

Update on changes to the contextual information and commentary

PITG 12/04

Issue

1. To provide a progress update on the potential improvements to be made to the contextual information and commentary published alongside the PIs on HESA's website. These recommendations can be found in PITG 11/09 and PISG 12/03 papers.

Progress update

2. Modifications proposed by HESA and recommended to PITG and PISG:

Modification	Progress
Re-structure the introductory pages creating an initial basic introduction page explaining what the PIs are and how they should be interpreted.	Not yet implemented
Have a separate FAQ section to replace the existing "guide to PIs".	Not yet implemented
Have a separate page about PISG and the PITG sub-group with papers from PISG meetings.	Implemented under the section "Governance of Performance Indicators". PISG papers from July 2011 and January 2012 added and PITG papers from November 2011 added. Minutes of PISG January 2012 to be added once approved by the group.
Re-work the definition sections making them more accessible with plain English text followed by additional information referencing the relevant HESA fields. For example, a simple definition explaining the various levels of study followed by a list of COURSEAIM codes applicable to each category.	Definitions section has been reworked making the terminology simpler with technical references included where applicable. Structure of the definitions page reworked to include definitions for all tables in one place and improved navigation allowing the user to jump to the appropriate section more easily.
Simplify the technical documents explaining them in more straightforward terms with examples followed by formulae and references to the relevant HESA fields.	The definitional information has been separated out from the technical information, leaving the technical information in one place. Further work planned to make the technical documents simpler and more straightforward for the

	user to understand.
Add a basic feedback form to the site with comments being sent to the HESA PI team for action.	Discussions with the IT team at HESA suggested that adding a feedback form to the site would likely increase the amount of spam e-mail unless an extra level of security was added to prevent this. Adding an extra level of security might put off users from completing a feedback form. It would probably be easier for the user to send an e-mail to the PI team, the address is included on every page of the PI website. The PI team e-mail address is already used fairly extensively.
Extend the PIs tables (excluding T6 which is Welsh institutions only) to include the full list of UK HEIs making table comparisons between tables more straightforward.	Fully implemented for the 2010/11 PIs.
Raise the profile of summary information and time series through the use of easily accessible charts.	New charts, mainly time series were created for the 2010/11 publication.

3. Further suggestions of the PITG:

Suggestion	Progress
Include a short survey on the HESA website allowing users to comment on the individual tables, their usage and possible improvements. In the first instance, an e-mail could be sent to all institutional PI contacts at institutions encouraging them to complete the survey. The survey could remain on the site long-term with any key messages and suggestions being fed-back to PITG and PISG.	PISG suggested this was of lower immediate priority, but should be implemented as an ongoing setup on the HESA website following the review of the PIs.
Provide an alternative structure of PI information: an institution focussed structure as well as the current indicator focussed structure. i.e. introduce an ability to look at all indicators available for a particular institution in a given year. Members noted that this may align well with other areas of the Public Information agenda.	PISG noted that this relates to representation of the PIs and requires further consideration, in terms of resource requirements in particular. The group noted that information in different representations was already available to institutional users via HEIDI, and that better understanding of public information requirements in relation to these statistics was required. As such,
Provide an ability to retrieve PIs for a	

<p>particular grouping of institutions. For example, allowing you to just select the Welsh institutions or the institutions within your own English region.</p>	<p>these suggestions were felt to be of lower immediate priority but useful for longer term development.</p>
<p>Review the presentation of the PI tables and the appropriateness of the contextual information provided within them. Members recognised the importance of contextual information in accurate interpretation of the indicators but noted that some tables were very large on account of its inclusion. Alternative layouts may be able to alleviate some of this and could be explored.</p>	<p>PISG suggested that this should be incorporated into any review process and into longer-term development.</p>
<p>Provide links to supplementary information, for example data prepared by the devolved nations that focussed specifically on institutions in that nation. Members agreed that while this would be possible it was not necessarily desirable: if the supplementary measures were sufficiently valuable to warrant this approach then the PISG should be advised to consider them for inclusion within the official PIs. Otherwise, there was a risk to the interpretation of the PIs and their value, as well as the risks arising from an inability of the PISG to exercise control over these supplementary measures.</p>	<p>PISG considered this suggestion, the group agreed that the publication of the PIs should make note of issues relating to the WP indicators for institutions in Scotland. It may be appropriate to explain the reasons why they are not included in all of the WP measures, and highlight the availability of other measures prepared by Scotland that focussed specifically on institutions in that nation. Beyond this, it was not desirable to take further action on account of the risk to the value and interpretation of the PIs.</p>
<p>Review press relations and engagement with institutions with regards to interpretation of the PIs, and consider the potential for a dissemination seminar.</p>	<p>PISG suggested that this should be incorporated into any review process and into longer-term development.</p>

Further information

4. For further information contact Suzie Dent (Phone: 01242 211109; e-mail: suzie.dent@hesa.ac.uk).