



# SFC Consultation

## Taking account of Associate Students in the Higher Education Students and Qualifiers statistical publication

Issue date: 21 August 2015

Deadline: 13 November 2015

Summary: To consult with users on options to report on Associate Students in future editions of the 'Higher Education Students and Qualifiers' publication.

FAO: Users of the 'Higher Education Students and Qualifiers' statistical publication.

Further information:

**Contact:** John Taylor  
**Job title:** Policy Officer/Analyst  
**Department:** Funding Policy  
**Tel:** 0131 313 6558  
**Email:** [jtaylor@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:jtaylor@sfc.ac.uk)



Scottish Funding Council  
Promoting further and higher education

Scottish Funding Council  
Apex 2  
97 Haymarket Terrace  
Edinburgh  
EH12 5HD  
T 0131 313 6500  
F 0131 313 6501  
[www.sfc.ac.uk](http://www.sfc.ac.uk)

## **Taking account of Associate Students in the Higher Education Students and Qualifiers<sup>1</sup> statistical publication**

### **Purpose of the consultation:**

1. The Higher Education Students and Qualifiers publication provides an overview of students in higher education at either higher education institutions (HEIs) or colleges in Scotland. This publication reports on the total number of instances of study (i.e. enrolments) for each reporting year. As students can enrol on more than one course in any given year, this means that the actual number of higher education (HE) students is less than the number of enrolments shown in the report.
2. Our consultation is not concerned with students who are enrolled on two separate courses within one academic year. Instead, the focus of the consultation is on individuals who are enrolled on HE courses delivered in partnership across the college and university sectors. Students enrolled on these programmes will attend college for the first year or first two years and then progress to complete their degree at the HEI. While attending college the student will have 'Associate Student' status at the partner HEI and have access to the university facilities. As a result the student could be enrolled at both the college and university for one or both of these first two years.
3. The views of stakeholders are being sought on the best way to handle these students in future editions of the HE Students and Qualifiers publication.
4. It should be noted that SFC produce other statistical publications<sup>2</sup> which analyse trends in one or both of the college and university sectors in Scotland. Sector-specific figures presented within these publications will include Associate Students. However these publications do not present a combined total count of enrolments across the two sectors, and are not in scope of this consultation.

### **Background:**

5. The term 'Associate Student' describes the situation where a college and a HEI share responsibility for a student, with the HEI acting as the awarding body for a course that is delivered partly by a college and partly by a HEI. Classes in the

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<sup>1</sup> Higher Education Students and Qualifiers at Scottish Institutions 2013-14:

<http://www.sfc.ac.uk/communications/Statisticalpublications/2015/SFCST042015.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> SFC Statistical Publication schedule 2015-16:

<http://www.sfc.ac.uk/PublicationsStatistics/statistics/PublishedStatistics/StatisticalPublicationSchedule.aspx>

earlier years may be delivered at the college while the later years may be delivered at the HEI.

6. Colleges return data on their students to SFC via the 'Further Education Statistics'<sup>3</sup> return, whilst university student data is collected by HESA<sup>4</sup>. It is not proposed that there will be any change to the way data on these students are collected.
7. SFC funded approximately 1,000 additional places to be delivered under this 'Associate Student' arrangement in 2013-14 (year 1) and funded around 1,000 further places for year 2 of these programmes in 2014-15<sup>5</sup>.
8. As SFC increase funding for arrangements to improve access to university, it is anticipated that the number of Associate Students will continue to increase in the coming academic years. It has been estimated that in 2012-13, there were around 1,300 students appearing in both sectors. Of those, SFC has been able to identify around 170 students who appear to have been reported in both sectors for the same course. This was prior to the introduction of the additional funded places.
9. In 2013-14, the number of students appearing in both sectors rose to around 2,300, of which around 900 appear to have been reported in both sectors for the same course.
10. Analysis by SFC has shown that Associate Students have also been present in all earlier academic sessions in scope of this publication (namely 2004-05 to 2013-14). These students are being recorded separately in both sectors.
11. It should be noted that there are other students who are counted more than once across multiple courses, for valid reasons. It is possible for a student to enrol on multiple HE-level courses at an HEI or college or across the sectors in the same academic year. For that reason, we report on instances of study (i.e. a count of enrolments) in this publication, rather than student headcounts.

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<sup>3</sup> Further Education Statistics Return:

[http://www.sfc.ac.uk/guidance/SubmittingStatisticalInformation/FE\\_statistical\\_data/Data2013-14/fes\\_1314.aspx](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/guidance/SubmittingStatisticalInformation/FE_statistical_data/Data2013-14/fes_1314.aspx)

<sup>4</sup> HESA student record 2013-14:

[https://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com\\_studrec&Itemid=232&menl=13051](https://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_studrec&Itemid=232&menl=13051)

<sup>5</sup> Additional places funding announcement:

[http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Funding\\_Outcome\\_Agreements\\_2013-14/University\\_Sector\\_Outcome\\_Agreements\\_2013--14\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Funding_Outcome_Agreements_2013-14/University_Sector_Outcome_Agreements_2013--14_Summary.pdf)

## Consultation

12. Possible approaches to this issue for future editions of the HE Students and Qualifiers publication are detailed below. SFC would welcome any additional thoughts that users may have on this matter.

### ***Option 1: Continue to count the Associate Students in both sectors***

13. The Associate Students would continue to be counted in both sectors, and reported on as instances of study. This is in line with current HESA reporting methodology, so would enable consistency of figures with HESA's published data<sup>6</sup>.
14. Due to the growth in funded Associate Students places we would expect to count around 2,000 of these students in both the college and university sectors from 2014-15. SFC would include an additional table in the publication providing a profile of these students, and acknowledge these students appropriately in any accompanying commentary in the publication.

### ***Option 2: Count the students in the University sector only for all years of study***

15. These Associate Students would only be counted once. These students enrol on their course with the ultimate aim of achieving a degree qualification from the university, so they would be counted under that sector.
16. However it is possible that some of the students reported as attending the university in these early years would not be retained to year 2 or 3 and never actually attend a class at the university. With this option, colleges would not receive recognition for the achievements of Associate Students in any tables where numbers of qualifiers are presented.

### ***Option 3: Count the students in the college sector for years 1 and/or 2 of their study and in the university sector for later years of study***

17. These Associate Students would only be counted once. They would be reported against the institution delivering the course.
18. The student may not agree with this classification as they have enrolled with the aim of achieving a degree at a university, but are reported under a lower award at college. This option would deviate from HESA's reporting methodology, meaning we would expect that university sector total figures produced by SFC would differ from those derived by HESA.

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<sup>6</sup> HESA publication: Higher Education Student Enrolments and Qualifications Obtained at Higher Education Providers in the United Kingdom, 2013-14: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/sfr210>

## Responding to the Consultation

19. Please contact John Taylor, Policy Officer/Analyst if there are any further questions regarding this consultation, tel: 0131 313 6558, email: [jtaylor@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:jtaylor@sfc.ac.uk)
20. Responses to the consultation may be sent either by post or by e-mail to John Taylor. The closing date for responses is 13 November 2015.
21. Upon the close of this consultation, SFC will analyse and publish responses and results with a view to implementing any changes for the 2014-15 edition of this publication.
22. If you do not wish for your response to be published, please indicate this in your response.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin Smith".

**Martin Smith**

Deputy Director, Funding Policy