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Dear colleague,

Release of 2019-20 Office for Students data checking tools

On 23 July we notified higher education providers about the forthcoming release of the Office for Students (OfS) data checking tools for 2019-20.¹ I am writing to let you know that we have now published the tools.

The tools will allow your institution to submit Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student data, 2019-20 HESA Student Alternative data or the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA's) 2019-20 Individualised Learner Record (ILR). They will also allow you to receive outputs designed to improve the quality of your final data submission.

We strongly encourage you to make use of these tools. We regard them as an essential element of providers' data quality processes. Data submitted to HESA or the ESFA must be signed off as correct by the accountable officer and will be used by the OfS for regulatory purposes.

As we wrote in our July publication, the tools will help providers to:

- return accurate data to HESA and the ESFA, supporting compliance with conditions of registration F4 and F3
- verify the accuracy of OfS algorithms that may be used for regulatory purposes
- respond to data verification questions raised by OfS staff
- reduce the likelihood of selection for data assurance activity for 2019-20
- identify errors in, or discrepancies with, in-year OfS data returns.

¹ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/2019-20-data-checking-tools/.

Please note that for providers submitting data returns to HESA, data will not be regarded as 'credible' until all queries have received responses or are cleared through the submission of amended data.

We have written to the data contact at your institution with the relevant technical detail, including instructions on how to use the tools.

If you have any further queries please email ilrdata@officeforstudents.org.uk, apdata@officeforstudents.org.uk or hesastudentdata@officeforstudents.org.uk as appropriate.

Kind regards,

Richard Puttock, Director of Data, Foresight and Analysis