



Department  
for Business  
Innovation & Skills



Skills Funding  
Agency

## Revisions Policy for the Statistical First Release

The Statistical First Release (SFR) “Further Education & Skills: Learner Participation, Outcomes and Level of Highest Qualification Held” is published 5 times a year.

This document is intended to provide users with information on how revisions to the SFR are managed, in accordance with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#)<sup>1</sup>.

### Revisions

We aim to avoid the need for revisions to statistical publications unless they are absolutely necessary or are planned changes to provisional statistics. We put systems and processes in place to minimise the number and scale of any revisions made.

There are three main categories that revisions to the Statistical First Release can fall in to:

- 1. Receipt of subsequent information:** Receipt of subsequent (later) information or data; this can be planned, for example, receipt of more accurate information or data for the current period following more detailed validation of the source data; or unplanned, for example, late receipt of information or data from a data provider or administrative system, following discovery of an error or otherwise.
- 2. Methodology changes:** These could include planned changes in how information is collected from administrative systems; changes in statistical methodology to improve accuracy and measurement; or changes in definitions or categories.
- 3. Errors:** Errors in the statistical systems and processes used to produce the SFR.

More information on how each of these types of revision apply to the SFR, and how we manage them, is given below.

### 1. Receipt of subsequent information

Administrative systems can update information previously held, meaning that some information relating to a period already published is subsequently revised. This is the case with Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and EOP data used in this SFR.

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<sup>1</sup> Principle 2 Practice 6 of the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#) requires producers of Official Statistics to publish a revisions policy for those outputs that are subject to scheduled revisions.

Principle 2 Practice 7 of the Code requires producers of Official Statistics to correct errors discovered in statistical reports, and alert stakeholders, promptly.

The timing of each publication is designed to coincide with when data becomes available, in order to minimise the risk of revisions.

We periodically review the publication timetable of the SFR to maximise the quality and completeness of the data in the public domain. For example, we introduced an additional release in November 2013 to reflect earlier receipt of final full year data.

All in year data is clearly marked in the SFR as reported to date or reported so far. See Publication Cycle Across the Year paragraph in [Further Education and Skills: Statistical First Release Technical document](#).

Labour Force Survey data, used for estimates of level of highest qualification held in the population is provisional and finalised the following year. It is not normally subject to other revisions, except where periodically the population estimates it is weighted against are revised.

Vocational Qualification data from Awarding Bodies is not generally revised.

## **2. Methodological Changes**

As the SFR is intended to bring transparency to the delivery of government-funded further education and skills qualifications, it is appropriate to change our methodology to accurately reflect the further education and skills system when there are policy changes to how learners or programmes are funded.

Where major changes to collection systems are planned or where we propose significant changes in statistical methodology, definitions or categories, we will, where possible, consult with users on the changes. We will always consider the options for maintaining a consistent time-series, including any revisions to previously published time-series.

## **3. Errors**

We have robust procedures in place to minimise errors in the statistical systems and processes used for the SFR and regularly review our procedures to minimise the risk of errors. However, we recognise that errors may occasionally occur.

Where such errors do occur, we will assess the significance of the error on the interpretation of the affected statistics and determine an appropriate response in terms of publishing revisions and alerting users.

## **Handling of revisions**

It is our policy when handling revisions to statistical publications to be open and transparent with users about the need for revisions and how and when to expect revisions as part of our standard publication process.

As discussed above, all in year data is clearly marked in the SFR as reported to date or reported so far and the Publication Cycle Across the Year paragraph in the [background information](#) document explains when data is expected to be final.

Any unplanned/methodology changes from previous releases are clearly stated in a separate section within the SFR commentary and within the SFR tables, and it will be made clear which numbers are affected.

Where unplanned changes are assessed as being significant, we seek to reissue the SFR and withdraw the affected tables as a matter of urgency. We will also publish a statement on the website, drawing the revision to the attention of the user.

## **Feedback and Queries**

If you have any feedback and queries on this document please contact the Service Desk on 08702 670001 or [servicedesk@sfa.bis.gov.uk](mailto:servicedesk@sfa.bis.gov.uk)

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