
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Jonathan Waller
Director of Data & Innovation and Lead Official for Statistics
Jisc
(by email)

8 August 2024

Dear Jonathan,

Compliance Check of Higher Education Student Statistics

We recently completed our compliance check of the [Higher Education Student Statistics](#) and are pleased to confirm that these accredited official statistics continue to meet the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value as set out in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

This compliance check was originally initiated in September 2023 following the merger of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Jisc in 2022 with the aim to ensure that the statistics continued to meet the standards expected of accredited official statistics. During this time, the first data collection under the new Data Futures model was underway, which experienced a number of challenges. As a result, we shifted the focus of this compliance check to primarily consider the Quality pillar of the Code of Practice.

We previously conducted a [compliance check](#) on these statistics in 2018. Since then, you have improved the language and format of the summary statistics by including additional information and definitions throughout the bulletin, which support users' interpretation and understanding of the statistics. It is good that you have also reduced the number of people who have pre-release access to the statistics. In addition, it is encouraging to see that it is now easier to access and navigate the quality report.

The Data Futures programme aims to transform the collection, processing and analysis of data in the Higher Education sector and has been in development since 2015. Following a period of considerable communication with the Higher Education sector, the new data collection was introduced in 2023 to collect data for the 2022/23 academic year. The implementation of the new data collection faced several challenges that had the potential to impact the number of Higher Education providers who submitted data and the quality of the data received. We commend the dedication of Jisc, working with statutory bodies and HE providers throughout the data submission period which ensured that all required UK Higher Education providers were able to submit data for inclusion within the 2022/23 student data set.

Following data submission, your staff conducted an unprecedented level of quality assurance to ensure that the data were fit for purpose. Your January 2024 [blog](#), and the

[quality report](#) published with the statistics, sets out the steps that you have taken to maximise the quality of the data, including:

- Field-by-field comparison with year-on-year variances which involved comparing the distribution of field categories with equivalent data from previous years
- Continuity testing by linking records for each student to their records in previous years to ensure that relevant characteristics have been recorded consistently over time
- Comparisons of aggregated statistics with previous years.

By proactively and openly sharing information with users on the quality assurance process, you have supported continued trust in the statistics and provided users with valuable information that will inform how they use the statistics.

We consider that Jisc has responded well to the challenges faced by the introduction of the Data Futures programme, and that Jisc has taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statistics meet the standards of the Code.

To improve future data collections, we encourage Jisc to reflect on the lessons learned from this process to draw valuable insights, in conjunction with the findings from the Office for Students' UK-wide independent review once completed.

I would like to thank you and your colleagues for their positive engagement throughout this review process. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter further.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead