular, they highlighted the potential for an increased focus on any uneven distribution observed across (and within) institutions, and a resulting potential to consider other indicators in relation to WP. Possibilities in terms of indicators relating to ethnic groups and other equality and diversity measures were felt to be important for coverage by any review, along with indicators relating to attainment and free school meals receipt. Given the recent and forthcoming changes to higher education in the UK, particular care would be required by the review to address issues in a manner that was consistent and sensitive to HE provision at institutions in all four administrations of the UK.

Action: The PITG to seek clarification from the PISG as to the priorities and intentions for the WP indicators to enable the PITG to advise further where necessary.

Action: The PITG to provide advice to the PISG on any review of the WP indicators on the basis of the known issues and emerging context highlighted by the paper and the PITG's discussion.

Research indicators

7.8. Members noted that usage of the research indicators by themselves, funding body and government colleagues, and others was unclear but not believed to be extensive. The visibility of these indicators was therefore an important issue that the PITG and the PISG should seek to better understand. Knowledge of institutions' use of the research PIs would be useful, and the 2006 review of the PIs may provide some further insight as to the perceptions of these indicators.

7.9. The group discussed the existing research PIs and noted that these indicators differed to the WP, retention and employment ones in nature. Whether or not this was an advantage or disadvantage was not known given limited clarity on how institutional performance could most usefully be measured in this area. A priority was felt to be to identify the sorts of PIs that would be useful in relation to research: if these did not match

with the current indicators then possibilities for, and focuses of, replacements should be considered.

7.10. Members noted that the HESA academic cost centres that were used in the derivation of the current research indicators had been reviewed and now provided greater resolution in some areas. It was felt that this may alleviate some of the issues that have existed in relation to these indicators and mean greater consistency in future. However, the issues relating to funding council QR allocations remained significant. QR funding models were noted to differ across the devolved nations of the UK and the increasing divergence of these models may have an increasing impact on the research indicators and interpretation of them.

Action: Secretariat to revisit the findings of 2006 review of the PIs to seek insight regarding the perceptions of the research indicators by other users. PITG members to consider what other sources might be explored to enhance understanding of institutional and other usage of these PIs.

Action: The PITG to provide advice to the PISG on any review of the research indicators on the basis of the known issues and emerging context highlighted by the paper and the PITG's discussion.

8. The inclusion of low credit bearing students in the Performance Indicators population (PITG 11/08)

8.1. SD introduced the paper and noted that the group had considered at their last meeting whether or not historical reasons for differences between the standard HESA populations and the PI populations were still valid. One of the key areas of difference that was discussed related to the exclusion of students on low credit bearing courses. At that time the PITG asked HESA to undertake further analysis of the data coverage of low credit bearing students and provide details of that coverage to the PITG along with additional contextual information.

8.2. It was highlighted to the group that only 7.4 per cent of the 75,575 UK domiciled low credit bearing full- and part-time undergraduate entrants in the 2009-10 HESA session population were not currently being included within the PIs population due to reduced information in fields which were currently used to define the PIs population.

8.3. The group noted that the distribution of low credit bearing students across institutions varied and some returned more reduced records than others, but that numbers with a reduced return (5,600 students) were relatively small overall. Their inclusion / exclusion would mainly impact on table T2b (Part-time undergraduate entrants by age marker and low participation marker) on account of low credit bearing students largely being mature and part-time other undergraduates.

8.4. The group also noted that inclusion of all low credit bearing students within the PI populations may increase the number of unknowns in the data, and that there may be differences in this respect across institutions in the devolved nations where there may be different requirements for some components within a reduced return (for example, FTE). Members felt, however, that institutions should not have the ability to define their own PI populations by choosing whether or not to return a reduced record for their low credit

bearing students. As a result the group agreed to make the recommendation to the PISG to include all students on low credit bearing courses within the PI populations.

Action: The PITG to recommend to the PISG that HESA implement the inclusion within the PI populations of all students on low credit bearing courses, regardless of whether or not a reduced return has been submitted.

Action: HESA to look further at the distributions of unknowns in the data in considering the appropriate manner in which to treat these missing values.

9. Performance Indicators contextual information and commentary (PITG 11/09)

9.1. The group were informed that, as part of their discussion of the role and relevance of the PIs at their July 2011 meeting, the PISG had asked the PITG to provide them with initial advice on the potential for improvements to be made to the contextual information and commentary published alongside the PIs on HESA's website. The PISG had felt that a program of work was required to address visibility, awareness and understanding of the PIs. In particular, it was requested that this work focus on providing accessible information regarding the use and content of the indicators.

9.2. SD introduced the paper and outlined the proposed modifications to the existing PIs area of the HESA website. It was noted that the PISG had been keen to provide two levels of explanation such that the full technical detail remained available to those who sought it, and the group felt that this seemed a sensible approach. The group felt that there would need to be some user input via pilot testing to assess actual improvements these modifications made to accessibility, but noted that this would align with Official Statistics requirements relating to knowledge of users and their usage and requirements. They agreed that the proposed modifications should be recommended to the PISG.

9.3. Members discussed other possibilities that may offer an improvement to the accessibility of the PIs. These are outlined below:

- a. Include a short survey on the HESA website allowing users to comment on the individual tables, their usage and possible improvements. In the first instance, an e-mail could be sent to all institutional PI contacts encouraging them to complete the survey. The survey could remain on the site long-term with any key messages and suggestions being fed-back to PITG and PISG.
- b. Raise the profile of summary information and time series through the use of accessible charts.
- c. Provide an alternative structure of PI information: an institution focussed structure as well as the current indicator focussed structure. i.e. introduce an ability to look at all indicators available for a particular institution in a given year. Members noted that this may align well with other areas of the Public Information agenda.
- d. Provide an ability to retrieve PIs for a particular grouping of institutions. For example, allowing you to just select the Welsh institutions or the institutions within your own English region.
- e. Review the presentation of the PI tables and the appropriateness of the contextual information provided within them. Members recognised the importance

of contextual information in accurate interpretation of the indicators but noted that some tables were very large on account of their inclusion. Alternative layouts may be able to alleviate some of this and could be explored.

f. Provide links to supplementary information, for example data prepared by the devolved nations that focussed specifically on institutions in that nation. Members agreed that while this would be possible it was not necessarily desirable: if the supplementary measures were sufficiently valuable to warrant this approach then the PISG should be advised to consider them for inclusion within the official PIs. Otherwise, there was a risk to the interpretation of the PIs and their value, as well as the risks arising from an inability of the PISG to exercise control over these supplementary measures.

g. Review press relations and engagement with institutions with regards to interpretation of the PIs, and consider the potential for a dissemination seminar.

Action: The PITG to recommend to the PISG the series of modifications to the existing PIs area of the HESA website outlined by the paper, and invite the PISG to consider those described in the discussion detailed above.

10. Process for discontinuation of Table T6 (Oral)

10.1. JW noted that at their July 2011 meeting the PISG had discussed the future of Table T6 – Module completion rates, produced for HEIs in Wales only – and proposed its discontinuation on the basis that the measure was no longer being used. HESA had been asked to provide clarification of the process for such discontinuation given the PI's status as official statistics and to liaise with HEFCW colleagues to clarify support for discontinuation.

10.2. Members were informed that while it remained under investigation, responses had now been received from seven of the 11 HEIs in Wales and each had stated that they made no use of Table T6. HEFCW had also confirmed that they did not use this information in its published form. The PITG confirmed that they were happy to support discontinuation of the indicator on the basis of these responses.

10.3. JW updated the group on the process for discontinuation of an indicator in accordance with guidance from the National Statistician's office. This stated that the announcement that a statistic would be discontinued should be made far in advance, and preferably in the release prior to discontinuation. On this basis the PITG agreed to HESA's proposal that a recommendation be made to the PISG that Table T6 should be published for the final time in 2012, and that this publication should announce its discontinuation with effect from 2013 onwards.

Action: The PITG to recommend to the PISG that discontinuation of Table T6 should take effect from 2013 onwards: the indicator should be published in the 2012 release, in which the decision to discontinue it should be announced.

11. Technical changes to the Performance Indicators (PITG 11/10)

11.1. SD introduced the paper and noted that the need to consider changes to the benchmarking groups arose from the introduction of a new coding frame, QVALENT3, for highest qualification on entry to replace the existing QVALENT2. The group were

informed that the benchmarking groups would need to be defined in terms of a combination of QVALENT2 and QVALENT3 as the latter was a compulsory part of the HESA return for entrants only in 2010-11: for existing students QVALENT2 could still be used.

11.2. The paper outlined the proposed new qualification on entry groupings for use within the PI benchmarks:

- a. QVALENT2 code 10 (undergraduate qualifications with qualified teacher status) had previously been erroneously included within the 'Higher education qualification – Other undergraduate' group. The group agreed that the revised grouping should include this code within the 'Higher education qualification – First Degree' group, along with its equivalent QVALENT3 code H11.
- b. The group noted that in QVALENT3 code J49 was used to identify HE level (level 4) foundation courses but there was no longer a code to identify FE level (level 3) foundation courses. Members recognised that numbers were likely to drop given that the 'Foundation course' group would now only contain HE level foundation courses but that they were expected to remain substantial. The proposed grouping was agreed.
- c. Members agreed the proposed approach in relation to QVALENT3 codes X04 (other qualification level not known) and P80 (other qualification at level 3) in that identification of a tariffable qualification should first be sought and assigned before any remaining non-tariffable qualification is assigned to the 'Others' group¹.
- d. The group noted that BTEC qualifications were now returned to QVALENT 3 codes X04 or those beginning with P. The ability to identify BTEC qualifications would therefore rely on the level of detail provided by institutions in the granular qualifications on entry data. HESA noted that this information was being provided, though more consistently for institutions in England than for those in the devolved nations. Members agreed that the 'BTEC' grouping should be retained, and a note included in the PIs publication that highlighted the reduced proportions of entrants from Scotland and Wales who were known to hold BTEC qualifications between 2009-10 and 2010-11.
- e. Members agreed that since the international baccalaureate certificate was now tariffable and a QVALENT3 code available for it, the 'International Baccalaureate' group should include both the international baccalaureate certificate and the international baccalaureate diploma.
- f. While there was no QVALENT3 code available to be included within the definition of the 'GNVQ/NVQ' group, members agreed that the group should be retained. It would no longer be relevant in respect of the WP indicators which considered entrants and QVALENT3 only, but would remain in the benchmark

¹ Subsequent analysis following the meeting showed that HESA validation rules in respect of QVALENT3 code X04 prevent its use where a student holds tariffable qualifications. As such, the process outlined here would prove to be superfluous in relation to the X04 code.

calculations in respect of the other PIs: its continued use should be revisited at a later stage if numbers in the group became small.

g. QVALENT3 code P92 (level 3 qualifications of which none are subject to UCAS tariff) was noted to have no equivalent in terms of QVALENT2, but contained a substantial number of students in the 2010-11 data. The group recognised that there was no clear cut way to separate the QVALENT3 codes beginning with P into two distinct groups in the manner that was possible with respect to the QVALENT2 codes of 39 and 40. For QVALENT3 codes beginning with P it was agreed that student records would be interrogated for A level or Highers grades, international baccalaureates, BTECs and so on so that they could be assigned to the appropriate benchmarking group where possible. Though it may facilitate a large benchmarking group, where P codes (including P92) could not be assigned using this process they would fall into a group of 'level 3 and equivalent qualifications with unknown points'.

11.3. Members approved the recommendation to the PISG of their agreed proposals in respect of the new qualification on entry benchmarking groups.

Action: The PITG to recommend to the PISG the agreed proposals for the new qualifications on entry benchmarking groups defined in terms of both QVALENT2 and QVALENT3.

12. Update on the introduction of the A* grade

(Oral)

12.1. Members were invited to note that at their previous meeting they had made a decision to make an interim recommendation to the PISG regarding the treatment of A* grades A level as A grades for the short term. HEFCE, HESA and UCAS had planned to explore the potential to obtain information regarding the qualifications on entry held by UCAS accepted applicants.

12.2. The group were updated that UCAS had looked further at this issue. They had found that the *J transaction was not the best source of this information for a number of reasons, but regardless of this, considering the data in such a way as to further explore the issue was not included in the usage agreement that existed between HEIs and UCAS. Members noted that the 2010-11 HESA data would soon be available. UCAS suggested that there were a reasonable number of deferred entry students starting in 2010-11 so the data contained a mix of old and new A grades achieved at A level. There would be institutional variation in this and it was possible that at some institutions a sizeable proportion of entrants would be treated differently. The group agreed to support their interim recommendation to treat A* grades at A level as A grades for the time being.

Action: The PITG to recommend to the PISG that for the short term A* grades achieved at A level should be treated as an A grade.

12.3. Members were invited to note that UCAS had expressed willingness to undertake analysis in future to enable data to become available to the PITG on the characteristics of new qualifications that would be introduced to the UCAS tariff. Early knowledge of additions to the tariff would enable the PITG to refine its approach to their inclusion within the benchmarking calculations.

13. Date of the next meeting

13.1. The PITG would meet next in June 2012, with the date to be agreed by correspondence.

14. Any other business

14.1. Members highlighted an issue that had the potential to impact upon institutions' benchmarks and that they felt worthy of bringing to the attention of the PISG.

14.2. The group recognised that institutions in England had been incentivised to improve their qualifications on entry data. This incentive was provided by the introduction of mechanisms within student number controls that enabled unconstrained recruitment of students who held qualifications on entry that were equivalent to, or higher than, AAB achieved at A level. It was anticipated that as a result, 2010-11 HESA data would show more complete and comprehensive qualifications on entry data and an effect of this may be that English institutions appeared to have larger numbers of students in benchmarking groups that captured higher tariff scores. It follows that there may be potential for an impact on the benchmarks calculated.

14.3. A particular point to note was that this improvement would not necessarily be consistent across the devolved nations: the incentive described above did not exist for institutions outside of England. Though funding bodies in the devolved nations had continued to encourage high and consistent data quality across all UK institutions, it was unlikely that institutions in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland would see similar improvements in their 2010-11 qualifications on entry data. As a result they would not see the same movement in their benchmarking groups and the benchmarks calculated for them.

14.4. Members accepted that this situation was likely to materialise but recognised that there was nothing that could be done to mitigate the effects. The group agreed the proposal that the PITG recommend to the PISG that the 2012 publication should note this situation and highlight its impacts to users.

Action: The PITG to recommend to the PISG that the 2012 publication note improvements observed in qualifications on entry data in 2010-11 for English institutions only as a result of incentives introduced by the new student numbers control policy in England. Impacts on the benchmarks for English HEIs were likely to result.

Meeting closed at 13.05pm

Actions arising:

Action: The PITG to recommend to the PISG postponement of consideration of the incorporation within the PIs of HE provision delivered by FECs and other alternative providers.

Action: The PITG to revisit the issues relating to the inclusion of alternative providers at a later meeting of the group, once the HE regulatory framework became clearer.

Action: PITG to agree at their next meeting the papers from this November 2011 meeting that were and were not exempt from immediate publication.

Action: The chair to provide a definitive response to the PISG at their next meeting recommending that A level subject area information should not be included in the PI benchmarks for the reasons outlined above.

Action: HEFCE and HESA to draft a paper for the PISG to present the case for their recommendation more fully.

Action: The PITG chair to seek clarification on the chosen review process, and the likely nature of further input required from the PITG, within discussions of this area by the PISG at their next meeting.

Action: The PITG to seek clarification from the PISG as to the priorities and intentions for the WP indicators to enable the PITG to advise further where necessary.

Action: The PITG to provide advice to the PISG on any review of the WP indicators on the basis of the known issues and emerging context highlighted by the paper and the PITG's discussion.

Action: Secretariat to revisit the findings of 2006 review of the PIs to seek insight regarding the perceptions of the research indicators by other users. PITG members to consider what other sources might be explored to enhance understanding of institutional and other usage of these PIs.

Action: The PITG to provide advice to the PISG on any review of the research indicators on the basis of the known issues and emerging context highlighted by the paper and the PITG's discussion.

Action: The PITG to recommend to the PISG that HESA implement the inclusion within the PI populations of all students on low credit bearing courses, regardless of whether or not a reduced return has been submitted.

Action: HESA to look further at the distributions of unknowns in the data in considering the appropriate manner in which to treat these missing values.

Action: The PITG to recommend to the PISG the series of modifications to the existing PIs area of the HESA website outlined by the paper, and invite the PISG to consider those described in the discussion detailed above.

Action: The PITG to recommend to the PISG that discontinuation of Table T6 should take effect from 2013 onwards: the indicator should be published in the 2012 release, in which the decision to discontinue it should be announced.

Action: The PITG to recommend to the PISG the agreed proposals for the new qualifications on entry benchmarking groups defined in terms of both QVALENT2 and QVALENT3.

Action: The PITG to recommend to the PISG that for the short term A* grades achieved at A level should be treated as an A grade.

Action: The PITG to recommend to the PISG that the 2012 publication note improvements observed in qualifications on entry data in 2010-11 for English institutions only as a result of incentives introduced by the new student numbers control policy in England. Impacts on the benchmarks for English HEIs were likely to result.

