
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Neil McIvor
Chief Data Officer and Chief Statistician
Department for Education

30 October 2019

Dear Neil

FURTHER EDUCATION AND SKILLS STATISTICS

As you are aware, we have recently completed our review of your [Further Education and Skills statistics](#) against the Code of Practice for Statistics. We appreciate your positive engagement and commitment to the development of these statistics. Our focus has been on the public value and quality of these statistics. We have identified areas of strength against the Code of Practice and areas where we consider that further enhancements would improve compliance. I am pleased to confirm that these statistics should continue to be designated as National Statistics.

We found that the statistics team engages effectively with known users, acting on their feedback to improve the relevance of the statistics, for example, by improving the granularity of apprenticeships data, allowing users to understand what courses are being undertaken at a local authority level when previous focus was at a national level. The statistics team has also engaged with the Government Statistical Service's Good Practice Team to improve the publication, taking on the feedback provided during the peer review process.

We welcome plans to move the Further Education and Skills statistics to DfE's new statistics dissemination platform, Explore Education Statistics (ESS) and we are pleased that you are planning for these important statistics to be one of the early adopters of the new platform. We look forward to the benefits the new platform will bring, including allowing users to access the full underlying data and improving accessibility to the statistics through simple hyperlinks to view the data. We therefore encourage the statistics team to continue with the current user engagement activities and to proactively extend its understanding of different types of user needs upon roll-out of the new platform. This engagement activity will enable further improvements to the public value of these statistics.

We found that the statistics team clearly explains methodology changes to the current statistics within the statistical release and future changes are pre-announced, with their impact on the statistics explained, so keeping users informed and up to date. The Code makes clear that producers of statistics should also clearly explain how they assure themselves that the statistics and data are accurate, reliable, coherent and timely. The account of the assurance processes for these statistics is currently incomplete and we therefore appreciate your commitment to use the Authority's Quality Assurance of Administrative Data (QAAD) toolkit to provide a fuller explanation of the quality assurance processes that the statistics will undergo once they are moved to the new dissemination platform. This will assure users about the latest quality assurance arrangements and reinforce users' assurances about the quality and trustworthiness of the statistics. We welcome

your commitment to publish this fuller explanation by the March 2020 Further Education and Skills Statistics publication.

Our domain team will continue to engage with you and your team over the coming months as development continues. Specifically, we would welcome formal notification when you publish your updated quality assurance material.

I am copying this letter to Adrian Jones, Head of FE Data and Statistics and Mike Jones, Deputy Head of Profession for Statistics.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Pont', with a horizontal line underneath.

Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead