

**Office for
Students**



Guidance on completing the interim financial return

April 2025

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Introduction

1. This guidance is to help higher education providers understand what they need to include in the interim financial return for April 2025.

Who needs to submit the return?

2. This interim return applies to all providers registered with the Office for Students (OfS), except for the following:
 - Further education colleges or sixth form colleges, under the primary regulation of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) are not required to submit this financial data to the OfS. For such providers, the OfS works closely with the ESFA to ensure that it's able to undertake appropriate monitoring of financial viability and sustainability.
 - Providers that have submitted a finalised Annual Financial Return (AFR) workbook in the one month preceding, or are due to submit a finalised AFR workbook in the two months following, the required deadline of this interim return.
 - In addition, providers that are already subject to more frequent or recent engagement might not have been invited to complete this interim return.

What information do we need?

3. We require providers to give summary information relating to the year ending in 2025. We recognise that a small number of providers will have already passed the 2025 year end and therefore the data will be draft year-end figures).
4. This interim financial return requests a limited set of information and much of the information requested in the interim return is defined on the same basis as the information required in the AFR workbook. This guidance sets out the specifications and definitions of the required data.
5. We have included details of the information required as part of this interim return as a schedule to the F3 notice 'Interim financial return April 2025 – deadlines and requirements'.¹
6. Please ensure the information you submit accurately represents your best estimate of your provider's financial performance and position for, and at, the year ending 2025. It is the responsibility of providers to return data as accurately as possible.
7. In the interests of minimising the potential burden on providers, we do not intend to carry out a verification and sign-off process (as we do for the AFR). Nor do we require approval by the governing body. However, submission of the interim return will include a declaration that it is submitted with the approval of the Accountable Officer.

¹ See [Deadlines and requirements for interim financial return: enclosing F3 Notice - Office for Students](#).

Why do we need this information?

8. We're asking for this information to help us better understand how your finances are changing through the current financial year. We want to understand any material movements in some core financial information for the year ending in 2025, including:
 - Total income
 - Total expenditure
 - Current asset investments
 - Cash and cash equivalents
 - Lowest cash balance.
9. We will use this information to update our understanding of individual providers' financial position and performance and the wider sector, which is particularly important considering the financial sustainability challenges in the sector. This information will allow us to prioritise our provider engagement, direct our discussions with providers and improve the accuracy of the core data we use to model potential financial risk scenarios.
10. The information provided will be treated as commercially sensitive. However, as is the case in relation to other information, we may be subject to disclosure requirements under the law.

Interim financial return April 2025 – content

11. The return is designed to ensure that we can understand material movements in some core financial information relating to your forecast performance and position for the year ending in 2025. It is made up of nine questions, each with two parts (i.e. question 1 and question 1a), plus a free text commentary box.
12. For questions 1 to 7a, if the latest best estimate is unchanged from that submitted in the last AFR, a nil return can be submitted.
13. Where relevant, the corresponding AFR table and row number for the interim question has been included to allow cross-referencing with your latest Annual Financial Return.
14. For all financial data, providers must enter the figures in **thousands of pounds (£'000s)**.
15. All questions refer to **financial year ending 2025**.²

² Questions 8 and 8a refer to financial years ending 2025 and 2026.

Consolidated statement of comprehensive income and expenditure (as per Table 1 of the Annual Financial Return)

Question	What you need to do:	Notes to help you:
1. Total income	Providers should select if their best estimate of total income, for financial year ending 2025, has changed since the submission of their last AFR.	<p>Total income is as per table 1, row 1g of the AFR workbook.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the response is 'yes', you will need to respond to question 1a. • If 'no', you will move forward to question 2.
1a. Total income	Please provide a revised forecast of total income for financial year ending in 2025.	Total income is as per table 1, row 1g of the AFR workbook.
2. Total expenditure	Providers should select if their best estimate of total expenditure, for financial year ending 2025, has changed since the submission of their last AFR.	<p>Total expenditure is as per table 1, row 2f of the AFR workbook.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the response is 'yes', you will need to respond to question 2a. • If 'no', you will move forward to question 3.
2a. Total expenditure	Please provide a revised forecast of total expenditure for financial year ending in 2025.	Total expenditure is as per table 1, row 2f of the AFR workbook.

Consolidated statement of financial position (as per Table 2 of the Annual Financial Return)

	What you need to do:	Notes to help you:
3. Current asset investments	Providers should select if their best estimate of current asset investments, for financial year ending 2025, has changed since the submission of their last AFR.	<p>Current asset investments are as per table 2, row 2c of the AFR workbook.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the response is 'yes', you will need to respond to question 3a. • If 'no', you will move forward to question 4.
3a. Current asset investments	Please provide a revised forecast of current asset investments for financial year ending in 2025.	<p>Current asset investments are as per table 2, row 2c of the AFR workbook.</p> <p>Include the value of investments held that you intend to sell/liquidate within 12 months of the financial year end. This includes any savings or gilts or bonds with a term of less than 12 months.</p>
4. Cash and cash equivalents	Providers should select if their best estimate of cash and cash equivalents, for financial year ending 2025, has changed since the submission of their last AFR.	<p>Cash and cash equivalents are as per table 2, row 2d of the AFR workbook.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the response is 'yes', you will need to respond to question 4a. • If 'no', you will move forward to question 5.
4a. Cash and cash equivalents	Please provide a revised forecast of cash and cash equivalents for financial year ending in 2025.	<p>Cash and cash equivalents are as per table 2, row 2d of the AFR workbook.</p> <p>The items that you need to include as cash and cash equivalents are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • currency (notes and coins), including petty cash • cheques received but that have not yet been deposited in the bank account • money that you hold in your (the provider's) current and savings accounts

	What you need to do:	Notes to help you:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • money held in money market accounts • short-term, highly liquid investments with a maturity of three months or less at the time of purchase. If you have an overdraft, then you must not net off the value of the cash and cash equivalents with any overdraft balance.

Consolidated statement of cash flows (as per Table 3 the Annual Financial Return)

	What you need to do:	Notes to help you:
5. Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities (after tax)	Providers should select if their best estimate of net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities (after tax), for financial year ending 2025, has changed since the submission of their last AFR.	<p>Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities (after tax) is as per table 3, row 6 of the AFR workbook.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the response is 'yes', you will need to respond to question 5a. • If 'no', you will move forward to question 6.
5a. Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities (after tax)	Please provide a revised forecast for net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities (after tax) for financial year ending in 2025.	Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities (after tax) is as per table 3, row 6 of the AFR workbook.
6. Date of lowest cash balance	Providers should select if the date of lowest cash balance, from now until the end of financial year ending in 2025, has changed since the submission of their last AFR.	<p>Date of lowest cash balance is as per table 3, row 13a of the AFR workbook.</p> <p>Please note you are only required to update the date of lowest cash balance if it falls between the date of submission of this interim return (10 April 2025) and the end of financial year ending in 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the response is 'yes', you will need to respond to question 6a. • If 'no', you will move forward to question 7.

	What you need to do:	Notes to help you:
6a. Date of lowest cash balance	Please provide a revised forecast of the date of lowest cash balance from now until the end of the financial year ending in 2025.	<p>Date of lowest cash balance is as per table 3, row 13a of the AFR workbook.</p> <p>Lowest cash balance should be the lowest balance of 'available cash' – i.e. cash balance plus any remaining cash facility 'available' through 'already arranged' overdraft or revolving credit facility drawdown. This figure should also include any short-term deposits up to 12 months.</p> <p>Example – If your provider expects, at the lowest point, to be utilising an arranged overdraft (creating a negative cash balance), the 'available cash' balance in this row should instead represent the remaining undrawn sum of the arranged overdraft.</p>
7. Lowest cash balance	Providers should select if the best estimate of lowest cash balance, for financial year ending 2025, has changed since the submission of their last AFR.	<p>Lowest cash balance is as per table 3, row 13b of the AFR workbook.</p> <p>Please note you are only required to update the date of lowest cash balance if it falls between the date of submission of this interim return (10 April 2025) and the end of financial year ending in 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the response is 'yes', you will need to respond to question 7a. • If 'no' you will move forward to question 8.
7a. Lowest cash balance	Please provide a revised forecast of lowest cash balance from now until the end of the financial year ending in 2025.	<p>Date of lowest cash balance is as per table 3, row 13b of the AFR workbook.</p> <p>Lowest cash balance should be the lowest balance of 'available cash' – i.e. cash balance plus any remaining cash facility 'available' through 'already arranged' overdraft or revolving credit facility drawdown. This figure should also include any short-term deposits up to 12 months.</p>

	What you need to do:	Notes to help you:
		Example – If your provider expects, at the lowest point, to be utilising an arranged overdraft (creating a negative cash balance), the ‘available cash’ balance in this row should instead represent the remaining undrawn sum of the arranged overdraft.

Additional questions

16. The following questions require text responses.

	What you need to do:	Notes to help you:
8. Non-compliance with covenants attached to borrowing and financial commitments	Providers should select if they anticipate any non-compliance with covenants attached to borrowing or other financial commitments, for financial year ending in 2025 or 2026.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the response is ‘yes’, you will need to respond to question 8a. • If ‘no’ you will move forward to question 9.
8a. Non-compliance with covenants attached to borrowing and financial commitments	Please provide details of the non-compliance with covenants attached to borrowing or other financial commitments, for financial year ending in 2025 or 2026.	Please provide details of potential covenant breaches during financial year ending 2025 and 2026.
9. Borrowing to support operating cash flow	Providers should select if they anticipate having to draw upon any borrowing (already arranged or yet to be arranged) to support operating cash flow before the end of financial year 2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the response is ‘yes’, you will need to respond to question 9a. • If ‘no’ you will move forward to a free text commentary box.
9a. Borrowing to support operating cash flow	Please provide details of the borrowing you expect to utilise.	
Free text commentary	You should include details of anything you deem relevant relating to financial performance or position of the provider.	

17. We have published guidance on completing the AFR24 workbook on our website.³

³ See 'Guidance on completing the Annual Financial Return 2024 workbook', available at [Regulatory advice 14: Guidance for providers for the Annual Financial Return - Office for Students](#).



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