
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Pauline Donnan
Department of Education, Northern Ireland
(by email)

13 November 2018

Dear Pauline

STATISTICS ON YEAR 12 AND YEAR 14 EXAMINATION PERFORMANCE AT POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

As you are aware we recently carried out a short review of compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) of statistics on [Year 12 and Year 14 examination performance at post-primary schools in Northern Ireland](#) as part of our ongoing programme of compliance checks. We consider that these statistics continue to meet the standards required for designation as National Statistics. Here are our main findings around the three pillars of the Code.

Trustworthiness: We welcome the clear steps that are taken to assure users of the trustworthiness of these statistics, including organisational level statements on compliance with the code. These provide transparency around the processes followed by the department to ensure trustworthiness.

Quality: We consider that the quality assurance around the underlying data is good and well documented. This helps users to understand the quality of the underlying data. There are clear statements about what is included and excluded from the statistics which support appropriate use of the statistics. We welcome the steps that the team has taken to consider other data sources and balance the various needs of users. The team stated that it is looking to move to a web portal for schools to enter data (already used elsewhere in the department). This will further enhance the quality of the data by enabling additional quality assurance at the point when the data are entered.

Value: The team has regular contact with the known users, and user consultation on the work programme takes place within the department. These activities help ensure that the team understands the user need. We suggest that the team could do more to ensure an ongoing dialogue with users outside of the department to maximise the value of these statistics. The release is easy to read and there is useful detail on the data collection in the Summary of Annual Examination Results background report. As part of this compliance check the GSS Good Practice Team carried out a review of the release and made some suggestions for improvements. This review has been shared with the team and we encourage them to consider these suggestions.

We would like to thank the team for its support in carrying out this compliance check and commend the statisticians on the ways that they are seeking to continue to develop these statistics for the public good.

I have copied this letter to Siobhan Carey, as Chief Statistician for Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead