

## **UK Performance Indicators Technical Group**

Minutes of the UK Performance Indicators Technical Group (UKPITG) held at 12.00pm on Monday, 20 July 2015 at Northavon House, Bristol and via video conference

### **Present:**

Members:	Jonathan Waller	Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) [Chair]
	Gordon Anderson	Scottish Funding Council (SFC)
	Matthew Bollington	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
	Suzie Dent	HESA
	Hannah Falvey	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)
	Jovan Luzajic	Universities UK, Universities Scotland, Higher Education Wales, GuildHE
	Richard Puttock	Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
	Chris Williams	Welsh Government
Secretariat:	Alison Brunt	HEFCE
	Mark Gittoes	HEFCE

### **Apologies:**

Michael MacNeill	Department for Education and Learning, Northern Ireland (DELNI)
Awaiting nomination	UCAS

## **1. Welcome from the chair**

1.1 Following introductions, the chair welcomed members to the meeting. It was noted that the secretariat were awaiting a formal communication from UCAS as to their intention to withdraw their membership of the UK Performance Indicators Steering and Technical Groups.

## **2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**

2.1. The group accepted the minutes of the previous meeting as a true and accurate record of the meeting. It was noted that all actions arising from the minutes were addressed by items on the agenda.

ACTION: HESA to publish the minutes of UKPITG's February meeting on their website alongside the UK Performance Indicators and associated content.

## **3. Matters arising**

- (a) Publication timings for UKPIs

Following the UKPITG's February discussion of concerns surrounding the timeliness of Tranche 1 of the UKPIs, the steer requested by members had been sought from UKPISG. This related to the potential separation of the WP and non-continuation indicators into two publication tranches.

UKPISG had considered that the concerns that had been raised were justified, and requested that HESA publish the WP UKPIs separately to the non-continuation indicators to the earliest possible timetable. UKPITG recognised that items on the agenda would impact on the feasibility of making this change in the 2016 publication of the WP UKPIs. On this basis, HESA proposed that the existing WP UKPIs be published for the providers currently included in the UKPIs coverage in late January/early February 2016.

ACTION: UKPITG members to identify any problems with the proposed 2016 publication timetable for the WP UKPIs as soon as possible, in order to facilitate the announcement of the change required by the status of UKPIs as official statistics.

(b) Collection of UKPRNs in the PREVINST field

SD updated the group on concerns previously expressed by UKPITG as to the extent of missing information in the collection of UKPRNs in the PREVINST field.

It was reported that the \*J data transaction revealed that around 30 per cent of all records had PREVINST returned as 'unknown'. This proportion was said to be close to 15 per cent among records pertaining to young, UK-domiciled entrants. However, when analysed by higher education provider some in Scotland and Northern Ireland (where coverage of UKPRN assignments to schools was partial at the time of data returns) were reported to have between 60 and 80 per cent of records with unknown previous school information.

HESA reported that providers were being encouraged to patch the data using available mappings (including that facilitated by the Department for Education's EduBase), and that while some were committing resource to doing this others were unable to do so. GA reported that SFC had now established mappings between UKPRNs and Scottish school types that would be helpful to providers in that nation and should facilitate a substantial improvement to the completeness of their data.

ACTION: SFC to share mappings of UKPRNs to Scottish schools with HESA as soon as possible.

UKPITG acknowledged that there were a number of options available to them in the event that data completeness did not improve. It was agreed that no firm decision could be made until the full set of data became available later in 2015 and an assessment could be made of its quality. The group agreed a decision in principle that patching of previous school information be employed using all available mechanisms. This was felt to be preferable to compromising the stability of benchmarks through the selective suppression of institutional indicators.

These mechanisms included linked school-level data that HEFCE, and the Scottish and Welsh Governments, may be able to access for these purposes, as well as the capacity for UCAS to further enhance the mapping file that they had constructed.

UKPITG acknowledged that their subsequent decisions would need to be sensitive to institutions' concerns regarding the quality and sources of patched school information.

ACTION: HESA to explore potential patching mechanisms in relation to previous school information, with UCAS, HEFCE and the Scottish and Welsh governments.

ACTION: UKPITG to take a decision as to suppression requirements later in 2015 and by correspondence, when data quality was known.

#### **4. Update from the April meeting of the UKPISG (Oral item and minutes of that meeting)**

4.1. JW updated the group on the key points of the UKPISG business discussed in April 2015. UKPITG were invited to note that the four UK funding bodies had published correspondence on Thursday 16 July 2015 communicating recent decisions of UKPISG and inviting comments on a number of proposals for new WP UKPIs.

4.2. The circular noted that a roundtable discussion of the future of research UKPIs had been established and UKPITG were informed that this meeting had been scheduled for early September 2015. The group were invited to note that UKPISG's ambition was for a small number of new research UKPIs to be developed for introduction as experimental statistics in 2016.

4.3. UKPISG's decision that a small number of new WP UKPIs be published in 2016 was also communicated in the circular, and the need for UKPITG to now focus on development work was reinforced. The strong steer from UKPISG as to UKPIs covering the totality of HE provision – including that registered at alternative providers, and further education and sixth form colleges – was also reiterated.

4.4. The group were invited to note that UKPISG had considered their recommendation relating to the publication of disaggregated information for the Open University in the UKPIs, with each national centre being reported separately in the appropriate nation. Members were informed that the issue had not been progressed on account of a lack of clarity as to the registration practices used by the institution in terms of attributing students to different national centres. UKPITG confirmed that registration was based on the students' domicile for funding purposes, and that this argument should be made in relation to the rationale for implementing their recommendation.

ACTION: UKPITG to provide confirmation to UKPISG as to registration practices used by the Open University with regards to their national centres.

#### **5. Next steps in the review of the WP indicators (UKPITG 15/04†)**

5.1. MG introduced the paper and noted that UKPISG had determined some proposed changes and some new indicators for possible introduction to the 2016 publication of UKPIs.

5.2. Members noted their previous agreement that the existing WP UKPIs be published for the providers currently included in the UKPIs coverage in late January/early February 2016. It was also agreed that it would not be feasible to publish new indicators to the same timetable, and that publication of new WP UKPIs later in 2016 was acceptable for the first release. The group were informed of guidelines that

recommended that measures be published as 'experimental statistics' for two successive years, but that their future timing would not be constrained by the timetable employed during their time as experimental statistics. While members agreed to determine a likely publication date for new experimental statistics during 2016 at their next meeting, an ambition to incorporate them into the current publication of Tranche 2 (typically early July) of the UKPIs was recorded. It was acknowledged that this would facilitate the required feedback processes, among both users and UKPISG.

ACTION: UKPITG to determine a likely publication date for new experimental statistics during 2016 at their next meeting.

5.3. Members proceeded to consider the implications and feasibility of UKPISG's proposals:

***Exploring the development of area-based measures to be taken forward as nation-specific indicators***

5.4. It was agreed that area-based measures based on the POLAR3 classification would continue to be produced in relation to institutions in England, and that no further work was required to take this forward as a nation-specific UKPI for England.

5.5. While Wales confirmed that continued use of the POLAR3 classification was possible, it was reported that POLAR3 was likely to be used as a contextual measure only, alongside a preferred nation-specific UKPI based on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivations or Communities First areas. While these were already used as the basis for statistical publications in Wales, it was felt that work may be required to ensure that their use as a nation-specific UKPI was in alignment with the requirements of Official Statistics.

5.6. Scotland also indicated that work would likely be required to ensure that use of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivations as their nation-specific UKPI was in alignment with the requirements of Official Statistics. It was confirmed that measures based on POLAR3 would not be produced for institutions in Scotland.

ACTION: UKPITG members representing the four UK nations to review the preferred options for nation-specific area-based indicators, to include consideration of feasibility and methodology, in advance for a September discussion of production requirements.

***Exploring the development of new WP indicators***

ACTION: UKPITG members representing the four UK nations to take forward parallel streams of work regarding clarification of the feasibility, data sources and practicalities (including applicability and robustness, as well as process) of each of the new indicators discussed below. Progress should be reported at the next meeting of UKPITG.

***Exploring the development of new WP indicators: Household residual income of entrants to higher education***

5.7. Members felt that, from a technical perspective, production of a measure based on household residual income (HRI) would be relatively straightforward. HEFCE indicated that there would need to be a discussion with the Student Loans Company in relation to data sharing for the purposes of publication within UKPIs, and agreed to lead on both those discussions and the development of the measure.

5.8. Consideration would need to be given to the appropriate level(s) of HRI for a UKPI indicator to look at. In particular, variations in support packages across the UK and associated differences or changes in reporting of HRI could influence comparability: both across institutions in different parts of the UK and across a time series. Practicalities of applicability and interpretation should therefore be carefully considered.

ACTION: UKPITG members representing the four UK nations to identify variations in student support packages in relation to HRI, and subsequently, to contribute an understanding of appropriate level(s) of HRI to the next meeting of UKPITG.

ACTION: HEFCE to take forward technical development of a methodology using HRI, and discussions with SLC regarding agreed data sharing purposes.

***Exploring the development of new WP indicators: Proportions of entrants from different school or further education institution types***

5.9. Members sought clarity as to UKPISG's interpretation of the refinements perceived in relation to school and further education institution types. It was noted that the December 2014 roundtable discussions highlighted a range of potential school-based measures, one of which was expressed with reference to an improved articulation of progressions from further education to HE: in terms of the proportions entering HE from FECs and other types of education provider, or in terms of an individual's prior attainment/advanced standing. When UKPISG discussed this proposal in April 2015 they considered that improved articulation was, in effect, a refinement of the existing UKPI measuring the proportion of entrants from state schools (within table T1). Discussions had proffered the potential to produce a more articulate measure simply by moving away from a binary split of school type and showing a wider range of school categorisations, such as some of those used in the Department for Education's EduBase. A measure that considered the proportions of entrants from each of selective state schools, non-selective state schools, independent schools and further education colleges, was felt to be one plausible example.

5.10. UKPITG considered that work would be required to establish the applicability of existing school classifications (such as those used in EduBase) across the UK nations, as well as to improve understanding of the potential to access and define consistent measures for use on a UK-wide basis.

ACTION: UKPITG members representing the four UK nations to identify school-type classifications in use in their nation, and subsequently, to contribute an understanding of their applicability to other UK nations to the next meeting of UKPITG.

***Exploring the development of new WP indicators: Schools with low proportions of pupils progressing to further study, and pupils in receipt of free school meals***

5.11. Reflecting discussion of the previous two proposals, members noted that these two measures would be relatively straightforward to produce in relation to schools in England. Pupils in receipt of free school meals and proportions of pupils progressing to further study were existing measures used by DfE and derived from the National Pupil Database.

5.12. UKPITG agreed that work would be required to establish any existing use, applicability and comparability of similar measures elsewhere in the UK nations.

ACTION: UKPITG members representing the four UK nations to identify any existing school-based measures considering progression and/or free school meals in their nation, and subsequently, to contribute an understanding of their applicability to set of UK-wide indicators at the next meeting of UKPITG.

***Exploring the development of new WP indicators (lower priority indicators, to be progressed to more elongated timescales): Schools with high proportions of leavers who were not in employment, education or training (NEET), and measures based on value added, or learning gain, facilitated by higher education***

5.13. Members felt that some of the groundwork required to progress development of a measure based on NEET would be covered by development of other school-based measures described previously. Meanwhile, it was agreed that development of measures involving value-added or learning gain would need to await work currently being undertaken by HEFCE, and potentially the development of the Teaching Excellence Framework in England.

5.14. UKPITG also indicated the need to learn from the development and introduction of measures for 2016 publication, and that a development process for further indicators such as these would need to be established in mid-2016.

ACTION: UKPITG to establish a development process for indicators based on NEET and value added or learning gain in mid-2016.

5.15. UKPITG also indicated the need to learn from the development and introduction of measures for 2016 publication, and that a development process for further indicators such as these would need to be established in mid-2016.

***Exploring the development of new WP indicators: Extended coverage to incorporate provision registered at further education colleges, sixth form colleges and alternative providers***

5.16. Members noted that in terms of extending coverage to incorporate higher education provision registered at sixth form and further education colleges, HEFCE had already developed and publishes measures based on UKPI methodologies for such institutions in England.

5.17. It was reported that Wales needed to look at the manual processes involved in incorporation of these providers into UKPIs, though such providers were known to be small in number. Scotland noted that measures related to these providers already existed but not in a format comparable with the UKPIs.

ACTION: UKPITG members representing Wales to explore the processes required to facilitate incorporation of HE provision registered at Welsh further education colleges into UKPIs, and report back to the next meeting of UKPITG.

ACTION: UKPITG members representing Scotland to work with HEFCE and HESA to explore the ways in which measures for Scottish further education colleges could be developed to ensure comparability with UKPIs.

5.18. Additionally, it was noted that incorporation of provision registered at alternative providers was presently an England-focussed issue but also a Government priority. It was reported that data collections were currently limited to students on courses with specific course designation, and that data quality would remain unknown until data was received at the end of 2015. UKPIG would need to maintain a watching brief on these issues.

***Exploring the development of new WP indicators: Processes and other issues***

5.19. The group considered issues of transparency in the event that UKPIs were drawing on data sources other than HESA data, or produced by organisations other than HESA. It was noted that these issues would need to be further considered in the feasibility work being taken forward by UKPITG in the coming months.

5.20. In the meantime, members noted that transparency should be a priority for UKPIs, particularly in terms of previewing indicators to institutions. Institutional access was considered crucial for sector trust in the measures, and a desire to develop quality assurance processes that were as close as possible to the current arrangements was expressed. However, members were also clear that the desire for transparency should not be all encompassing and may not be met immediately upon introduction of a new indicator. It was agreed that transparency should not prove an absolute barrier to the publication of an indicator if there was a clear policy need for it, and that it may take time to develop the processes to be employed for any given new indicator.

5.21. It was agreed that the HESA website should remain the single portal for access to UKPI measures, with HESA coordinating the release of UKPI publications.

ACTION: HESA to articulate the specific production stages of UKPIs, with a view to determining how each stage might be achieved in relation to new UKPI measures.

**6. Next steps in the review of the benchmarking approach (UKPITG 15/05†)**

6.1. JW introduced the paper and reinforced that UKPISG were anticipating the review to effect change in the 2016 publications of UKPIs. The group agreed that in the available timescales, including those required by Official Statistics for prior announcement of change(s), the existing benchmarking approach would be included in the 2016 publications of existing UKPIs. The indicators may be reproduced later in 2016 employing an alternative or experimental benchmarking approach.

6.2. The group considered the framework that was proposed within the paper, and the work areas in turn. HESA agreed to lead work area (a) - an Independent assessment of the statistical approach to the benchmarking - and the group approved the subgroup proposed. It was agreed that HEFCE would lead work area (b) - a review of the principles employed in the selection of benchmarking factors - and that, in addition to those listed in the paper UUK would contribute to this area. HEFCW would lead work area (c) - a review of the methodology used to define groupings used within benchmarking factors - and the Welsh Government agreed to lead on work area (d) - user consultation regarding the benchmarking approach. The subgroups for each work area were approved.

ACTION: Specific activities within each work area, and their associated timings, to be determined by the leads of those areas in advance of the next meeting of UKPITG. Any

requirements to draw on parties external to the UKPITG subgroups defined should be identified.

## **7. Technical issues related to the UK Performance Indicators (Oral item)**

7.1. HEFCE informed the group of concerns related to low response rates to the 2013-14 DLHE survey among a number of institutions. The institutions affected were reported to span the UK nations, and to have demonstrated substantial year-on-year variation in the response rates observed.

7.2. It was noted that the UKPIs automatically suppressed an institutions data within the Employment UKPIs if they failed to achieve 85% or more of the target response rate. In addition, HEFCE had carried out a number of analyses examining the robustness of the DLHE, and no additional suppressions were implemented in the 2015 publication of Tranche 2 of the UKPIs. This work had demonstrated that despite substantial variation in response rates for some student groups in particular, when responses from these groups were reweighted little impact was been observed on the outcomes recorded.

7.3. Members noted that KIS and other public information outputs making use of DLHE data were requiring response rates that were closer to the target response rates in order to ensure more representative data entering the public domain. It was agreed that UKPITG would consider increasing the response rate thresholds employed in the UKPI suppression mechanisms for 2016 publication of Employment UKPIs. Messaging and communication would also help to reinforce the importance of high response rates to representative outputs.

ACTION: Paper to be prepared for the next meeting of UKPITG which demonstrates the potential impact of incremental increases in the suppression threshold for DLHE response rates. To include information on the affected number of institutions in each UK nation, and to be based on response rates to recent DLHE surveys.

7.4. UKPITG recorded their support for the use of the forthcoming HMRC data in understanding variation or omissions in the DLHE survey.

7.5. SD informed the group that a request had been made for published UKPI tables to include the institution's UKPRN as well as their name. Members agreed that the additional information should be included in 2016 and future UKPI publications.

ACTION: HESA to include UKPRN in all future UKPI publications.

## **8. Papers proposed as exempt from immediate publication (marked with †)**

8.1. Members agreed that the papers proposed as exempt should be considered as exempt from publication on the basis that they related to ongoing reviews in development. A publication date with respect to these papers would be agreed by the UKPITG at a future meeting.

ACTION: HESA to publish the agreed non-exempt papers from this July 2015 meeting on their website alongside associated content relating to governance of the UKPIs.

## **9. Date of next meeting**

9.1. Members agreed that the group would next meet following the September 2015 roundtable discussion on the future of the research UKPIs, with dates to be agreed by

correspondence. The group confirmed that they would secure dates for bimonthly meetings of UKPITG, with those dates to be agreed by correspondence at the earliest opportunities.

## **10. Any other business**

10.1. BIS alerted members to increasing interest in the development of the Teaching Excellence Framework. It was reported that work in this area was fast paced and that the consideration of appropriate metrics for use in this context was likely to overtake UKPI development work. UKPITG and UKPISG members would need to maintain an awareness of the implications of the TEF and its overlaps with existing metrics and measures. It was requested that, as a BIS project, BIS representatives seek to keep UKPITG and UKPISG informed as the work develops.

ACTION: BIS representatives to keep UKPITG informed of development of the TEF, and overlaps with, or implications for, UKPIs in particular.

## **Meeting closed 14.00**

### **Actions arising:**

Paragraph 2.1: HESA to publish the minutes of UKPITG's February meeting on their website alongside the UK Performance Indicators and associated content.

Paragraph 3(a): UKPITG members to confirm the suitability of the proposed 2016 publication timetable for the WP UKPIs as soon as possible, in order to facilitate the announcement of the change required by the status of UKPIs as official statistics.

Paragraph 3(b): SFC to share mappings of UKPRNs to Scottish schools with HESA as soon as possible.

Paragraph 3(b): HESA to explore potential patching mechanisms in relation to previous school information, with UCAS, HEFCE and the Scottish and Welsh governments.

Paragraph 3(b): UKPITG to take a decision as to suppression requirements later in 2015 and by correspondence, when data quality was known.

Paragraph 4.4: UKPITG to provide confirmation to UKPISG as to registration practices used by the Open University with regards to their national centres.

Paragraph 5.2: UKPITG to determine a likely publication date for new experimental statistics during 2016 at their next meeting.

Paragraph 5.6: UKPITG members representing the four UK nations to review the preferred options for nation-specific area-based indicators, to include consideration of feasibility and methodology, in advance for a September discussion of production requirements.

Paragraph 5.6: UKPITG members representing the four UK nations to take forward parallel streams of work regarding clarification of the feasibility, data sources and practicalities (including applicability and robustness, as well as process) of each of the

new indicators discussed below. Progress should be reported at the next meeting of UKPITG.

Paragraph 5.8: UKPITG members representing the four UK nations to identify variations in student support packages in relation to HRI, and subsequently, to contribute an understanding of appropriate level(s) of HRI to the next meeting of UKPITG.

Paragraph 5.8: HEFCE to take forward technical development of a methodology using HRI, and discussions with SLC regarding agreed data sharing purposes.

Paragraph 5.10: UKPITG members representing the four UK nations to identify school-type classifications in use in their nation, and subsequently, to contribute an understanding of their applicability to other UK nations to the next meeting of UKPITG.

Paragraph 5.12: UKPITG members representing the four UK nations to identify any existing school-based measures considering progression and/or free school meals in their nation, and subsequently, to contribute an understanding of their applicability to set of UK-wide indicators at the next meeting of UKPITG.

Paragraph 5.14: UKPITG to establish a development process for indicators based on NEET and value added or learning gain in mid-2016.

Paragraph 5.17: UKPITG members representing Wales to explore the processes required to facilitate incorporation of HE provision registered at Welsh further education colleges into UKPIs, and report back to the next meeting of UKPITG.

Paragraph 5.17: UKPITG members representing Scotland to work with HEFCE and HESA to explore the ways in which measures for Scottish further education colleges could be developed to ensure comparability with UKPIs.

Paragraph 5.21: HESA to articulate the specific production stages of UKPIs, with a view to determining how each stage might be achieved in relation to new UKPI measures.

Paragraph 6.2: Specific activities within each work area, and their associated timings, to be determined by the leads of those areas in advance of the next meeting of UKPITG. Any requirements to draw on parties external to the UKPITG subgroups defined should be identified.

Paragraph 7.3: Paper to be prepared for the next meeting of UKPITG which demonstrates the potential impact of incremental increased in the suppression threshold for DLHE response rates. To include information on the affected number of institutions in each UK nation, and to be based on response rates to recent DLHE surveys.

Paragraph 7.5: HESA to include UKPRN in all future UKPI publications.

Paragraph 8.1: HESA to publish the agreed non-exempt papers from this July 2015 meeting on their website alongside associated content relating to governance of the UKPIs.

Paragraph 10.1: BIS representatives to keep UKPITG informed of development of the TEF, and overlaps with, or implications for, UKPIs in particular.