
Introduction

1. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) carried out a review of its statistical publications, in consultation with stakeholders, from May 2013 to December 2013. This report sets-out the recommendations of that review and SFC’s agreed actions in response to the recommendations.

Executive Summary

2. The aim of the review was to improve SFC’s current statistical publications so that the publications are coherent and meet user needs and that the content aligns with key performance indicators used in SFC’s outcome agreements and the performance management framework. We also aimed to ensure that we strike the right balance between: providing information that is relevant and meaningful for stakeholders; and value for money.

3. A further key aim was to ideally published statistical reports on one or two key dates during the year and align where possible these dates with the publication of related information by other agencies (in particular, HESA). There was also a need to make information available more quickly and make the most of modern technology.

4. We have consulted widely with our stakeholders, using mainly our existing stakeholder groups and sector contacts as well as colleagues in Scottish Government.

5. The key findings are that our publications are widely used and there was strong support from the sectors to continue publication of our main publications (HE Students and Qualifiers, Participation Indicators for Scottish HEIs, Students Eligible for Funding, Scotland’s Colleges: A Baseline Report, College Performance Indicators). There were comments related to improvements to the layout and format of the reports, which we have taken on board.

6. There was however, limited support for continuing with our publication Participation Rates for Entrants to Scottish Higher Education. There is little use made of the statistics contained in the report because the policy context has moved and this is no longer a key performance measure. However, Scottish Government colleagues do use these statistics and we need to investigate further the use of this publication and whether or not the statistics used by them can be incorporated into another publication.

7. The national measure and key performance indicators for individual HEIs and colleges are derived from the same data sources as our national statistics.
publications. Some of the key measures are taken directly from our publications, while others go to a finer level of detail. We are at the early stages of developing outcome measures and we need to decide what, when and how we publish. We may wish to incorporate more of the measures into our existing publications.

8. We intend to publish our statistics on two key dates. These dates have been chosen to align with other relevant publication dates, particularly HESA. The dates also ensure that we are releasing data as soon as it becomes available, while ensuring that the data is not released before it is properly quality checked and we are content that the underlying data is robust and reliable.

9. We have set-out a number of recommendations in this report along with further actions which have been endorsed and agreed by SFC’s executive.

Background

10. The aim of our review was to ensure that we continue to deliver our statutory functions including the development of Outcome Agreements for universities and colleges with relevant information (see attached Annex A terms of reference).

11. The Council currently produces a range of statistical publications that provide information on Scotland’s colleges and universities. Typically the reports consist of text information interspersed with tables and charts and are published in PDF format on the Council’s website. The purpose of Council’s review of its statistical publications was to rationalise the information that is presented and to reduce the number of publication dates to avoid similar information being released at different times of the year.

12. The Council is looking to simplify and improve its publications by focusing their content and by providing information that is relevant and meaningful to users in a more accessible and efficient way.

13. The Council proposes to introduce changes that make it easier for users of college and university statistics to find the information they are looking for. It is proposed to reformat some publications into shorter executive summaries with supplementary data being made available in an easily accessible format on the council’s website. This will allow statistics users to interrogate and navigate their way through the data more easily rather than searching through the publications to try and find the data they want.

14. By simplifying the publications process, in some instances, the data will be available to users earlier than it was previously. The intention is that the information will be published on a maximum of two key dates during the year
which will be as close as possible to the publication of related information by other agencies, particularly the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

15. A small group, led by SFC’s Senior Director of Institutions and Corporate Services, carried out the review on behalf of SFC’s executive (see Annex B). The group consisted of officers from SFC’s executive, who liaised closely with colleagues in Scottish Government’s Analytical Serves Team throughout the review period. The group consulted with all SFC’s main stakeholders over a six month period (see Annex C).

16. The group made specific recommendations on the content and format of the statistical reports, as well as the timing of the release of the publications throughout the year. The group’s recommendations were discussed with SFC’s Chief Executive’s Group, who endorsed the recommendations and agreed a set of actions in response. This report sets-out the recommendations and agreed actions in response.

**Statistical publications produced by the Council**

17. The Council currently produces the following publications that cover provision at either the higher education institutions or the further education colleges or both:

- HE Students and Qualifiers
- Participation Rates for Entrants to Scottish Higher Education
- Participation Indicators for Scottish HEIs
- Students Eligible for Funding
- Scotland’s Colleges: A Baseline Report
- College Performance Indicators

18. The publications below are National Statistics, which means that the statistics comply with the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. To have the designation of National Statistics the statistics should “meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well”.

- HE Students and Qualifiers
- Participation Rates for Entrants to Scottish Higher Education

19. National Statistics are reviewed periodically and SFC is currently undergoing a review by the UK Statistics Authority. This is timely, as the findings of the UK Statistics Authority set-out in their assessment report will be incorporated into future publications. Consideration is being given to including the College Performance Indicators as National Statistics.
**Review of statistical reports, recommendation and agreed actions**

20. This section of this report takes each of our publications in turn, sets-out the findings of the review. It summarises the consultation responses and sets-out a recommendation for each publication, these recommendations have been endorsed by SFC’s executive and actions agreed in response are also included.

**HE Students and Qualifiers**

21. The HE Students and Qualifiers publication combines information on HE activity at universities, taken from the HESA returns and at colleges, taken from the Further Education Statistics (FES) returns collected by the Council. Each table covers either all HE enrolments or entrants to HE courses or HE qualifiers. Many of the tables show a ten-year time series and cover information such as age, gender, domicile, level of study, subject of study and deprivation status. The most recent version of this publication can be found on the Council’s website at: www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/ReportsandPublications/Higher_Education_Students_and_Qualifiers_at_Scottish_Institutions_2011-12.pdf

22. Following discussions between the Council’s executive and HESA, HESA included some information on HE activity at Scotland’s colleges in their Statistical First Release on ‘Student Enrolments and Qualifications in 2012-13’, published in January 2014. The amount of information HESA publish on HE activity in Scottish colleges might increase in future years.

23. Regardless of what HESA publish, the Council will still be producing most of what is in the current HE Students and Qualifiers publication. However, we intend that the publication will be shortened to an executive summary highlighting key points, along with a small number of tables and charts that back up the key points. The information that appears in the tables in the current format of the publication will be made available in an Excel workbook that can be downloaded from the Council’s website. This will make the information available in a format that will be easier for others to use to carry out their own analyses of the data. Technical notes, definitions of terms used and descriptions of how the data is obtained and used will be provided in a separate annex.

24. The Council is aware that there are other (than Excel) software packages available that could provide users with the opportunity to carry out their own analyses of the data. Following the next release of this publication the Council’s executive will take a more detailed look at some of these packages with a view to using at least one of them to make the information available in a more interactive form in future years. However, the Council will also continue to
make tables available in an Excel workbook as this format can be loaded into most of the other packages that people might be using.

25. Feedback from our key stakeholders was that this publication was valued and used as it provided data which was not available in other publications. It gave a comprehensive and complete picture of all HE level provision in Scotland. There was support for the Council to progress work with HESA to incorporate some information on HE provision in Scotland’s colleges in their publications, but it was recognised that this may take some time for this to happen. There was therefore wide support for continuing the publication and improving the format as proposed above.

Recommendation

We recommend that we:

- Continue to publish HE Students and Qualifiers
- Improve the layout and access to the data
- Continue to work with HESA to incorporate HE activity in colleges in their publications.

Agreed action

The Council’s executive endorsed the recommendation and agreed that publication should continue, the work with HESA should also be progressed and we should continue to keep our publication under review to increase the effectiveness of published reports.

Participation Rates for Entrants to Scottish Higher Education

26. The Participation Rates for Entrants to Scottish Higher Education highlights two measures of participation in higher education: the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) and the Young Participation Rate (YPR), which are again derived from the HESA and FES returns. These two measures were introduced, following a consultation with stakeholders, to replace the old Age Participation Index (API) which was not considered sufficiently broad in its coverage of mature and part-time learners to continue with. Many of the tables in this publication show six-year time series and show breakdowns of the measures by factors such as: age, gender, level of study, type of institution (Scottish HEIs, Scottish colleges, HEIs in the rest of the UK), deprivation and local authority. The most recent version of this publication can be found at: www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/ReportsandPublications/Participation_Rates_for_Entrants_to_Scottish_Higher_Education_2011-12.pdf
27. The Council’s executive was of the view that there is only limited use made of this publication, and that it does not relate to current Government policy or targets. The Scottish Government are also currently consulting on developing a ‘Participation’ measure for Post 16 Learning, Training and Work. The Council’s executive, therefore, considers that there is a case for discontinuing this publication and consulted key stakeholders about this. If it was considered that there is an on-going requirement for this information, another option would be to publish the information less frequently than every year as the indicators do not tend to vary too much from year to year. During the course of our consultation we found that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills are planning on releasing another version of a publication they produce that covers participation rates, but that they will then be consulting on discontinuing it.

28. Feedback from our key stakeholders in colleges and HEIs, was that this publication was not used. Our response was that as the policy context has changed these measures of participation are no longer used as key indicators. We are aware that the indicators do feature in supporting documentation for SFC’s Learning for All report, however it appears that they are included because they are available rather than because they are key measures. However, the Scottish Government responded to our consultation on discontinuing this publication by stating that there is some use made of these indicators. We need to give further consideration to this and find out whether or not the full publication is used, or particular statistics which could be incorporated in other publications.

29. As this is a National Statistics publication we were aware of the need to consult widely on discontinuation and give advance notification. At this point we feel further consultation is necessary, particularly with Scottish Government colleagues. If the result of this further consultation was to recommend discontinuing the publication in its current form and incorporating some key statistics in another publication, we would need to give advance notification of this. This would involve one further publication cycle of the existing report in 2014. We would also follow the guidelines of the UK National Statistics Authority with regard to the process for discontinuing a publication.

Recommendation

We recommend that we:

- Investigate further with Scottish Government the use of this publication and whether or not the statistics used by them can be incorporated into another publication
- We publish this report in 2014
Dependant on the outcome of further investigation with Scottish Government colleagues we give advance notification of discontinuing this publication in 2015.

Agreed action

The Council’s executive endorsed the recommendation and agreed that we should try to incorporate any key statistics used by Scottish Government colleagues in another relevant publication. Given the limited use of the publication we should not be seeking to continue this as a standalone publication in future years.

Participation Indicators for Scottish HEIs

30. HESA publish performance indicators for all of the UK higher education institutions. However the indicators of participation from low participation neighbourhoods are not published for the Scottish HEIs as such indicators would be misleading for them. This is partly because the higher levels of participation in Scotland mean there are fewer low participation neighbourhoods in Scotland and partly because the Scottish institutions recruit a considerable number of students from the other home nations, and only a small proportion of these is likely to be from low participation areas. A similar consideration applies in respect of students from the lower social classes, NS-SEC 4-7.

31. It remains important to provide an indication of the efforts made by Scottish HEIs to widen access to less privileged sections of Scottish society, and with this aim the Council publishes two tables relating to young Scottish-domiciled entrants to full-time undergraduate courses. One table looks at the numbers of such entrants from the most deprived areas, as indicated by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, while the second table looks at the numbers of such entrants from social classes NS-SEC 4 to 7 inclusive. The latest version of these tables can be found at: www.sfc.ac.uk/statistics/higher_education_statistics/HE_performance_indicators/Participation_indicator_for_Scottish_HEIs.aspx

32. A fundamental review of the performance indicators produced by HESA on behalf of the UK funding bodies has recently been carried out. This concentrated on the requirement and use of the PIs. The review indicated that the PIs should continue, they should be re-titled UKPIs and a set of principles be developed to cover the existing and any new PIs. The review also indicated concern that the current widening participation indicators did not cover the UK and that further work should be carried out to see if it is possible to come up with an agreed UK set of PIs that cover widening access and participation. The
Council’s officers are involved as members of both the UKPI Steering Group and Technical Sub-group.

33. Feedback from our stakeholders was that we should progress with the work to develop UK PIs for widening access. That we should ensure continued liaison with the HE sector on the development of these PIs. Recognising that this will take time, and may not result in agreed UK PIs for participation, we should continue to publish the Participation Indicators for Scottish HEIs. That this should be done at the same time as the UKPI indicators are published.

**Recommendation**

We recommend that we:

- Continue to publish Participation Indicators for Scottish HEIs, to complement the UKPI publication
- Continue to work at UK level to develop UKPIs for widening access and participation.

**Agreed action**

The Council’s executive endorsed the recommendation and agreed that we should continue to publish the PIs for Scottish HEIs. If UKPIs on widening participation are agreed, we should review and consult further with our stakeholders on the need to continue with separate Scottish PIs.

**Students Eligible for Funding**

34. Students Eligible for Funding provides in-year figures of students whose places are supported through the Council’s allocations of funding, that is Scottish and other EU students, and rest of UK students not paying the de-regulated tuition fees introduced in 2012-13. This information is collected by the Council through the institutions’ Early Statistics returns. The publication is short, currently two tables, as there is limited amount of information collected through the Early Statistics Return. The latest version of this publication can be found at: [http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/StatisticsHEstatistics/Statistical_Bulletin_Students_Eligible_for_Funding_2012-13.pdf](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/StatisticsHEstatistics/Statistical_Bulletin_Students_Eligible_for_Funding_2012-13.pdf)

35. As with the HE Students and Qualifiers publication this publication will now consist of an executive summary that highlights the key points, while the tables will be made available in an Excel workbook that can be downloaded from the Council’s website.

36. Feedback from our stakeholders was that this publication is used. It is the only available source of in-year statistics on students enrolled at HEIs, they are therefore widely used. Responses to the consultation indicated that at present
the publication is concise and contains key information. We are therefore not recommending any change, although we will continue to review the publication with a view to improving the format, content, coverage and accessibility.

Recommendation

We recommend that we:

- Continue to publish Students Eligible for Funding.

Agreed action

The Council’s executive endorsed the recommendation.

Scotland’s Colleges: A Baseline Report

37. Scotland’s Colleges: A Baseline Report gives a broad overview of college delivery for the most recent year and trends over the last seven years. This includes statistics on groups with protected characteristics as well as high level figures on full-time and part-time numbers, FTEs, hours of learning and subject area. The latest version of this publication can be found at: www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Statistical_publications_SFCST022014_BaselineReportforAcademicYear201213/Baseline_Report_2012-13.pdf

38. The Council’s executive plans to publish the same information, but also provide the information in an Excel workbook so that users of the information can carry out their own analyses. We plan to improve the existing format and layout, ensure that key messages are set-out in a short executive summary and provide technical supporting information in annexes to the report.

39. The feedback from our stakeholders was that this was a key document widely used. It contains full and comprehensive information on provision and participation in Scotland’s colleges. It is used as the source document for many other publications, including publications by Education Scotland, Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), Audit Scotland and Colleges Scotland. There has been a considerable amount of political scrutiny of student numbers in Scotland’s colleges in recent years and the statistics produced in this report have often been quoted in the Scottish Parliament and used as a source to answer Parliamentary questions.

40. The latest version of the report was published in January 2014 and we did build into that report improvements to the format of the report, including a short executive summary highlighting key messages, and making all the supporting data available in Excel tables. We are therefore not recommending any further change to this publication, although we will continue to review it with a view to improving the format, content, coverage and accessibility.
**Recommendation**

We recommend that we:

- Continue to publish Scotland’s Colleges: A Baseline Report.

**Agreed action**

The Council’s executive endorsed the recommendation.

**Colleges Performance Indicators**

41. The College Performance Indicators publication provides an overview of college retention and achievement rates for different categories of student as well as indicators measuring the proportion of college staff with an appropriate teaching qualification. The different categories of student shown include: gender, age group, level of study (HE, FE), qualification aim and subject group. Academic performance is split into the following categories: early withdrawal, further withdrawal, completed partial success and completed successful. The latest version of this publication can be found at: [www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Statistical_publications_SFCST012014_CollegePerformanceIndicators201213/College_Performance_Indicators_2012-13.pdf](www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Statistical_publications_SFCST012014_CollegePerformanceIndicators201213/College_Performance_Indicators_2012-13.pdf)

42. The Council asked Education Scotland to undertake a study of how the college sector makes use of PIs and other data, see: [www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/EffectiveUseofDataApril13_tcm4-783039.pdf](www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/EffectiveUseofDataApril13_tcm4-783039.pdf)

43. Section 4.3 of this report discusses the use made of college PIs and provides useful feedback on how the report can be improved. The Council’s executive has used this feedback to improve the report for the 2014 edition and future years.

44. Through the consultation process we proposed that colleges publish their own performance indicators on their own websites, using a template provided by the Council. The figures would be automatically derived and sent to the colleges when they submit their FES returns. The colleges will be asked to publish their PIs on the same day as the Council publishes performance indicators and accompanying commentary for the college sector.

45. We received positive feedback from key stakeholders to this proposal. College were satisfied that the PIs would be generated in a consistent way for all colleges and comparable with the Scottish college sector PIs. This would also allow colleges also to provide some local context and commentary to their PIs on their website. It was also felt that, although not a primary audience for the
PIs, students and prospective students could access the PIs more readily from a college’s website than from SFC’s website.

46. The latest version of the report was published in January 2014 and we introduced the new process with support of colleges. The PIs for the sector are available from SFC’s website and we provide links to individual college PIs. We have also made these available in Excel format. Users can also download the sector and individual college PIs from our website, without having to go to individual college sites. We have improved the format of the report, including a short executive summary highlighting key messages, and making all the supporting data available in Excel tables. We are therefore not recommending any further change to this publication, although we will continue to review it with a view to improving the format, content, coverage and accessibility.

Recommendation

We recommend that we:

- Continue to publish College Performance Indicators.

Agreed action

The Council’s executive endorsed the recommendation and noted that the change in publication process had been positively received and had made the statistics more widely accessible.

Outcome Agreements

47. The Council has introduced outcome agreements with both universities and colleges. These set out what colleges and universities plan to deliver in return for their funding from the Council. Their focus is on the contribution that the colleges and universities make towards improving life chances, supporting world-class research and creating sustainable economic growth for Scotland.

48. As well as the outcome agreements the Council has developed a set of national performance measures for both the university and colleges sectors. The national performance measures for the university sector can be found on page 16 of the university outcome agreement guidance for 2014-15 available on the Council’s website at: www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/GuidanceOA1415/University_Outcome_Agreement_Guidance_2014-15.pdf

50. The Council is currently considering what information should be published with regard to the performances of the university and college sectors in relation to the outcome agreements for 2012-13, recognising that some of the information is available at different times. In future years performance with regard to some of the national measures might be integrated with some of the other statistical publications, for example the College Baseline Report.

51. The national measures and key performance indicators are for individual HEIs and Colleges and are taken from the same sources as our national statistics publications. Some of the key measures are taken directly from our publications, while others go to a finer level of detail. We are at the early stages of developing outcome measures and we need to decide what, when and how we publish. We may wish to incorporate more of the measures into our existing publications.

**Recommendation**

We recommend that:

- as we develop our national performances measures we consider to what extent these measures can be incorporated into existing statistical publications or published separately.

**Agreed action**

The Council’s executive endorsed the recommendation.

**Publication dates**

52. The Council’s executive is looking to reduce the number of publication dates to avoid similar information being released at different times of the year. The intention is that the information will be published on two key dates during the year which will be as close as possible to the publication of related information by other agencies, particularly HESA. The dates will therefore be in January, to coincide with HESA’s first release of information on HE student enrolments and qualifications, and in March, to coincide with the release of the first tranche of PIs for the UK higher education institutions, covering widening participation and non-continuation. We received positive feedback to this proposal.

53. The College Performance Indicators and College Baseline Report have already been published in January, in line with this recommendation. The HE Student and Qualifiers, Participation Indicators for Scottish Higher Education Institutions and Students Eligible for Funding will be published in March.
54. These dates also ensure that we are releasing data as soon as it becomes available, while ensuring that the data is not released before it is properly quality checked and we are content that the underlying data is robust and reliable.

55. As we intend to have further discussion and consultation on the Participation Rates for Entrants to Scottish Higher Education, the intention is to publish at a later date in 2014, likely to be around summer.

**Recommendation**

We recommend that:

- the College Performance Indicators and College Baseline Report are published in January each year and the HE Student and Qualifiers, Participation Indicators for Scottish Higher Education Institutions and Students Eligible for Funding will be published in March.

**Agreed action**

The Council’s executive endorsed the recommendation.
Annex A

Outline project plan for review of Scottish Funding Council statistical publications

Purpose

Improve the Scottish Funding Council’s (SFC’s) current statistical publications so that:

- Ideally, they are published on one key date during the year (and certainly on no more than two key dates during the year)
- As far as possible, these dates align with the publication of related information by other agencies (in particular, HESA)
- The content of the publications is coherent
- The content of the publications aligns with the key performance indicators used in SFC’s outcome agreements and in SFC’s Strategic Performance Management Framework
- The way in which the information is made available makes the best use of modern technology
- Information is made available more quickly
- The arrangements strike the right balance between: providing information that is relevant and meaningful for stakeholders; and value for money

Key elements

The key elements of the project are expected to be as follows:

- Detailed analysis of the existing publications
- Mapping of the connections between the existing publications
- Identification of good practice and modern techniques in how statistical information is made available to stakeholders
- Design of how colleges can release their own information
- Informal consultation with stakeholder groups
- Redesign of existing publications
- Creation of mock-ups of the proposed new approach
- A possible formal written consultation (if required by the Code of practice)
- Adjusting the proposals to take account of feedback
- Creation of a full briefing pack to inform implementation
Timeline

The main period for release of statistical information is currently between the latter part of the calendar year and March of the following year. Preparations for these publications take place throughout the year, but become more intense towards the turn of the year. This review therefore needs to be completed by the summer.

The summary timeline is expected to be:

- May: Confirmation that ‘Scottish Participation in Further and Higher Education’ will not be published in future
- May and June: Assessment, research and design
- June: Informal consultation
- August and September: Formal written consultation, if necessary
- September: Final decisions made, taking account of stakeholder feedback

Skill requirements and suggested fulfilment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Fulfilled by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall project direction and leadership</td>
<td>Senior Director – Institutions and Corporate Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder handling – for engagement and consultation with stakeholders</td>
<td>Support from SFC communications team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written communication – for preparation of consultation material and other documents.</td>
<td>Support from SFC communications team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall design of statistical publications.</td>
<td>Head of Strategic Performance Management and existing member of Funding Policy Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of IT for publication of statistics.</td>
<td>Existing member of Funding Policy Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production of supporting material for implementation of new arrangements</td>
<td>Existing member of Funding Policy Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team working</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>Existing member of Funding Policy Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project oversight</td>
<td>Senior Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the input of the Head of Strategic Performance Management, at this stage it is anticipated that the review will require dedicated resource from within the Funding Policy Group. It is proposed that this will be achieved by:

- reallocation of an existing member of the Funding Policy Group
- provision of an additional fixed-term post in Funding Policy Group to allow the Group to cover the reallocated work.
Review group

Scottish Funding Council

Martin Fairbairn, Senior Director Institutions and Corporate Services (Chair)
Martin Smith, Deputy Director, Funding Policy
Gordon Anderson, Senior Policy/Analysis Officer
Elizabeth Horsburgh, Communications Officer
Ross McCleary, Policy/Analysis Officer

Scottish Government

Lynn Graham
Gayle Mackie
Ryan Scott
Annex C

List of those consulted

Institutional Group on Statistics (representative from HEIs)
Statistical Advisory Group for Further Education (representative from Colleges)
SDS/SFC Joint Skills Committee (includes wide range of stakeholders from industry as well as other public bodies)
Scottish Government, Employment Skills and Lifelong Learning
Universities Scotland
Colleges Scotland
Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
Education Scotland
Annex D

Extracts from the minutes of the most recent meetings of the IGS and SAGE groups; pertaining to publications

IGS extract

Review of Council’s Statistical Publications

Paper IGS-SFC (172)

The group was informed of a review being undertaken by the Council to; Rationalise the number of publications produced, to simplify and improve publications and to reformat publications for ease of use by investigating more interactive analysis packages.

A detailed listing of all the publications currently produced was presented, along with proposed changes to each. Regarding the timing of publications, it was suggested that publication dates should coincide with other agencies such as HESA. This would indicate that most publications would appear in January and March.

- It was agreed that due to the number of publications involved, the group could feedback comments to SFC after detailed consideration.
- It was agreed to maintain the use of Excel, despite the limitations, it was in widespread use and was convenient.

SAGE extract

Review of national statistics publications

Martin Smith informed the group that SFC had been conducting a review of our national statistics publications. The review would look to simplify and improve SFC’s publications and provide them in a more accessible format. This is likely to involve streamlining the publications and perhaps providing shorter executive summaries with core data being made available on the Council’s website. The review has considered changes to the following publications:

HE students and qualifiers

This publication provides an overview of all the HE activity in Scotland including HE college activity. SFC plans to publish a shorter executive summary report highlighting key points with supporting tables. SFC has also been in discussion with HESA regarding publishing some headline figures for college HE and HEI enrolments as part of their first release in January 2014.
Participation rates for entrants to Scottish HEIs

SFC plans to discontinue this publication as it is not widely used. Other options would include publishing on a less frequent basis.

Participation indicators for Scottish HEIs

This publication supplements the HESA PIs produced for Universities and provides indicators of participation from low participation neighbourhoods. HESA is currently conduction a review of PIs which may remove the need for these supplementary indicators to be produced by SFC. SFC will continue to publish these indicators in the meantime.

Student Eligible for funding

The students eligible for funding publication is based on the students eligible for funding collection which is the equivalent of the in-year statistics return previously collected from colleges. SFC propose to publish an executive summary style report that highlights key points. The tables will be made available separately on our website.

Scotland’s Colleges: A baseline report

It is proposed to continue to publish the college baseline report in a similar format to previous years and SFC will take steps to align our figures with performance measures for college outcome agreements. However SFC would also make the tables available in excel format to allow users to carry out their own analyses.

College performance indicators

Education Scotland carried out a review of how the college sector makes use of data which included PIs. The review provided SFC with some useful advice to improve the presentation of our PIs.

SFC is also proposing asking colleges to publish their own (SFC produced) PIs on their website. The publication of these PIs is covered in more detail in a separate agenda item on the PI report.

Outcome agreements national measures

SFC is considering what information should be published with regard to the performance of the sectors in relation to outcome agreements for 2012-13, recognising that some of the information is available at different times. Some of these indicators may be integrated into other statistical publications.
Timing

It is proposed that the college sector statistics would be published in January and HEIs in March.

The group welcomed the review of statistical publications but questioned the timing of the proposed publication dates and the implications for the availability of national indicators for comparison with regional performance measures in time for producing outcome agreements. Current timings would force colleges to use old data when setting targets.

**Action:** SFC to look at what data can be made available to inform the setting of outcome agreement targets.