

3 March 2025

Dear <Accountable Officer>

Next steps for student data collection

I'm writing to share information on our plans following the publication of Price Waterhouse Coopers' (PwC) independent review¹ of the Data Futures programme, including an update on in-year data collection, and a message about deadlines for Jisc's 2024-25 student data collection.

In-year data

In our response to the independent review, we said we had decided to take forward the collection of in-year student data, together with Jisc, the Scottish Funding Council, Medr and the Department for the Economy for Northern Ireland. We agreed that having the right data, at the right time and in the right way is essential to enable higher education institutions to operate effectively. We also reaffirmed its importance for robust and timely regulation, making sure that interventions have a positive and meaningful impact on student experiences of, and outcomes from, higher education.

We appreciate that getting to this point with the implementation of Data Futures has not been smooth sailing. The PwC report highlights challenges that included staff welfare and capacity, issues with technology and changes to the programme. We are committed to learning from the lessons in the report, and will engage closely with you and your student records officers to develop a sustainable approach to in-year data collection that works effectively for all of us.

Our ambition is to do an initial in-year collection for the 2027-28 year, but how we do that will be led by close engagement with your colleagues.

Over the next few months, we and Jisc will work with providers, sector representatives and software suppliers to explore the form in-year data should take. We will be in touch soon with next steps for this engagement and information about how your colleagues can get involved.

¹ See [Independent review of Data Futures programme published - Office for Students](#).

Deadlines for the 2024-25 student data collection

A first step towards realising the benefits of in-year data is the timely and effective completion of the autumn student data collection each year.

The autumn 2025 collection will be the third using the Data Futures platform. In 2024 we saw progress towards timely data submission. We know that many institutions have a good track record in meeting data submission deadlines and we're grateful for the work that goes into meeting these expectations.

However, in autumn 2024 there was still a large group of providers not able to meet submission deadlines. Late submission by individual providers affects our ability to use and publish sector-wide student data to the planned timetable for the benefit of all providers. It delays us making comprehensive information available to students, providers and others, delays our calculations of OfS funding allocations, and it unfairly disadvantages those providers that do deliver their data on time.

This year we are making changes to ensure the timelines we set for submission of student data are met across the sector in England. Jisc will increase support for universities and colleges making data returns. A new data management toolkit will be available from May, and Jisc will host new masterclasses in key areas of the student record and data collection. This is additional to Jisc's existing seminars and training and the established service provided by the liaison team.

We also want to increase transparency about which institutions are successfully meeting deadlines and which are not. Delayed submissions can create issues for students and other institutions; we don't think it is fair that providers submitting on time are subject to sector-wide criticism because of delays caused by a minority of institutions. We hope all providers will submit on time, but in the event that some do not we expect to publish a list of those that miss the 5 November 2025 deadline.

We recognise that meeting this deadline will take a concerted effort from leadership teams across the sector, especially where their institution has previously struggled to meet submission deadlines. Timely submission means making sure there are adequate systems in place to record and submit student data. It means making sure relevant teams have sufficient capacity and capabilities and this may require investment.

We understand this can be challenging, especially in the current context of financial pressures for the sector. But it is important that institutions have appropriate control over the operation of their data functions, and that teams are supported to deliver high quality data to the published deadlines. We want to avoid repetition of the challenges of previous years – for the benefit of all universities and colleges, their staff, and ultimately their students. We are also conscious that improved data capability in institutions is a necessary precondition for the further simplification of data processes in future.

There is a timeline to guide providers through the stages of data submission for the 2024-25 student data collection on the HESA website.² Jisc will also share the information in this letter with your colleagues responsible for student data collection.

I look forward to working with you and your teams to make sure this year's annual collection of student data is a success.

Yours sincerely

Josh Fleming
Director, Strategy and Delivery
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² See [HESA - Experts in higher education data and analysis](#).