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HE Update:

Key Information Set: Our experience so far

July 2013

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## What is KIS?

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The Key Information Set (KIS) was introduced in September 2012 as a new initiative to provide prospective students and parents with a consistent set of comparable information on University courses. It aims to provide information at a course level using indicators such as student satisfaction; employability statistics; course structure (contact hours and assessment types) and financial information (tuition and accommodation fees). KIS information is available on the Unistats website<sup>1</sup> and on course pages on University websites.

The data is collected from multiple sources, including the National Student Survey (NSS), the Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE), and KIS data provided by institutions. The new data collection means that institutions have had to implement procedures to coordinate the collection across a number of areas, and keep up-to-date with the evolving guidance around this collection.

## Our KIS Journey (experiences and issues)

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Recognising the speed in which KIS was imposed on Universities; the new data collection requirements; the slow development of student record systems to facilitate the process; knowing HEFCE will audit the returns, and ultimately the importance of KIS as a marketing and recruitment tool, we assisted our Members by undertaking a number of KIS reviews during 2012/13.

Our approach has been to work with institutions to check that processes for the compilation of the KIS information are effective and efficient, and the information itself is accurate and returned in accordance with HEFCE requirements.

During the course of our reviews we have identified some common and, at times some unique, issues. We provide a sample of the most common issues we have found:

- **Scheduled Teaching and Learning Percentage (also known as contact hours).**

We have found that percentages are not always calculated in line with HEFCE guidance and in every review undertaken we have found courses that are under and over represented. This was more common where academic departments were asked to provide the data but not exclusively. We have also found issues with system configurations, which have also caused incorrect calculations.

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<sup>1</sup> Unistats <http://www.unistats.co.uk>

- **Consistency between the student record system, UCAS and the KIS submission**

In some cases sourcing the valid courses for submission within the KIS has identified inconsistencies between the various systems that store course information. This has meant that valid courses can be left out of the KIS.

- **New data collection**

Certain areas of the KIS meant that academic departments had to be involved in the data collection process. We found that they did not always get support in providing the data per HESA/HEFCE guidance, or that there was no robust central assurance check on data quality.

- **Automated allocation of data**

We have found software issues that have caused incorrect allocations of data. This highlights a need for keeping software up-to-date and configured correctly. Data should also be, to an extent, manually verified.

- **Lack of formal post-submission review**

The KIS provides comparable information on undergraduate courses from institutions across the UK. We have found that Universities have yet to formally analyse the results of the KIS within faculties or centrally, meaning they miss out on an opportunity to identify areas of improvement.

## How can we help?

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Our data assurance team engaged with the implementation of the KIS from its beginning, and continue to engage with HEFCE keeping abreast of sector issues and future changes to the return. The team attended a joint HEFCE/HESA training seminar prior the first submission, and discussed with HEFCE's data assurance team to jointly plan and develop the approach to auditing the KIS.

If you recognise any of the issues highlighted, or general difficulties with KIS, we are happy to share our knowledge and experience, and provide the good (and not so good!) approaches for tackling these issues.

**For more information or an informal conversation on the KIS, please get in touch with our Data Specialist:**



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