Higher education data reduction taskforce (HEDRT)

Notes of the meeting held on Monday 9th May 2022, 11:00-13:00, held virtually via MS Teams.

Attendance

Chair

Neil McIvor, Chief Data Officer and Chief Statistician, Department for Education (DfE)

Attendees

- Minister Donelan – Minister for Higher and Further Education

- Alison Berry – Director of Statutory Operations – Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

- Don Campbell – Head of Data Centre of Excellence – Student Loans Company (SLC)

- Sarah Pearce – Further Education & Skills statistician – Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)

- Richard O'Kelly – Head of Analytical Data – Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

- Sarah Ardin – Head of Research & Analysis – Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (IfATE)

- Richard Puttock – Director of Data, Foresight and Analysis – Office for Students (OfS)

- Nadir Zanini – Associate Director of Research, Data and Analytics – Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)

- Matt Bollington – Higher Education Statistics Unit lead – Department for Education (DfE)

- Shauna Vulliamy – Head of OfS Sponsorship team – Department for Education (DfE)

- Andy Youell – Executive Director of Regulation – University College of Estate Management

- Mark Corver – Founder – Data HE

- David Hayes – Chief Data Officer – Open University

- Daniel Kidd – Deputy Academic Registrar – University of Wolverhampton

- Sally Turnbull – Chair of HESPA's Higher Education Data Insight Group

- Lindsay Jones – Head of MIS – Leicester College

- Nathan Michael – Academic Registrar – Grimsby Institute

- Terry Hutchinson – Director of curriculum and governance – DN Colleges Group

- Tim Hogan – Head of HE Economics and Senior Economist – Department for Education (DfE)

- Henna Akram – Analyst – Department for Education (DfE)

- Olly Clifton Moore – Head of HE Analysis – Department for Education (DfE)

- Lydia Turpin-Beesley – Secretariat – Department of Education (DfE)

Apologies

- David Craig – Director, Data Science – Department for Education (DfE)

- Alan Fenton – Academic Registrar – Newcastle College

- Jackie Njoroge – Director of Strategy – University of Salford

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Members of the Taskforce and the Chair, Neil McIvor, introduced themselves to each other.

2. Ministerial foreward

Minister Donelan thanked the Taskforce members for agreeing to join this important Taskforce to reduce data burden on the HE Sector. The Minister emphasised that the Taskforce provides a real opportunity for all parties involved in data in the HE Sector to discuss challenges and opportunities, and, most importantly, to agree tangible actions.

3. Review of minutes

The Chair ran through the minutes from the previous meeting and attendees reviewed these and agreed them to be an accurate record.

4. Group updates

The Chair invited members of the Taskforce to share updates on their work streams.

Governance of data collection

The Taskforce was updated on the successes of the former Data Landscape Steering Group (DLSG), and Data Landscape Advisory Panel, which included introducing a code of practice for data suppliers and a new subject coding system.

The Taskforce discussed potential future governance models, however they agreed that governance may not offer the quick wins the Minister has challenged the Taskforce to prioritise. The Chair expressed a need to unpack why the DLSG approach had not been successful.

ACTION: HESA (Alison Berry) & OfS (Richard Puttock) - To collect feedback on approaches to governance from Taskforce members for the June meeting.

Identifying areas where similar definitions are used for different purposes that create burden

The Taskforce recognised it is too soon to provide specific feedback at this stage, however they discussed ideas for improvement on the following issues:

- Variations of the same thing from different regulators

- Ways of working

- Governance around change

- Strategic change

There was support for considering duplication across data collection portals, setting up an issue / opportunity log and for categorising data items into those that are regulatory (which need to be accurate) and those for information (where absolute accuracy is less essential).

The Chair agreed for the group to move forward with this.

The Taskforce also discussed overcoming legal and data sharing barriers, with the need to look at secondary legislation.

ACTION: OU (David Hayes) - To share an issues log with the Taskforce for consideration at the June meeting.

Data sharing blockages

Following a presentation on a 'Shared Data Agreement', the Taskforce recognised this could be a potential option to implement as part of any recommendations made.

The group discussed what actions on data sharing need to be considered to reach a point where it can begin to look at the reduction of burden, including how it could define a minimum data set and confidently share that data across organisations.

The Chair is keen on progressing where possible, a joint sharing agreement. This could be either a Data Trust or an ONS Data Platform using a data gateway.

The Chair asked the Taskforce to look at risk appetites and specify a minimum dataset.

ACTION: SLC (Don Campbell) - To set out the initial steps to specify a minimum dataset for the June meeting

How regulators could help data suppliers extract greater value from the data they supply

The most significant value from the various data returns is derived by those who collect data; most of the burden is carried by those who submit data. Providers could gain additional value with data access that allowed further competitor and environmental analysis, which could be achieved by collectors 'opening up' additional dimensions in the data that are already collected.

ACTION: HEDIG (Sally Turnbull) - To clarify opportunities for gaining greater value from the supplied data ready for the June meeting.

5. Date of next meeting

23/06/2022 1000hrs – 1200hrs – location TBC

6. Any other business

The Chair asked for the next meeting to be extended to three hours.

ACTION: Secretariat – To extend the June meeting to three hours.