

Meeting of the Statistical Advisory Group for Further Education (SAGE).

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 27 March 2008 at Donaldson House, Edinburgh.

Present:

John	Duffy	Chair
Gerhard	Mors	Scottish Government
Debbie	Anabile	Scottish Government
Julie	Gilstrap	ASC
Ian	McCallum	Quality Improvement Forum
Gill	Ritchie	Adam Smith College
Kenny	Wilson	Jewel & Esk College
Alan	Forsyth	Cardonald College
Brian	Hughes	Anniesland College
Gordon	McBride	Secretary to SAGE
Mike	Shewry	SFC - Statistics
Lesley	Sutherland	SFC - Learning & Teaching
Kirsty	Skidmore	SFC - Funding (for item 7)
Peter	Connelly	HMIE
Robert	McIlwaine	Ayr College
Paul	MacFadyen	SFC - Statistics
Hazel	MacDonald	SFC - Statistics
Erica	Blair	SFC – Human Resources (for item 6)
Jillian	Battersby	SFC – Learning & Teaching
Lynn	Tabor	Reid Kerr College

Apologies:

Marie	McGee	SQA
Brian	Lister	Cumbernauld College
Susannah	Lane	Universities Scotland
George	Reid	Scottish Government
John	Kemp	SFC – Strategy
Martin	Smith	SFC- Funding

1 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the SAGE meeting of 23 August 2007 (previously circulated) were approved.

2. Matters arising

The remit of SAGE (paper 00/08) was approved with replacement of the last sentence by

‘In addition the group will provide input to SFC, the Scottish Government and other stakeholders on statistical matters relating to the College and University Sectors’.

Action

SFC to update the remit as above.

3 Paper 01 / 08 Data security

SFC presented the above paper which covered revised arrangements for data security and actions so far. The group recognised the need for a heightened awareness of data security and agreed that the paper should be accepted as a basis for improvement. It was agreed that data security would be improved by requiring receipts for data transactions carried out in person. The policy would evolve over time and the Scottish Government were due to introduce a new data policy in April which will further inform SFC’s approach to data security.

Action

SFC to update the paper to include the use of receipts for appropriate data transactions and implement the policies.

4 Paper 02/ 08 Student and staff performance indicators 2006-07

The group were informed of SFC’s intention to publish the 2006-07 student and staff performance indicators in advance of the August deadline.

It was noted that some of the college student outcome profiles looked implausible. SFC would investigate the underlying data during April with a view to amending

the profiles and other quantities where necessary. Some of these profiles could be explained by activity mix in that colleges with large amounts of ECDL or SVQ courses could show a greater percentage of continuing students than might be expected. However there was strong agreement that students on 1 year courses should not be coded as continuing.

The FES 3 PI proposed in the paper to replace the existing SARU PI had been developed by a sub group of SAGE comprising Gill Ritchie, Kenny Wilson, Ian McCallum, Robert McIlwaine, Lynn Tabor, John Duffy and Gordon McBride. It was agreed that the PI should be published in the PI publication, but colleges would be asked to confirm the results as accurate before publication, and would have an opportunity to correct the underlying data.

A tool would be developed by SFC to calculate this PI by subject (superclass), department code and other variables useful for college purposes.

The proposed new validation checks were agreed although there was some discussion about the requirement for an X code for all higher group awards on the FES3 (unit) return. It was agreed that C codes would also be appropriate.

There was some discussion about the error check for students completing courses before the final year. It was agreed that some students (a small percentage) will complete their course before the final year and that error checks should take this into consideration (perhaps by accepting this coding for a small percentage of students).

There was a majority view that the student outcome code for progressing (code 9) should be replaced by 4 new codes indicating the following:

- the student was progressing to the next year but had not gained 70% of the units undertaken;
- the student was progressing to the next year and had gained 70% of the units undertaken;
- the student was continuing across academic years on a programme that spans academic years; and
- the student had successfully gained all the units that they were able to achieve in the current academic year.

Action

SFC should investigate the use of C codes on higher group awards in the context of the validation check requiring an X Code for all higher group awards on the FES3 return.

The FES guidance notes should be updated with the new outcome codes.

FES ON LINE should be updated with the new cross checks.

5 Participation report

Mike Shewry gave a presentation on report on Scottish Participation in Further and Higher Education which was scheduled to be published on 28 March 08. The report can be viewed at:

http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications/scottish_participation_report_01-02_05-06.pdf

The Scottish Government welcomed the publication and the group were informed that SFC will update the report over the next few months with data for academic year 2006-07.

The group were also informed that SFC plan to develop a GIS tool to allow stakeholders to create geographical views of participation by specified attributes of interest such as college, subject, etc.

6 Paper 03/08 Proposed individualised staffing return

The group were informed that college principals had agreed to the introduction of an individualised staffing return. Two groups would be set up to develop this collection, one to consider the content of the collection and the other to develop protocols governing use of the data.

Members highlighted the problems of collecting data on CPD. No conclusion was reached on the best method of dealing with this problem, although the suggestion of a CPD record similar to the proposed contract record was made.

It was explained that no decision has yet been taken on the details and format of the return and college staff, including HR staff and the HR community of practice would have their views fully considered before finalising the return. The return is not due to be introduced until 2009-10 which gives adequate time to work with colleges to address issues of concern.

Action

SFC to develop a paper outlining the current position on the staffing return for issue to HR managers requesting their feedback on these matters. Meetings of the working groups to be convened.

7 Paper 08 / 08 Teaching Funding Review

The group received an update on the teaching funding review and were made aware that a consultation document will be taken to Council on 9 May for approval and issued to colleges thereafter.

The contents of the paper are considered confidential until the consultation document has been issued.

Any changes would come into effect by 2009-10 at the earliest.

8 SAGE papers and minutes on line

It was agreed that SAGE papers and minutes should be placed on line except in cases where freedom of information exemptions apply.

Action

SFC to add relevant SAGE documents to the SFC website.

9 Paper 04/08 EMA unique IDs

The paper outlined the potential for double counting of students in the EMA statistics if they moved between institutions or enrolled more than once in an academic year. The paper recommended that the Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) be added to the collection to enable removal of duplicates. This was agreed.

Action

SFC to amend the EMA return to include the SCN for the July return for academic year 2008-09 and to amend the EMA software to allow colleges to return this additional information in 2007-08 where available.

10 Paper 05/08 First Destination of Graduates

The group were informed that SFC has set up a secure server for colleges to submit their data returns and that a download facility should be available for next year.

The paper also outlined a proposed FDG publication to be issued to colleges once the 2006-07 FDG return has been finalised. The group agreed the content of the publication.

Current return rates for Scotland's colleges ranged from 3 to 100%. Part of this variation will be due to the source of information on student's destination. Some colleges with very high return rates may be returning data based on informal feedback from persons other than the student. SFC and the Scottish Government are extremely interested in outcomes and would place a high value on improvements to the FDG return.

It was agreed that there would be benefit in undertaking a wider review of the return and updating the job codes to reflect the current job market.

Action

SFC to review the issue and produce the proposed publication once the 2006-07 return is available.

SFC to compare the HESA destinations return with FDG with a view to updating the FDG codes.

SFC to prepare a paper for the next SAGE meeting on FDG to include proposed revised code lists.

11 Paper 06/08 Student Surveys – Data protection statement

The Scottish Government had identified a problem with 'fair processing' notices issued by colleges in that they did not clearly permit use of student identification data for follow up research.

The Scottish Government issued a statement to colleges to be included in their enrolment forms to deal with this problem but required a mechanism to inform SFC if the student had opted out of follow up surveys.

There was some discussion about the volume of students who would opt out and whether or not this information should be captured a part of the FES data return or via a separate return.

It was reported that some colleges would be unable to return this data via FES as the Capita system in use at these colleges currently has no spare fields. This would not be the case for all colleges.

Action

SFC to add a new field on FES to collect these details and to put a new collection in place for those colleges who cannot return this data via FES.

12 Paper 07/08 National Statistics

The Scottish Government members informed the group that the new Statistics Authority will assume its role on 1 April 2008 and that the Scottish Government have agreed to accept the act for Scotland. The Authority will have a statutory responsibility to promote and safeguard the publication of official and National statistics.

Currently the Scottish Government use the FES and FDG returns for national statistics purposes but are distant from the quality procedures in place that govern these returns. The Cabinet Secretary has stated that SFC must abide by Scottish Government data procedures related to official and national statistics. This will ensure that statistics have a higher profile in the future.

The Scottish Government and SFC will agree a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to outline their separate responsibilities regarding data provision, quality and standards. This may involve the Scottish Government nominating SFC and therefore colleges as providers of official statistics which will have implications for data processing and quality procedures. The designation of colleges as providers of official statistics is likely to be a few years away.

Action

SFC and Scottish Government statisticians to agree a MoU to replace the existing Service Level Agreement.

13 Any other business

There was no other business.

14 Date of next meeting

The next meeting would take place on a date to be arranged around September /October 2008.