

Statement of Administrative Sources for the Statistical First Release “Further Education & Skills: Learner Participation, Outcomes and Level of Highest Qualification Held”

The Statistical First Release (SFR) “Further Education & Skills: Learner Participation, Outcomes and Level of Highest Qualification Held” is published on a regular basis.

This statement is in accordance with Protocol 3 of the UK Statistics Authority [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#)¹, and describes how administrative data is used to compile the Statistical First Release. This Protocol requires all producers of official statistics to publish, in consultation with the National Statistician, a ‘Statement of Administrative Sources’ which lists:

- a) The administrative systems currently used to produce official statistics;
- b) Procedures to be followed within the organisation to ensure that full account is taken of the implications for official statistics when changes to administrative data sources are contemplated;
- c) Information about other administrative sources that are not currently used for statistical purposes but which have the potential to be so used;
- d) The arrangements they have put in place to provide statistical staff with appropriate access to such sources;
- e) Arrangements for auditing the quality of the administrative data used for statistical purposes;
- f) Arrangements for ensuring the security of the resultant statistical processes.

The next section takes each of these six requirements and assesses them against the Statistical First Release.

a) The administrative systems currently used to produce official statistics

Official statistics published by the Skills Funding Agency (the Agency) are based on two main sources - data extracted from administrative systems, and data gathered from statistical surveys.

The data sources used in the SFR are detailed in Annex A. No data source used is collected for the sole purpose of the Statistical First Release. By using data which is already available within administrative systems rather than collecting data afresh we are able to limit the overall burden placed on data providers, and also avoid the costs of mounting dedicated data collection exercises. In addition, the data we extract from such systems has the advantage of being timelier than data from statistical surveys

¹ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

and, when compared with data from surveys, can also deliver data with a greater breadth and depth of coverage.

The UK Statistics Authority actively encourages public bodies to exploit administrative and management sources for statistical purposes. However the Authority recognises that the statistical advantages of such arrangements can only be fully realised if statisticians have appropriate access to such systems; if statistical purposes are reflected in the design, management, and development of such systems; and if adequate safeguards are put in place to ensure the professional integrity of any official statistics derived from them.

Information from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Ofqual are used to supplement the administrative data used in the SFR. This shows contextual information on the level of adult educational attainment in the population.

b) Procedures followed within the organisation to ensure that full account is taken of the implications for official statistics when changes to administrative data sources are contemplated

Changes to the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and other Agency data collections are requested from interested parties and these requests are evaluated and the successful requests authorised by the Agency and the Department for Business and Skills (BIS).

Changes to the Vocational Qualifications data collection are agreed by interested parties from the Department for Education (DfE), Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) & RM (External contractors) who annually review the content and the methods by which the data is collected and processed. Wherever possible, changes to the specification are kept to an absolute minimum, as any changes have potentially costly implications for awarding organisations, who operate many different software systems.

c) Information about other administrative sources that are not currently used for statistical purposes but which have the potential to be so used

There are currently no other administrative data sources that contain information on Further Education. If such a data source were proposed to be collected in the future, both the Department for Business and Skills and the Skills Funding Agency would be involved. Part of this involvement would be to produce an impact assessment which would include how it could affect the Statistical First Release.

There are no other administrative sources that collect information on vocational qualification awards as comprehensively as the Vocational Qualifications data collection, although other data collections such as the ILR do hold some information on learners who achieve such qualifications. Not all of the awarding bodies who offer vocational qualifications provide data on the award of vocational qualifications. The department receives aggregate vocational qualifications data as received from awarding bodies by OfQUAL, and uses this aggregate data as a measure to gauge how complete the vocational qualifications data collection is.

d) The arrangements put in place to provide statistical staff with appropriate access to such sources

The data sources used in the SFR are accessible by analysts across BIS, DfE, EFA and the Agency.

The level of access to data depends on the role of the member of statistical staff. Those who are involved in producing the Statistical First Release have access to the data at its lowest level of granularity, which has been anonymised so no individual's details can be seen. Further information can be found in the Confidentiality and Disclosure Policy of the Statistical First Release.

e) Arrangements for auditing the quality of the administrative data used for statistical purposes;

For Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data, data quality is managed at several levels:

- i. The Agency and BIS manage standards relating to the collection of data, report based on the data supplied by providers and these standards are fed back to providers at the close of a return ;
- ii. Internal data groups agree standards for use of the collected data in terms of measures and methods;
- iii. The Agency carry out appropriate checks on the data where related to funding and operational use;
- iv. The SFR production team undertake further quality assurance and plausibility checks;
- v. Appropriate governance of quality for statistical purposes is set by the Government Statistical Service team producing the SFR and issues relating to the quality of the administrative data are referred to the Vocational Education Data Board that addresses data issues for ILR collections.

The Vocational Qualifications data is received, processed and then quality assured by the DfE. Any issues relating to the quality of the data are referred back to the contractors providing the data, with the data signed off by DfE once any issues have been resolved.

f) Arrangements for ensuring the security of the resultant statistical processes.

Data and information is shared between the Agency and analysts in BIS in line with Cabinet Office guidelines, via a secure server and is encrypted. Those who are involved in producing the Statistical First Release are subject to the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and are aware of their responsibilities under the Data Protection Act. Further information in this and arrangements for data provided to external partners can be found in the Confidentiality and Disclosure Policy of the Statistical First Release.

Annex A: Data Sources Used in the Statistical First Release

The following table describes the administrative and survey data sources which are used to produce the Statistical First Release (SFR) “Post-16 Education & Skills: Learner Participation, Outcomes and Level of Highest Qualification Held”.

Data Source	Main purpose of this data source	Data Collection Arrangements	Access and Dissemination
<p>Individualised Learner Record (ILR) See Data Sources</p> <p><i>This is an administrative data source and the Agency manages the collection, analysis and dissemination of the data.</i></p>	<p>The Individualised Learner Record (ILR) is a collection of data about learners and their learning that is requested from learning providers in the FE system. The data collected is used to calculate the funding allocated to learning providers. The data collected is also used to ensure that public money is being spent in line with government targets for quality and value-for-money, for future planning, and to make the case for the sector in seeking further funding.</p>	<p>Providers return data according to the Agency’s collection timetable. Further information on collection arrangements can be found at : Individualised Learner Record (ILR) - GOV.UK</p>	<p>Access to the ILR is restricted to those statisticians and MI analysts who produce management information that supports policy and provider funding.</p> <p>An internal library of reports is regularly updated allowing day to day provider management to take place.</p> <p>Appropriate access is in place for statistical purposes to statistical staff throughout the Education Funding Agency and the Skills Funding Agency and also to statistical staff outside the agencies via a Data Sharing Protocol. See points d and f above for more information.</p>

<p>The Vocational Qualifications Database (formerly called the National Information System for Vocational Qualifications (NISVQ))</p>	<p>To provide management information on the number of vocational qualifications awarded to individuals undertaking accredited vocational qualifications offered by awarding bodies and certain characteristics of those receiving the awards.</p>	<p>The awarding bodies that have agreed to submit information on vocational qualifications awards send their data via a secure server. The data is processed on an annual data collection cycle which contains vocational qualification awards made between 1 October & 30 September each year. The processed data is then made available to the DfE who qualities assure the data before 'signing off' the annual data collection.</p>	<p>Access to the Vocational Qualifications database is restricted to those statisticians and MI analysts who produce management information that supports policy and provider funding. Some Vocational Qualifications data is matched to the National Pupil Database (NPD) to provide more information on young people's attainment.</p>
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