Higher education data reduction taskforce (HEDRT)

Notes of the meeting held on Thursday 23rd June 2022, 10:00-13:00, held virtually via MS Teams.

Attendance

Chair

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

Attendees

- 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)

- Ella Cross - Office for Students (OfS)

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

- Emma Davies – Deputy Director of HE Quality, Regulation and International – 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

- Jackie Njoroge – Director of Strategy – University of Salford

- Daniel Kidd – Deputy Academic Registrar – University of Wolverhampton

- Lindsay Jones – Head of MIS – Leicester College

- Nathan Michael – Academic Registrar – Grimsby Institute

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

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

- Tom Beresford – Head of Data Capture – Department for Education (DfE)

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

Apologies

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

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

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

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

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

- Alan Fenton – Academic Registrar – Newcastle College

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

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

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

2. 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.

3. Chair's address

The Chair thanked members for actively taking part and providing papers for this meeting. He acknowledged the group's expertise to take forward the Minister's aspirations for this Taskforce.

The Chair explained this is a turning point for the Taskforce, which needed to move from scoping to providing tangible, credible recommendations.

The Taskforce agreed the work was moving into a delivery phase, although it was recognised that the group would not be able to solve all the problems.

The Taskforce discussed the need to focus on delivery, identifying themes from the working groups and opportunities to create a new framework.

ACTION: Secretariat and internal colleagues - Future agendas to include specific item about what the taskforce expects to be delivered and how momentum will be maintained post October.

4. Group updates

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

Governance of data collection

A number of themes were discussed:

- Burdens surrounding governance functions and how to balance alongside effectiveness.

- Recognition that there would need to be clarity and transparency about how decisions have been reached.

- Acknowledgement that improving collaboration across organisations/nations would provide greater success, with DfE playing a role in this.

- The need to understand the obligation on data collectors, particularly around estimating cost to the sector of data requests.

- A strong view from the Taskforce about having an independent appeals body/adjudicator.

- More standardisation and rationalisation across processes and systems, however many agreed this would be a longer term goal.

- Reductions across organisational governance processes that might have an effect on data burden.

ACTION: HESA (Alison Berry) - To produce a paper for the next meeting setting out what it would mean to set up an adjudicator or design authority, what their remit could be, and pros and cons.

Data sharing blockages

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, move towards the definition of minimum data set, and confidently share data.

This generated a range of ideas:

- Articulate the value proposition clearly.

- Adopt a set of shared KPIs and success measures.

- Centralise a data dictionary that defines data across the sector for everyone.

- Use existing DSA agreements and adapt/enhance them to support easier data

sharing.

- Use common language and wording where possible across DSA to align on approach.

- Unlock and join the data at an individual level to support defined and agreed outcomes of use.

- Treat data sharing as neutral when looking at governance.

- Take a minimal, low risk, low cost approach initially and build from there.

The group also discussed the need for stakeholders to be engaged and communicated with clearly, and that making this a success will take time and investment. This work will need to start small and build. Next steps would be to articulate what a joint data set would look like.

ACTION: SLC (Don Campbell) – Look at the development of RACI for the group covering actions that could be undertaken to move towards a common data set and bring this back to the next meeting.

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

The group discussed the outcomes of the survey distributed via SROC and HESPA.

A small number of duplications were flagged around regulators needing information faster than HESA can accommodate:

- OfS do Higher Education Students Early Statistics (HESES)

- OfS do a Medical and Dental Students survey for Health Education England

- HESA collects an Initial Teacher Training (ITT) return for DfE

The other duplication identified is that ESFA and OfS collect duplicate information from universities about apprenticeships

Along with duplication, feedback extended to more major themes:

- governance

- single owner of data

- making change simpler

- data needing a clear purpose

- being bold and removing returns entirely

- sharing more data back with providers

The group discussed whether regulators could increase their risk appetite.

The Taskforce discussed success factors for their work, including:

- fewer returns (removed or less frequent),

- simplified returns

- better information back

- demonstration that instead of asking providers for data, the regulators/ALBs share data

ACTION: Data collectors/ALBs - Consider whether there are suggestions from the survey that the Taskforce could quickly take action to address

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

It was agreed to push this item back to the next meeting.

ACTION: Secretariat – Hold a discussion on the paper produced by Sally Turnbull (HEDIG Chair) at the next meeting

Data Collection Codes of Practice

Following a summary of what the codes cover and the work on burden assessment which supports them, there was a discussion on development of a burden assessment methodology. There was consensus that if there were a quantitative measure of burden available it could help to demonstrate any impacts of actions taken by the Taskforce.

ACTION: All - Consider the preferred approach for estimating the baseline cost of data collection.

5. Group membership

The Chair invited the Taskforce to discuss membership of the group, and whether there are any other groups that should be involved in order to meet its objectives.

The group agreed that they should reconsider the membership only if there was a critical gap.

However, it was noted that the Chair and/or a sub group of this board have stakeholder meetings with representative bodies such as SROC and ARC to road-test the recommendations of the Taskforce.

ACTION: Jackie Njoroge - to work with the Chair's Private Office to determine who he and the Secretariat needs to talk to regarding setting up stakeholder meetings.

6. Interim report

All members of the Taskforce were invited to reflect and discuss overall progress to date and content for the interim report.

They recognised the need to develop clear deliverables and will pick up in future meetings.

There was some discussion as the Taskforce moves towards delivery over how it is being promoted with the Sector and whether this ought to exend outside DfE. This could include promotion of the Interim Report.

ACTION: Work strand leads - Submit paragraphs for the Interim Report to be discussed at the next meeting, focusing on what specific avenues are being explored.

ACTION: Emma Davies - To support work strand leads to define what is expected for the Interim Report

ACTION: All - Board members to provide details to the Secretariat of who in their organisations the Taskforce could work with to promote the work of the Taskforce

7. Date of future meetings

04/08/2022, 1000hrs – 1200hrs – location TBC

12/09/2022, 1100hrs – 1300hrs – location TBC

27/10/2022, 1000hrs – 1200hrs – location TBC

8. Any other business

None