Department for Education

Further Education Financial Reporting Dry Run

April 2026 to March 2027

July 2026 (first published June 2026)

Contents

Table of figures

Summary

This document provides guidance and support to all colleges in the Further Education (FE) Financial Reporting Dry Run (the dry run), running between April 2026 to March 2027. It underpins the FE sector data submission and reporting.

Who this publication is for

This guidance is for:

- FE institutions
- Department for Education (DfE) employees

Main points

A dry run of financial data collection from the FE sector is required to prepare for future years. This guidance covers the requirements and how the data will be collected.

Background and Rationale

In November 2022, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reclassified FE colleges into the central government sector. As part of our commitment to working in partnership with the sector in respect of this change, we have been working with the sector to develop a simple and efficient way to implement an approach (known as the 'compromise approach') to ensure reporting obligations can be met without introducing undue burden, including avoiding a requirement to change financial year end to align with central government reporting dates.

During 2025, we conducted a pilot of the approach with 14 FE colleges. This enabled us to test the data collection process, gather insight from participants, and refine the requirements for the wider sector. Based on the evidence obtained through our pilot, Parliament has endorsed government's proposal to carry out a dry run of the compromise approach for the 2026-27 government financial year (1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027) to support an effective implementation in 2027-28. We are very appreciative of the way the sector has worked with us to achieve this positive outcome, particularly to the 14 FE colleges who completed our pilot.

Data collected during the dry run will not be included in central government reporting for the 2026-27 financial year. However, it will be used by both the ONS to collect information and the National Audit Office (NAO) in determining the most appropriate audit approach for future years once the data is included in central government reporting. For these reasons, the collection is mandatory.

Whilst the dry run requires significant work for both the Department and FE sector, its success is imperative to avoid enforcing a change of year end on the whole sector. The dry run represents the only opportunity for both sides to test the process and "get it right" ahead of full implementation of the data into central government. The Department therefore wishes to stress the importance of treating the dry run in the same manner as if the collection was being reported to Parliament.

Further information on college accountability can be found in DfE's 2025 to 2026 accountability agreement.

Aims of the Dry Run

The main financial reporting requirements of the dry run are to accurately determine what the budget should be for annual spend in the sector and to consolidate FE colleges' outturn as at 31 March into the DfE Group Statement of Outturn against Parliamentary Supply (SOPS) in the DfE Group Annual Report and Accounts (ARA).

An explanation of the Parliamentary financial reporting cycle and the key terminology mentioned here is provided on pages 37 to 39.

The dry run will require high-quality data on which to draw evidence-based conclusions. Currently, all FE colleges submit the Finance Record (FR) and College Financial Forecast Return (CFFR) data returns to the Department.

Forecasting information will continue to be provided via the CFFR and will not be required for the dry run process. The requirements to complete both the FR and CFFR will continue as normal until further notice.

While these returns provide some of the key information necessary for sector consolidation, there is a requirement for further information to be provided in respect of consolidation. More granular and frequent financial data is required to satisfy these central government reporting requirements. Therefore, additional data collections are being trialled within the dry run.

As well as collecting more granular information, the dry run data collection is novel in its form. For example, it involves the use of an FE Chart of Accounts (CoA) that each college will map to provide the data required. Colleges will continue to maintain their own CoA within their accounting systems.

Requirements of the dry run

There may be additional information requested throughout the dry run, to satisfy the multiple aims and stakeholders. When these come to light, we will work with you to identify how best to capture them. These requests will evolve as the understanding of colleges' financial practices develops and as consensus on the best approach for FE sector reporting is reached between all interested parties.

Producing a Quarterly Update of Actuals

We will be requesting colleges to submit their actuals every quarter. Within these quarterly submissions, a monthly profile for those 3 months will be required. The college's accounting officer will be ultimately responsible for the accuracy of the data. The deadlines for submission can be found in Annex A.

Closing balance as at 31 March 2026

In the first return of the actual data, colleges will be asked to populate the closing balance data in March 2026. This will provide us with an opening balance for the April 2026 position.

Eliminations: college income from intra-sector and intra-government sources

We will need colleges to provide details on their income and expenditure with other colleges, with DfE and with other central government departments.

There is no *de minimus* for this information during the dry run, as we need to establish the level of intragroup transactions across the sector.

Colleges should ensure that values recognised in their returns match to the values recognised in their own ledgers.

We will then reconcile the balances and, where there are material variances in the values reported, may seek further information from colleges.

FE sector outturn to 31 March to inform the SoPS

The information provided in the data submissions will be used in the Department's SoPS.

The SoPS is the primary Parliamentary accountability statement and is unique to central government. It presents the Department's total expenditure compared to its Estimate and allows Parliament to assess whether the Department has managed funds in accordance with the amounts approved by Parliament in the Estimate.

The Estimate is set based on spending limits, applying different categories for day-to-day resource expenditure (RDEL), and capital investments (CDEL).

The SoPS, like the Estimate, uses these categories for reporting.

It is therefore vitally important that the guidance on how to map to the chart of accounts is followed, to ensure that college income and expenditure are reported against the correct spending limits.

External Audit

Engaging with college external auditors

It is unlikely that we will need to engage with the college's local auditors for the purposes of the dry run. As the SoPS will be reported in the DfE ARA and is classed as a primary financial statement it will be audited by the NAO.

However, colleges should still make their local auditors aware of the additional reporting requirements, since additional testing by the NAO will need to be carried out for a sample of colleges.

National Audit Office

The NAO is the UK's independent public spending watchdog. The Comptroller and Auditor General is responsible for providing an audit opinion on central government bodies. The NAO is required to provide an audit opinion on whether the SoPS, in the DfE ARA, "properly presents" the outturn against Parliamentary control totals, and that these totals have not been exceeded.

As the FE colleges will inform part of the SoPS, the NAO will need to obtain sufficient, appropriate audit evidence on the accuracy of the data submitted by the FE colleges.

The NAO will select a sample of colleges and arrange to complete substantive testing on the transaction level data of certain types of income and expenditure. The colleges selected for sampling will receive further information about this process nearer the time.

Specific timelines for this work are currently still to be determined. However, DfE and the NAO are conscious of colleges' resource constraints during local external audits and will ensure that this is considered when planning substantive testing of college data.

Chart of Accounts (CoA) mapping walkthrough

Benefits of using a mapped Chart of Accounts approach

To support greater consistency, transparency, and efficiency across the sector, the Chart of Accounts delivers a wide range of operational and reporting advantages for colleges. The following key benefits highlight how adopting a mapped CoA strengthens financial processes, reduces administrative burden, and enhances the accuracy and usefulness of the data submitted to the Department.

- **Provides the granular financial data required for consolidation:**
  The Chart of Accounts allows colleges to supply sufficiently detailed trial balance data that the existing collections cannot provide, ensuring the Department can meet the required legislative reporting requirements.
- **Reduces long term workload once initial mapping is complete:**
  While initial setup requires effort, subsequent annual updates to the CoA mapping are minimal, leading to a more efficient process from year two onwards.
- **Eliminates repetitive manual data entry into templates:**
  By using the trial balance directly rather than requiring colleges to manually key figures into individual fields, the CoA removes a major and time-consuming burden.
- **Improves data accuracy and validation processes:**
  Because the Department receives colleges' source financial data, validation focuses on mapping rather than rechecking manually entered totals, reducing error risk and improving reliability.
- **Builds on existing college accounting processes:**
  Colleges already produce trial balances as part of their normal financial practice, meaning the CoA fits naturally into their workflow without creating new reporting obligations.
- **Creates consistent data structures across all users:**
  A common CoA ensures uniformity of financial data across the sector, simplifying communication, analysis, and reporting for colleges and the Department.

The Chart of Accounts (CoA) Structure

The FE chart of accounts contains 1363 codes.

The FE CoA is organised into multiple hierarchical levels, ranging from high-level categories down to detailed granular accounts. This tiered structure enables users to navigate easily and identify the appropriate level of detail required for reporting.

The structure allows colleges with varying internal accounting systems to map their data effectively, regardless of how granular (or not) their internal codes may be. **Colleges are not required to replicate the full granularity of the FE CoA (Except for specific areas discussed in section on fixed assets); rather, they should map their existing accounts to the most appropriate code within the standard framework**.

Each code within the chart of accounts is divided into 4 distinct levels to help direct users to the areas they require.

Figure 1 is an example of the different levels within the Chart of Accounts.

Figure 1: Three accounts codes broken down into 4 levels

Account Code	L0 Description	L1 Description	L2 Description	L3 Description	Code Description
16000000	Assets	Non-current Assets	Freehold Land	O/Bal	Non-current Assets: Freehold Land: O/Bal
16000010	Assets	Non-current Assets	Freehold Land	Additions DfE Capital Grant	Non-current Assets: Freehold Land: Additions DfE Capital Grant
16000020	Assets	Non-current Assets	Freehold Land	Additions other capital grant	Non-current Assets: Freehold Land: Additions other capital grant

Descriptions are provided in able 1 on what each level represents.

Table 1: Table showing Chart of Accounts levels

Level	Description
0	Lowest level of granularity. 5 categories exist at this level; Assets, Liabilities, Income, Expenditure and Taxpayers equity and other funds.
1	Increasing level of granularity. Splits assets into Current and Non-Current for example.
2	Increasing level of granularity. Splits assets into Freehold land, buildings, equipment etc.
3	Highest level of granularity.

Taking an individual account code as an example, we can split the code down into 4 distinct levels.

Figure 2: An example of a code. Non-Current Assets: Freehold Land: O/Bal

Code Description
Non-current Assets: Freehold Land: O/Bal

Using the account code in figure 2, we can break it down into the following 4 levels

- Level 0: Assets
- Level 1: Non-Current Assets
- Level 2: Freehold Land
- Level 3: O/Bal

Any account within the CoA can be broken down into these 4 levels.

Online System for Central Accounting and Reporting (OSCAR)

The numbering convention of the chart of accounts has been designed around the guidance from HM Treasury. The Online system for central accounting and reporting (OSCAR) Tool is a cross-government tool maintained by HM Treasury (HMT).

OSCAR follows the following coding logic.

OSCAR / Common CoA Structure

Statement of financial position (SOFP):

10000000 Assets

20000000 Liabilities

30000000 Taxpayers equity and other reserves

Statement of comprehensive net expenditure (SOCNE)

4000000 Income

5000000 Expenditure

6000000 Finance costs and other income and expenses

The FE chart of accounts structure for accounts codes is laid out in the table 2.

Table 2: FE Chart of Accounts structure

Account code range	Account code range: description	Notes
1000000 to 1999999	Statement of Financial Position (SoFP): Assets	Colleges may find more fixed asset account codes than they are used to. These should be made use of, as appropriate, to meet the reporting requirements
2000000 to 2999999	Statement of Financial Position (SoFP): Liabilities	
3000000 to 3999999	Equity	
4000000 to 4999999	Statement of Comprehensive Income (SoCI): Income	Includes several generic 'other specific grants' accounts to accommodate any grant income that may not be captured within standard categories.
5000000 to 5999999	Statement of Comprehensive Income (SoCI): Expenditure	

Using and Mapping to the FE CoA

Most FE providers maintain accounting structures that differ in depth and format from the DfE standard. The FE CoA has been intentionally designed with a broad set of codes to ensure future-proofing and flexibility, acknowledging initial uncertainties around reporting requirements.

The mapping exercise is intended to be a **onetime activity**. While the initial process may appear detailed and time consuming, it should only need to be completed once. To support this, all of your account codes, including those not currently in use, should be mapped to the FE Chart of Accounts (CoA). Completing a full mapping at the outset ensures that, when submitting monthly values, no additional mapping will be required for accounts that were inactive previously. You will only need to revisit the mapping exercise if you introduce new accounts into your financial system.

General Principles of mapping to the FE CoA

- **This mapping exercise is completed at the start and only once**
  Map all your account codes, including unused ones, to the FE CoA so that future monthly submissions need no further mapping, unless you later create entirely new accounts.
- **Your internal structure does not need to match the FE CoA on one-to-one basis**
  You may map multiple internal accounts to a single FE code where this is appropriate for reporting requirements.
- **Accounts should be mapped on a 'like-for-like' basis.**
  When completing the mapping, ensure that the nature of each account is matched appropriately. For example, a code relating to commercial income should, as a minimum, be mapped to an income category within the FE Chart of Accounts.
- **Ensuring Resource and Capital Expenditure are not mismapped**
  If a college maps an account relating to resource expenditure to a code intended for capital expenditure, it will be reported under the wrong DfE spending category. Because resource and capital expenditure are treated differently within government reporting and spending controls, mis-mapping can lead to inaccurate sector level reporting, incorrect interpretation of spending pressures, and potential issues with meeting departmental requirements. This misclassification would result in resource-based expenditure being incorrectly treated as capital, producing misleading returns and possible qualification of the DfE accounts.
- **For grant income, you should map to the most specific grant-related account code wherever possible.**
  As a minimum requirement, grant income accounts must be categorised into the following groups: **DfE**, **Local Authority (LA)**, **Non-government**, and **Other Central Government (Non-DfE)**. The Chart of Accounts includes more than 65 income codes relating to grant funding. Where an exact match for a particular grant is not available, you should select the most appropriate option from the 'other specific grants' accounts listed in table 3 to ensure the income is recorded accurately and consistently.

Table 3: Account codes relating to grant funding

L1 Description	Code Description
Funding Body Grants:	ESFA / DfE 16-19 other programme funding (exc. Bursaries): ESFA / DfE - Other
Funding Body Grants:	Other funding including Local Authority and schools: Other Specific Grants - LA
Funding Body Grants:	Other funding including Local Authority and schools: Other Specific Grants – Non-government
Funding Body Grants:	Other funding including Local Authority and schools: Other Specific Grants - Other Central Government (Non DfE)

- **You must not map one internal account to multiple FE codes.**
  Doing so causes data distortion during consolidation because the reporting workbook will only pull through one instance of the code, allocating all values incorrectly.
- **Use cost centres or activity codes where needed.**
  For example, colleges that use cost centres to differentiate curriculum areas should concatenate these with account codes to create a unique mapped value when necessary
- **Provide your full list of nominal codes in the mapping worksheet.**
  Colleges should provide their full list of nominal codes within the mapping worksheet to ensure that no account is missing, even if a number of accounts are unused initially. This will reduce validation errors and the effort required to maintain future mapping.
- **If new nominal codes are created during the dry run, they must be added to the mapping worksheet.**
  Colleges must ensure that the mapping worksheet is up to date to ensure no accounts are missing which will subsequently lead to a non-balanced TB.
- **You must record all fixed asset movements in the appropriate movement accounts.**
  Fixed asset movements **must not** be reported within a single asset account. Each type of movement – such as **additions, disposals, revaluations, or depreciation/amortisation** – must be recorded in its correct, designated movement account to ensure accurate reporting. Further detail on fixed assets is provided later in this workbook.

Mapping worksheet

Although the data collection workbook is still being finalised, the mapping worksheet is included within the CoA workbook. We are providing it to you at this stage to give early visibility of the structure and to support you in commencing the initial mapping process.

Users will map their own local account codes to the FE CoA within the 'mapping' worksheet. Figure 3: shows the worksheet before any data has been recorded by college with columns for College Account Code, Description and 2 other columns for DfE Account Code and Description.

Figure 3: Blank mapping worksheet

A	B	C	D	E
Mapping worksheet				
College Account Code	Description		DfE Account Code	Description

Colleges will provide their own local codes and description under the 'College Account Code' and 'Description' in column **A** and **B,** respectively.

Figure 4: Mapping worksheet filled with their local codes

A	B	C	D	E
Mapping worksheet				
College Account Code	Description		DfE Account Code	Description
1000	Buildings opening balance		16001000	Non-current Assets: Freehold Buildings: O/Bal
1020	buildings additions		16001020	Non-current Assets: Freehold Buildings: Additions other capital grant
2999	Staff costs - salary		50000000	Staff Costs: Teaching staff: Wages and salaries
76000	Commercial income		40307040	Other Income: Other commercial income: Other Commercial Income

After posting your full and complete nominal codes in column A, alongside the descriptions in column B, colleges must then map each account to one from the FE CoA in column D.

Figure 4 shows this college has a code '**1000** – Buildings opening balance' which they have mapped to '**16001000**: Non-Current Assets: Freehold Buildings: O/BAL' from the FE CoA.

Correctly reporting your fixed assets

Fixed assets – Colleges need to provide fixed-asset movement information at the required level of detail

A pilot data collection exercise was undertaken with colleges to gather both forecast and actual spend information at the Trial Balance (TB) level, however, we will only require your **actuals** for the 26-27 dry run.

Our review of the pilot colleges' submissions identified that the data provided did not align with the required reporting format for **Capital Departmental Expenditure Limits (CDEL).**

Capital Departmental Expenditure Limits (CDEL) cover spending on capital activity, such as additions, disposals, revaluations, and depreciation of fixed assets. Accurate reporting of these movements is essential because the Department uses them to determine the FE sector's **CDEL net spend**. Misreporting can prevent the Department from identifying the underlying drivers of asset changes, and risks undermining the compromise approach to reporting that is currently agreed.

Specifically, several colleges recorded their fixed asset movements within the opening balance accounts of the relevant assets. This approach prevented us from reliably distinguishing the nature of these movements, such as additions, disposals, or depreciation/amortisation, within the opening balance figures.

As each type of fixed asset movement requires a different treatment for the purposes of determining whether it should be included in departmental budgetary categories under the agreed compromise approach, the lack of clarity meant that the submitted data could not be used to produce an accurate CDEL net spend outturn

Figure 5 shows an example of an incorrect way of providing fixed asset movements where all assets are recorded under one account description

Figure 5: Incorrect method of providing fixed asset movements

Account Code	Account Description	Mar-2026	Apr-2026	May-2026	Jun-2026	Jul-2026
16001000	Non-current Assets: Freehold Buildings: O/Bal	1,000,000	10,000	5,000	(-2,000)	15,000

Given that these movements have been recorded within the opening balance accounts, it is not possible to accurately determine the underlying drivers of the changes.

Figure 6 shows an example of the format in which we require these movements to be reported. All assets should be recorded separately to show the underlying drivers of the change.

Figure 6: Correct method of providing fixed asset movements

Account Code	Account Description	Mar-2026	Apr-2026	May-2026	Jun-2026	Jul-2026
16001000	Non-current Assets: Freehold Buildings: O/Bal	1,000,000	0	0	0	0
16001010	Non-current Assets: Freehold Buildings: Additions DfE Capital Grant	0	10,000	0	0	8,000
16001030	Non-current Assets: Freehold Buildings: Additions other	0	0	8,000	0	7,000
16001090	Non-current Assets: Freehold Buildings: Disposals	0	0	0	(-2,000)	0
16001130	Non-current Assets: Freehold Buildings: Depreciation charged	0	0	(-3,000)	0	0

The revised presentation of the data enables us to clearly identify the underlying fixed asset movements, allowing for accurate reporting of the FE sector’s fixed assets.

To comply with DfE requirements:

- Record **each asset movement type separately** (e.g., additions, disposals, revaluations, depreciation / amortisation)
- **Do not combine all movements into a single net book value code**. Submissions that use a single code for an entire asset category will be rejected.
- If your financial system does not naturally record this level of detail, **create temporary (dummy) codes (see FAQ 5 for a worked example)** to ensure data is reported correctly. Alternatively, you can lift the figures from your asset register and input into the respective separate codes to ensure correct split. The net book value being reported on your TB must reconcile to the Net book value of your asset register.

The required format clearly distinguishes the underlying drivers of change, enabling accurate reporting for the FE sector.

Figure 7: Example of completed mapping worksheet

Mapping worksheet

College Account Code	Description	DfE Account Code	Description
1000	Tuition Fees – UK Students	40101030	Tuition Fees And Education Contracts: Contracts: Education Contracts - UK
1002	Tuition Fees – International Students	40101020	Tuition Fees And Education Contracts: Contracts: Education Contracts - Overseas
1005	Apprenticeship Training Income	40013000	Funding Body Grants: Total apprenticeship programme funding: ESFA / DfE - Apprenticeships
1012	Research Grants – Government	40204060	Other Grants And Contracts: Other grants: Research grants and contracts
1021	Consultancy Fees	40300000	Other Income: Consultancy: Consultancy & other services income
1022	Catering Income	40306000	Other Income: Catering Income: Catering Income
1023	Residence/Accommodation Fees	40312000	Other Income: Residences and conferences: Income
1024	Conferences & Events Income	40312000	Other Income: Residences and conferences: Income
1026	Nursery Income	40304000	Other Income: Nursery: Nursery income
1042	Endowment Income	40401000	Endowment And Investment Income: Interest: Bank interest receivable
2000	Academic Staff Salaries	50000000	Staff Costs: Teaching staff: Wages and salaries
2001	Support Staff Salaries	50002000	Staff Costs: Teaching and other support staff: Wages and salaries
2003	Casual & Hourly Paid Staff	50007000	Staff Costs: Temporary Staff: Wages and salaries
2005	Employer National Insurance	50002020	Staff Costs: Teaching and other support staff: Employers national insurance
2006	Employer Pension Contributions	50000030	Staff Costs: Teaching staff: Employers pension contribution
2007	Staff Training & Development	50012160	Staff Costs: Indirect Employee Expenses: Staff training
2008	Staff Recruitment Costs	50012130	Staff Costs: Indirect Employee Expenses: Recruitment
5001	Buildings – Opening balance	16001000	Non-current Assets: Freehold Buildings: O/Bal
5002	Buildings – Accumulated Depreciation	16001120	Non-current Assets: Freehold Buildings: Depreciation brought forward
5003	Leasehold Improvements – Opening balance	16004000	Non-current Assets: Leasehold Improvements: O/Bal
5006	Plant and Machinery - Capital grant additions	16005030	Non-current Assets: Plant & Machinery (Owned): Additions other
7000	Trade Creditors	26000000	Current Liabilities: Creditors <1 year: Trade Creditors
7001	Accruals	21000100	Non-Current Liabilities: Creditors >1 year: Other Accruals
7002	Deferred Income – Tuition Fees	21000070	Non-Current Liabilities: Creditors >1 year: Deferred income other
9002	Revaluation Reserve	30001000	Funds: Revaluation Reserve: O/Bal
9003	Restricted Reserve – Donations	30003000	Funds: Restricted Reserve: O/Bal

Data Collection Workbook

Key Points

This section covers how to complete the quarterly data collection workbook. Where possible, instructions have been included on the workbook itself.

- **To avoid balancing errors due to rounding, please ensure all values are entered to the penny (2 decimal places).**
- Only one workbook is to be provided by DfE, to be reused for each quarter. Therefore, all 12 monthly tabs will be available initially, but naturally, any future months beyond the current quarter are to remain blank. So, for Q1, please leave July onwards blank and for Q2, please leave October onwards blank etc.
- **Whilst the opening data for 31 March will be balances, please ensure only monthly movements are submitted for the 12 tabs covering April 2026 to March 2027.**
- All returns must be signed off by the college's Accounting Officer. A College Sign-Off tab has been provided for this on the Data Collection Workbook.

Workbook Tabs Description

The tabs are colour-coded to indicate their purpose.

Green tabs (Input)

Green tabs are those which colleges are required to complete.

College Sign-Off – This is the cover sheet of the workbook, to provide the college/return details as well as the approval from the Accounting Officer.

Mapping – This should be a one-time activity unless subsequent coding changes are required mid-year. The mapping process will be completed on a separate workbook that was provided to the sector early in the process and then, once complete, copied to this Mapping tab.

OpBal – 31Mar – this tab is to provide the **balances** at 31 March 2026. This will form the opening balances for the dry run.

Individual Months – there are 12 tabs for each month. These are to provide the **monthly movements.**

Eliminations – this tab is to remove ineligible transactions from the accounts.

Blue tabs (Information)

Blue tabs are read only, qualitative and are used for reference.

Contents & Instructions – this provides a breakdown of all the tabs on the workbook, as well the instructions for how to complete each Input tab.

Control – this tab provides the sense-check for the data provided and details whether the validations have been cleared.

DfE – CoA – this provides a full list of DfE codes for reference.

DfE – Consol – this is the current values as per the mapped codes.

Lists – A comprehensive list of bodies that are used in the Eliminations tab.

Orange tabs (Calculations)

Orange tabs are read only and provide quantitative data based on what has been included on the Input tabs.

College TB – this is an automatic consolidation of all data entered, as per the original college codes.

Depr Amort Impair – a useful summary of depreciation, amortisation, and impairment.

Quarterly process

For the dates of these quarters, please refer to Annex A.

For each month you are reporting for, go to relevant month. Add your college codes and **monthly movements to the penny (2 decimal places).**

Step-by-step guide

Tab: College Sign-Off

Step 1: Select the appropriate college from the drop-down list in cell C3.

Step 2: Complete all required fields within the “Sign Off Required” section (cell range C8:C11).

Step 3: Once the above steps are completed, the required file name will automatically populate in cell C23.

Step 4: Save the workbook using the file name displayed in cell C23, ensuring it is entered exactly as shown.

Tab: Mapping

Step 1: Input / copy and paste your complete set of CoA codes in column A and B.

Step 2: Select the appropriate account code from the CoA worksheet to map to the account listed in column A, and enter it in column D. The corresponding account description will then populate automatically in column E.

Tab: OpBal – 31Mar

Step 1: In column A, enter your own local Account code, with its corresponding account description in column B.

Step 2: in column D, enter the March 26 closing balance for the account.

Tab: Individual Months

Step 1: Insert your college account code in column A and its corresponding account description in column B.

Step 2: Insert the accounts corresponding monthly movement in column C for the month in question.

Step 3: This value will now pull through to the college TB worksheet.

(Note: users are only required to complete the worksheets for the months corresponding to the relevant quarter).

Tab: Eliminations

This worksheet must only be completed if you have transactions with another college, non-grant transactions with DfE, or any other central government transactions. If none of these apply, you are **not required** to complete this worksheet.

Step 1: From the drop-down lists, select the relevant college with which the transaction has occurred.

Step 2: Enter your local account code in the relevant column.

Step 3: Enter the aggregate total balance value in the relevant column. All values should be recorded to two decimal places. No '£' sign is required to be entered.

Step 4: Provide a clear and accurate description of the nature of the transaction

File naming

Please double check your values are monthly movements and not balances, as well as in pounds and pence and not rounded. Once this is done, the format to save your file will be found on the **College Sign-off** tab in cell C23.

Workbook validations

To help ensure accuracy, the workbook has in-built sense checks in place to validate the data. These are split between hard validations (which will mean the workbook cannot be accepted) and soft validations (to be checked, but the workbook will still be accepted). Further details on this are provided in the following section.

Hard validations (H)

There are critical issues that prevent submission and need to be addressed before submission.

The 9 hard validations are:

Mapping

H1 Missing DfE Mapping - one of the college codes appearing in the 'Mapping' tab has not been assigned a DfE code in that tab. This can be resolved by ensuring all college codes have been assigned to a DfE code.

H2 Included own local code more than once – it is not possible to have one college code mapped to multiple DfE codes, as it would not be possible to accurately verify the split. This can be resolved by ensuring all college codes only appear once on the mapping.

H3 Missing own code in 'Mapping' tab - in one of the monthly tabs, values have been entered against a code that does not appear in the 'Mapping' tab. This can be resolved by ensuring that all codes appearing in the monthly tabs are also included in the 'Mapping' tab.

Balances

H4 TB doesn't balance within individual months – at least one of the monthly tabs does not net to zero. This can be resolved by checking for the error on that respective tab.

H5 Depreciation charged doesn't reconcile to balance sheet – there is an imbalance in the period between depreciation charged to the I&E and that which has been added to the balance sheet. This can be resolved by checking for the error on that respective tab.

H6 Amortisation charged doesn't reconcile to balance sheet – there is an imbalance in the period between amortisation charged to the I&E and that which has been added to the balance sheet. This can be resolved by checking for the error on that respective tab.

H7 Impairments charged doesn't reconcile to balance sheet - there is an imbalance in the period between impairment charged to the I&E and that which has been added to the balance sheet. This can be resolved by checking for the error on that respective tab.

Sign-Off

H8 No sign off - not all sign off information has been provided within the 'College Sign-Off' tab. This can be resolved by ensuring all sections on the tab are complete before submission.

H9 No quarter selected – no option has been selected in the 'Which quarter are you submitting for?' drop-down on the 'College Sign-Off' tab. This can be resolved by selecting the relevant option on that tab.

Figure 8: Hard validations on the "Control" tab of the workbook

No	Type of Error	Instances	Issue / Resolution	Worksheet
Hard Validations (H) - Hard validations must pass before submitting workbook. Any attempts to upload a workbook with outstanding hard validations will be rejected.				
H.1	**Missing DFE Mapping**	**0**	**Issue** One of your local codes in column A of the 'Mapping' worksheet hasn't been assigned a DfE code in column D of the 'Mapping' worksheet. **Resolution** Please ensure each code in column A of the 'Mapping worksheet has been assigned a corresponding DfE code in Column D of the 'Mapping' worksheet. You can use column F in the 'Mapping' worksheet to filter on 'error' to find the codes which are causing the issue. You must ensure there are no 'error' in column F for the validation to pass.	**Mapping**
H.2	**Included own local code more than once**	**0**	**Issue** One of your local codes in column A of the 'Mapping' worksheet has been included more than once. Each code can only be used once in column A to ensure we can accurately trace the mapping values back. **Resolution** Please ensure each column in column A of the 'Mapping' worksheet is only included once in column A. You can use column G in the 'Mapping' worksheet to filter on 'error' to find the codes which are causing the issue. You must ensure there are no 'error' in column G for the validation to pass.	**Mapping**
H.3	**Missing own code in Mapping worksheet**	**0**	**Issue** In one of your 12 monthly Trial Balance (TB) tabs, or the Opening Balance - March tab, values have been entered against a code that doesn't appear in column A of the 'Mapping' worksheet. **Resolution** Please ensure that each account code entered into one of the monthly input sheets is included in column A of the mapping worksheet, alongside a corresponding DfE code in column D of the 'Mapping worksheet. You can determine which of the monthly input sheet is causing the issue from the cell range C11:C24 in the 'Control' worksheet. The monthly input sheet that is causing the issue will be highlighted in red. You can use column D in each of the monthly input sheets and filter on 'CODE MISSING MISSING PLEASE ADD TO MAPPING' to find the codes which are causing the issue.	**Monthly Sheets**
	Opening Bal - March	**0**		*Opening Bal - March*
	Q1 April	0		*Q1 April*
	Q4 March	0		*Q4 March*
H.4	**TB Doesn't balance within individual months**	**0**	**Issue** In one of your 12 monthly Trial Balance (TB) tabs, or the Opening Balance - March tab, the values entered into column C doesn't net to zero. For the accuracy of financial statements, the totals debits must equal the total credits at the end of each reporting period. **Resolution** You can determine which of the monthly input sheets is causing the issue from the cell range C25:C38 in the 'Control' worksheet. The monthly input sheet that is causing the issue will be highlighted in red. Please ensure that the values in Column C of the monthly input sheet nets to zero. Cell C2 in the monthly input sheet will total up the values in column C and provide a figure. This figure must net to zero for the validation to pass.	**Monthly Sheets**
	Opening Bal - March	0		*Opening Bal - March*
	Q1 April	0		*Q1 April*
	Q4 March	0		*Q4 March*
H.5	**Depreciation charged doesn't reconcile to balance sheet**	**0**	**Issue** Current period Depreciation of PPE in the SoFP and the Depreciation Expense in I&E must net to £0 **Resolution** The sum of values of depreciation in the balance sheet and I&E must net to nil. You must amend your TB values in order to approve and submit the form. Please use the 'DepAmorImp' worksheet to understand the error.	**DepAmorImp**
H.6	**Amortisation charged doesn't reconcile to balance sheet**	**0**	**Issue** Current period Amortisation of PPE in the SoFP and the Amortisation Expense in I&E must net to £0 **Resolution** The sum of values of amortisation in the balance sheet and I&E must net to nil. You must amend your TB values in order to approve and submit the form. Please use the 'DepAmorImp' worksheet to understand the error.	**DepAmorImp**
H.7	**Impairment charged doesn't reconcile to balance sheet**	**0**	**Issue** Current period Impairment of PPE in the SoFP and the Impairment Expense in I&E must net to £0 **Resolution** The sum of values of impairment in the balance sheet and I&E must net to nil. You must amend your TB values in order to approve and submit the form. Please use the 'DepAmorImp' worksheet to understand the error.	**DepAmorImp**
H.8	**No sign off**	1	**Issue** Not all sign off information has been provided within the 'College Sign-Off' worksheet **Resolution** Please ensure that all fields in cell range C8:C11 of the 'College Sign-Off' worksheet are complete. Any incomplete cells will cause this validation to fail.	**College Sign-off**
H.9	**No quarter selected**	1	**Issue** No quarter has been selected within the 'College Sign-Off' worksheet. **Resolution** Please ensure that a quarter is selected in Cell 21 of the 'College Sign-Off' worksheet is complete. A quarter must have been selected in Cell 21 for this validation to pass.	**College Sign-off**

Soft validations (S)

These trigger when a value outside of an expected parameter occurs. However, these do not prevent submission. Please double check these to ensure they are correct.

The 4 soft validations are:

Potential balances

S1 Values appear to be cumulative and not monthly movements - any month in which the total movements submitted are 95% or higher than the opening balances submitted for 31 March 2026 will trigger this validation. It indicates the potential that current balances have been incorrectly entered instead of monthly movements.

S2 Values recorded in opening balance accounts – opening balance accounts are only to be used for the 31 March 2026 values. Any in-year movements must be recorded on the relevant movement code. For example, additions must be recorded on the relevant additions code.

Nil values

S3 Cash or cash equivalents equals £0 – it would be expected to have a balance for cash or cash equivalents. This validation will trigger when no value have been entered

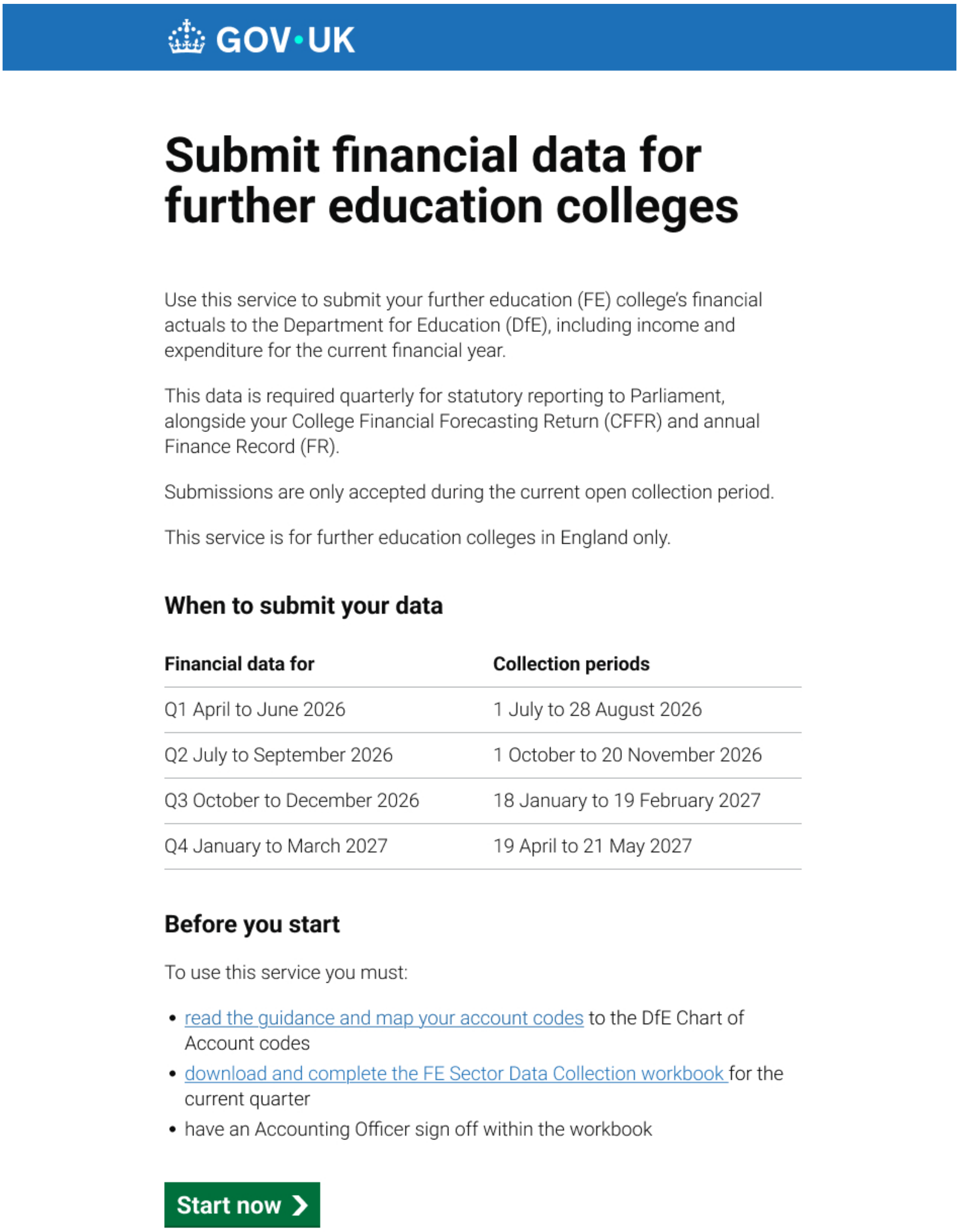
Figure 9: Soft validations on the "Control" tab of the workbook

No	Type of Error	Instances	Issue / Resolution	Worksheet
Soft Validations (S) - These validations should pass before submitting workbook (however there may be some instance where this is acceptable)				
S.1	**Values appear to be cumulative and not monthly movements**	0	**Issue** Based on the comparison between your monthly values and the March opening balances, it appears that cumulative balances have been submitted instead of monthly movements. Any month in which the total movements submitted are 95% or higher than the opening balances submitted for 31 March 2026 will trigger this validation. **Resolution** Please ensure that you have provided opening balances in the 'OpBal - 31Mar' worksheet, and monthly movements in the 12 monthly input worksheets (Q1Apr - Q4Mar)	**Monthly Sheets**
S.2	**Values recorded in opening balance accounts**	0	**Issue** Values have been recorded within the opening balance account. For accurate reporting to HMT, we need to understand the nature of these movements within fixed asset accounts. **Resolution** Please ensure that no values are being recorded in the monthly input sheet against any of the opening balance accounts for non-current assets. Please ensure that all movements (e.g., additions, disposals) are mapped to the appropriate movement account for the relevant asset.	**Monthly Sheets**
S.3	**Cash or cash equivalents equals £0**	1	**Issue** The value of Cash and cash equivalents or Bank overdraft is £0. **Resolution** In column A of the 'Mapping' worksheet, please ensure you have an account code that is mapped to one of the following codes (see below) in Column D of the 'Mapping' worksheet. 18014000 Current Assets: Bank Accounts: Bank Account 1 18015000 Current Assets: Savings Accounts: Savings Account 1 18016000 Current Assets: Petty Cash: Petty Cash Account 1 26000010 Current liabilities: Creditors <1 year: Bank overdraft We would usually expect colleges to disclose a figure in one of these accounts.	**Monthly Sheets**

How to submit your data

Please go to the following webpage: [Submit financial data for further education colleges - Start page - GOV.UK]

Figure 10: FE data collection submission home page



GOV.UK

Submit financial data for further education colleges

Use this service to submit your further education (FE) college's financial actuals to the Department for Education (DfE), including income and expenditure for the current financial year.

This data is required quarterly for statutory reporting to Parliament, alongside your College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) and annual Finance Record (FR).

Submissions are only accepted during the current open collection period.

This service is for further education colleges in England only.

When to submit your data

Financial data for	Collection periods
Q1 April to June 2026	1 July to 28 August 2026
Q2 July to September 2026	1 October to 20 November 2026
Q3 October to December 2026	18 January to 19 February 2027
Q4 January to March 2027	19 April to 21 May 2027

Before you start

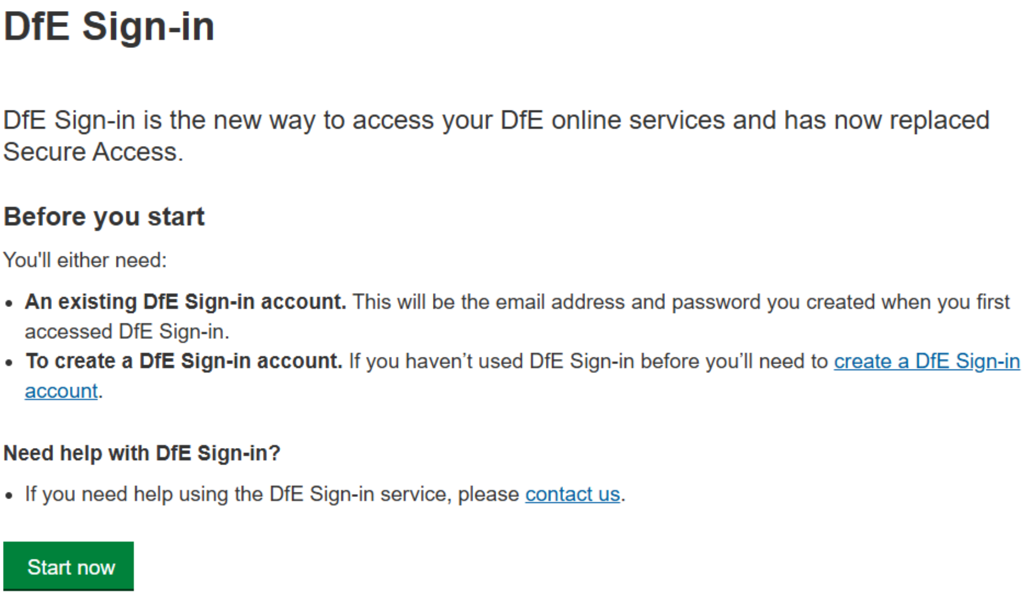
To use this service you must:

- read the guidance and map your account codes to the DfE Chart of Account codes
- download and complete the FE Sector Data Collection workbook for the current quarter
- have an Accounting Officer sign off within the workbook

Start now

1. Click on **Start now** to begin.

Figure 11: Sign-in page



DfE Sign-in

DfE Sign-in is the new way to access your DfE online services and has now replaced Secure Access.

Before you start

You'll either need:

- **An existing DfE Sign-in account.** This will be the email address and password you created when you first accessed DfE Sign-in.
- **To create a DfE Sign-in account.** If you haven't used DfE Sign-in before you'll need to create a DfE Sign-in account.

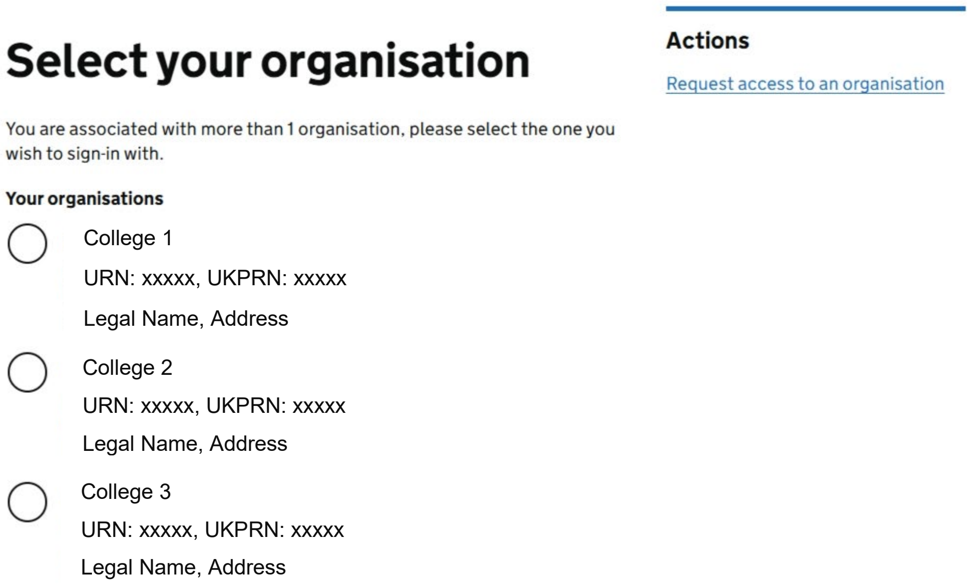
Need help with DfE Sign-in?

- If you need help using the DfE Sign-in service, please contact us.

Start now

2. This will take you to the sign-in process. Click **Start now** again and log in.

Figure 12: College selection



Select your organisation

You are associated with more than 1 organisation, please select the one you wish to sign-in with.

Your organisations

College 1
URN: xxxxx, UKPRN: xxxxx
Legal Name, Address

College 2
URN: xxxxx, UKPRN: xxxxx
Legal Name, Address

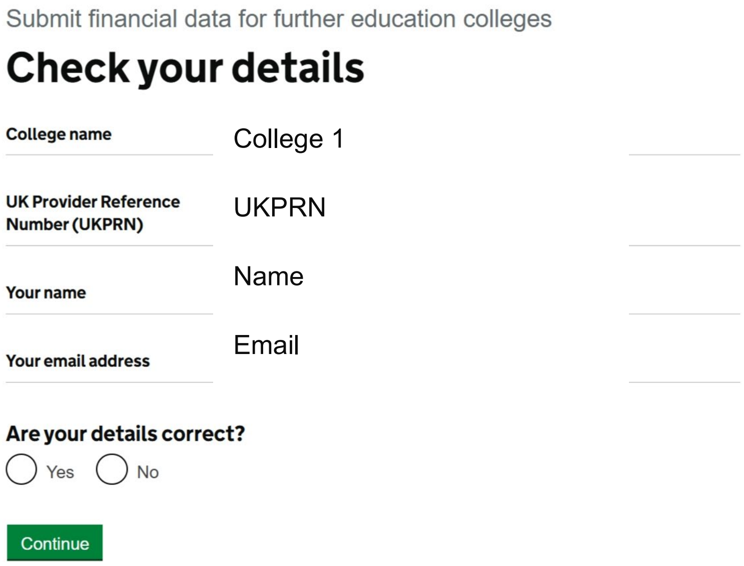
College 3
URN: xxxxx, UKPRN: xxxxx
Legal Name, Address

Actions

Request access to an organisation

3. If you have multiple institutions registered to your account, you will be asked to choose the college you are submitting the data for.

Figure 13: Check your details page


Submit financial data for further education colleges

Check your details

College name	College 1
UK Provider Reference Number (UKPRN)	UKPRN
Your name	Name
Your email address	Email

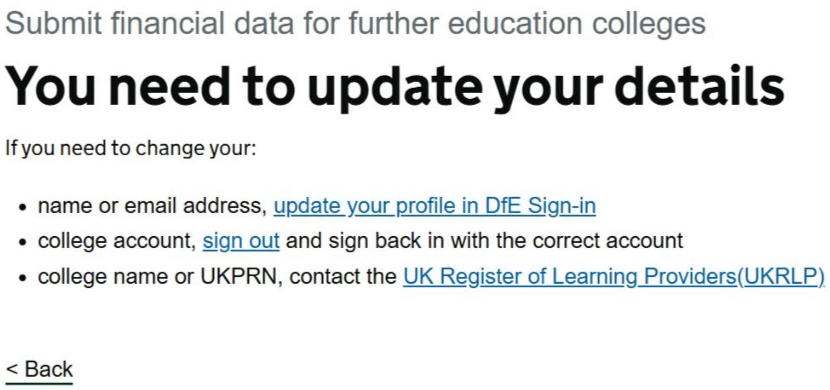
Are your details correct?

Yes No

Continue

4. You will be asked to confirm the details held are correct.

Figure 14: Update details page


Submit financial data for further education colleges

You need to update your details

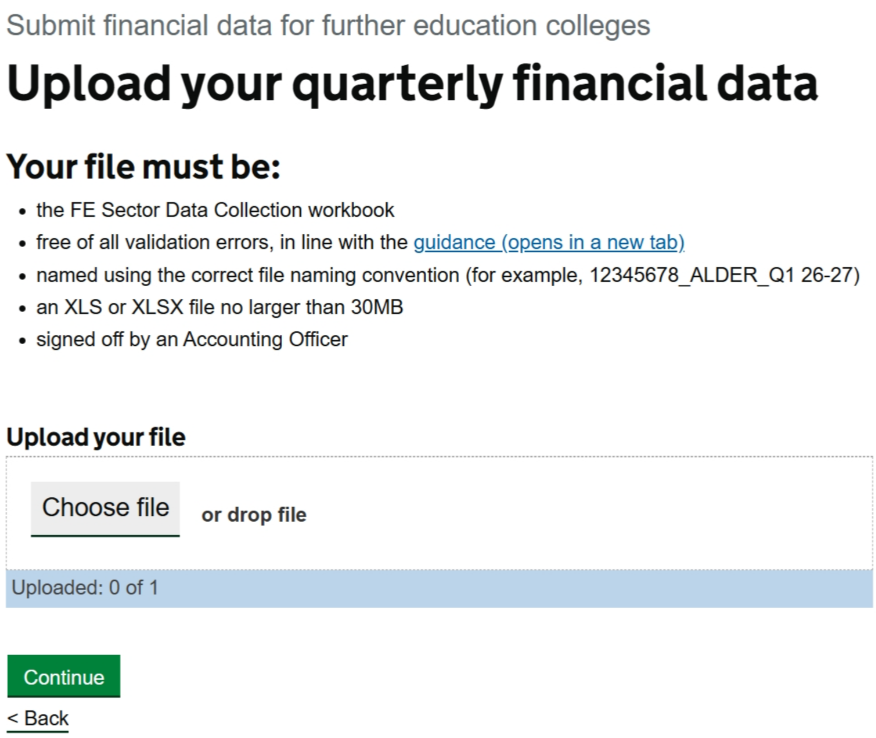
If you need to change your:

- name or email address, update your profile in DfE Sign-in
- college account, sign out and sign back in with the correct account
- college name or UKPRN, contact the UK Register of Learning Providers(UKRLP)

< Back

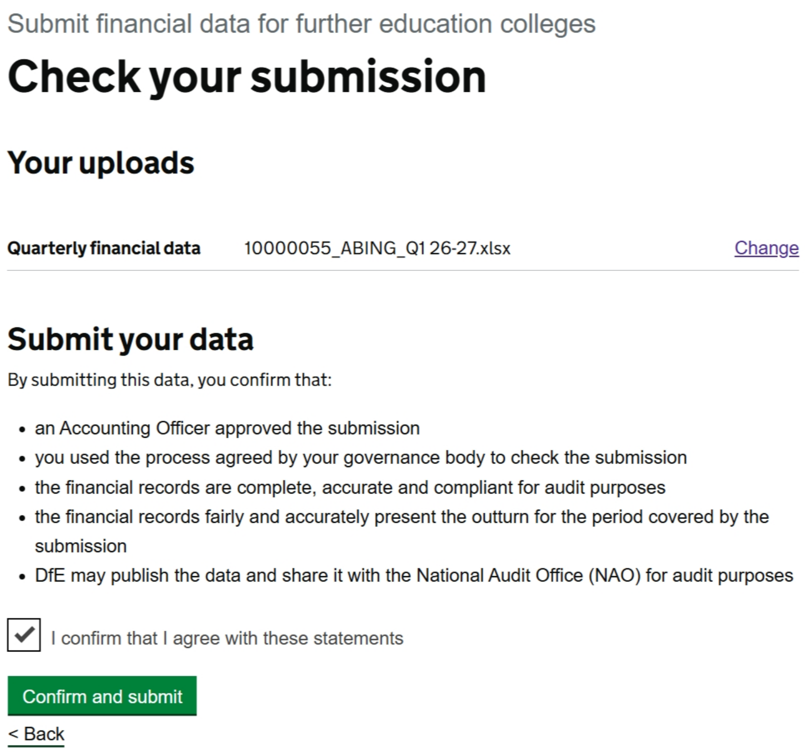
5. If you select **No** in the previous section, then you will be provided guidance on how to update your details, so you can return to the process.

Figure 15: Upload page



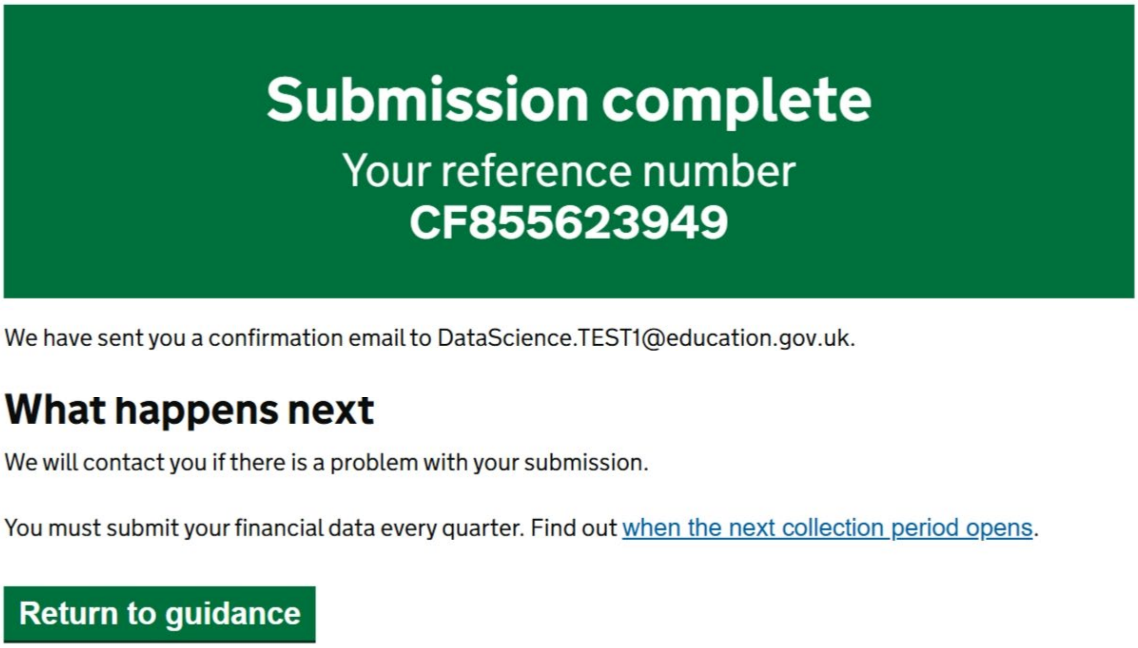
6. Once the correct details have been confirmed, you will be invited to upload your workbook. Click on **Choose file** and once the correct workbook has been selected, click on **Continue**.

Figure 16: Submission check page



7. Before the workbook is submitted, you will be asked to agree to several statements. Click in the box and select **Confirm and submit**

Figure 17: Submission complete page



8. Once these statements are agreed, you will receive a notification to confirm that the submission is complete and you will be provided with a reference number, which we advise you to take note of. You can now press **Exit** and end the process.

Support for colleges

1. **Customer Relationship Management** – see below.
2. **Webinars** – multiple focussed sessions on launch and every quarter. The dates of these are in Annex A.
3. **Drop-in Q & A sessions** – alongside the regular calls, we will host several agenda-free chats which will be driven by the colleges. Again, the dates of these are in Annex A.
4. **Pilot advocate support** – available on request. Sometimes the best assistance will come from fellow colleges and not from DfE. Please advise us if you would like to contact a college who has experience in the data collection.

Customer Relationship Management support

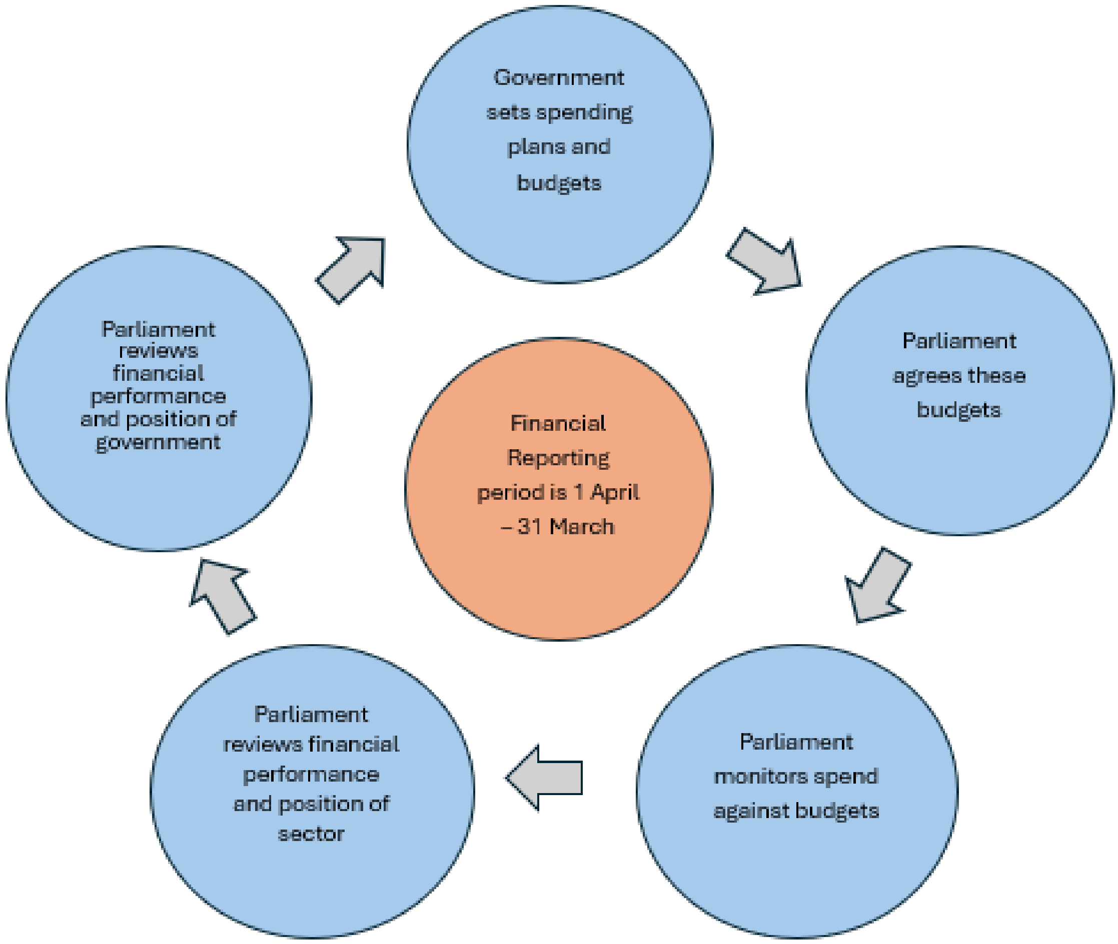
If you wish to contact DfE regarding your submission, use the Customer Help Portal.

1. Select the query type “Data returns, collections and requests”.
2. Then select “Financial returns”
3. Then select “Submit financial data for further education colleges”
4. Then select the appropriate option from the list.

Parliamentary reporting cycle and terminology

A high-level overview of the current Parliamentary financial reporting cycle is below:

Figure 18: Parliamentary Financial Reporting Cycle



This diagram illustrates the financial reporting cycle from 1 April to 31 March, showing government budget planning, parliamentary agreement, monitoring, and review of financial performance. Blue circles represent key steps with arrows indicating process flow around a central orange circle specifying reporting period.

Key terminology used within this cycle includes:

Estimates

1. Estimates are the means of obtaining from Parliament, the legal authority to consume resources and spend cash the government needs to finance department's agreed spending programme.
2. Under the Clear Line of Sight (CLOS) reforms which came into effect from 2011-12 and align Estimates, budgets and accounts, Parliament gives statutory authority for the consumption of resources and capital and for cash to be drawn from the Consolidated Fund (the government's general bank

account at the Bank of England) by Acts of Parliament known as Supply and Appropriation Acts. This process is known as “Supply procedure”.

3. The Main Estimates start the Supply procedure and are presented by the Treasury around the start of the financial year (ending 31 March) to which they relate. Any necessary, New, Revised and/or Supplementary Estimates, asking Parliament for approval for additional resources, capital, and/or cash or for authority to incur expenditure on new services, are usually presented in February. Departments are expected to manage within the spending limits voted on by Parliament.
4. After the end of the financial year (in July) the Treasury presents the Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses to Parliament, providing outturn figures for public expenditure by department.
5. Since reclassification of the FE Sector to central government, the Department must provide realistic, taut estimates of budgets to parliament to ensure the sectors spend (approx. £6.4 billion expenditure, from 222 college corporations) is authorised.

Statement of Outturn Against Parliamentary Supply (SoPS)

6. In addition to the primary statements prepared under International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) requires the Department to prepare a Statement of Outturn against Parliamentary Supply (SoPS) and supporting notes.
7. The SoPS and related notes are subject to audit, as detailed in the Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the House of Commons. The SoPS is a key accountability statement that shows, in detail, how an entity has spent against their Supply Estimate. Should an entity exceed the limits set by their Supply Estimate, called control limits, their accounts will receive a qualified opinion.
8. The format of the SoPS mirrors the Supply Estimates, published on Gov.Uk, to enable comparability between what Parliament approves and the final outturn. The SoPS contains a summary table, detailing performance against the control limits that Parliament have voted on. The supporting notes include a reconciliation of outturn to net operating expenditure in the Statement of Consolidated Net Expenditure (SoCNE), to tie the SoPS to the financial statements (note 2).
9. Usually in annual report and accounts in Government, all figures included in the SoPS are also included in the financial statements. Therefore, the NAO relies on its audit work it has carried out to support its separate opinion on the financial statements, in order to support its opinion on the SoPS

10. Due to reclassification, the sector would ordinarily be required to provide audited accounts prepared to a 31 March date for inclusion in the DfE Group Annual Report and Accounts. We understand the undue burden this would create for the sector, and this is why we have worked with HMT and Parliament to agree a compromise approach. Colleges will provide data to a 31 March date, but this is only for inclusion in SoPS and not the financial statements as well. Rather than a full year end audit for this information, here will be a less burdensome assurance process undertaken by the NAO to ensure the SOPS is properly presented.

Total Government Spending or Total Managed Expenditure (TME)

11. TME is split up in to:

- Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) – these are the budgets government departments have been allocated to spend. How total government spending is split between government departments is set at Spending Reviews. Things that departmental budgets can be spent on include the running of the services that they oversee such as colleges, and the everyday cost of resources such as staff.
- Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) – which is money spent in areas outside budgetary control, which are typically demand-led, and includes welfare, pensions, debt interest payments, and provisions. It is spent on items that may be unpredictable or not easily controlled by departments and can be relatively large in comparison to DEL.

12. Money within both DEL and AME can be further split into resource spending and capital spending:

- Resource spending is money that is spent on day-to-day resources and administration costs. Often referred to as RDEL or RAME.
- Capital spending is money that is spent on investment, loans and things that will create growth in the future. Often referred to as CDEL or CAME.

Annex A - Calendar

	2026
Chart of Accounts Sector-Wide Calls	21 to 30 April
Webinar Sessions (Workbook Launch)	22 to 30 June
Weekly Drop-in Calls	1 July to 28 August
Q1 (April to June) Submission Deadline	**28 August**
Webinar Sessions	21 to 30 September*
Weekly Drop-in Calls	1 October to 20 November*
Q2 (July to September) Submission Deadline	**20 November**

	2027
Webinar Sessions	4 to 15 January*
Weekly Drop-in Calls	18 January to 19 February*
Q3 (October to December) Submission Deadline	**19 February**
Webinar Sessions	5 to 16 April*
Weekly Drop-in Calls	19 April to 21 May*
Q4 (January to March) Submission Deadline	**21 May**

*Estimated Webinar Sessions and Drop-in Calls dates, subject to requirements.

Department
for Education

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