

# Performance Indicators contextual information and commentary

PITG 12/07

## Issue

1. Explaining why Scottish institutions are not included in all of the Widening Participation (WP) Performance Indicators (PIs), and highlighting the availability of other WP measures prepared by Scotland.

## Recommendations

2. The Performance Indicators Technical Group (PITG) to approve by correspondence the proposed approach to outlining known issues relating to the WP indicators for institutions in Scotland, and the proposed wording to highlight the availability of measures prepared by Scotland.

## Discussion

3. At the July 2011 meeting of the Performance Indicators Steering Group (PISG) the group requested that the PITG provide initial advice to them on the potential for improvements to be made to the contextual information and commentary published alongside the PIs on HESA's website. The intention was to address visibility, awareness and understanding of the PIs.

4. The PITG subsequently discussed a range of potential improvements, some of which have since been implemented. Though the provision of links to supplementary information such as data prepared by the devolved nations was not felt to be a desirable modification, the PISG agreed in January 2012 that the publication of the PIs should make note of issues relating to the WP indicators for institutions in Scotland.

5. The group felt that it was appropriate to explain the reasons why Scottish institutions 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. It was noted that the Scottish measures were not formal PIs so while they may provide useful contextual information, the presentation of such highlighting of availability would need to be carefully managed for the greater good of the PIs. It was not desirable to provide direct links to this and other supplementary information on account of the risk to the value and interpretation of the PIs. 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.

6. HESA have considered the practical options in respect of such a note, and have asked the PITG to agree the proposed approach and wording described below:

**The POLAR2 low participation measure is based on a UK wide classification of areas into participation bands. The relatively high (in UK terms) participation rate in Scotland coupled with the very high proportion of HE that occurs in FE colleges means that the figures for Scottish institutions could, when viewed in isolation, misrepresent their**

**contribution to widening participation. Therefore, low participation data has not been produced for institutions in Scotland from 2007/08.**

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) produce their own indicators relating to young full-time Scottish domiciled undergraduate entrants, showing proportions from the most deprived datazones and also from social classes NS-SEC 4-7. These measures are produced and published independently of 'Performance Indicators in HE in the UK'. The Performance Indicators Steering Group bears no responsibility for the SFC measures but has recognised that they may provide some contextual information for interested readers. The measures are available from the SFC website <sup>FOOTNOTE</sup>.

Footnote:

[http://www.sfc.ac.uk/statistics/higher\\_education\\_statistics/HE\\_performance\\_indicators/Participation\\_indicator\\_for\\_Scottish\\_HEIs.aspx](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/statistics/higher_education_statistics/HE_performance_indicators/Participation_indicator_for_Scottish_HEIs.aspx)

7. HESA have advised that the UK Statistics Authority have actively encouraged the provision of links to other material that might be useful to their statistics users. It is this advice that leads to the proposed inclusion of the direct link to the Scottish measures in an associated footnote. It is proposed that the link is included as a footnote rather than with the main body of text as a compromise between the decisions made by the PISG and the guidance from the UK Statistics Authority.

8. The first paragraph of the suggested text (highlighted in bold text) already exists on the PIs section of the HESA website under each of 'Definitions of terms', 'Notes to tables' and 'Changes to the PIs'. The additional wording (and the footnoted link) would be published alongside the existing text under the 'Definitions of terms' section of the HESA PIs website. To improve the visibility of this information, a brief reference to Scottish institutions not being included in the low participation indicators would also be made in each of the following sections of the HESA PIs website: 'Notes to tables'; 'Changes to the PIs'; 'Guide to PIs'; and 'Widening participation of under-represented groups (tables T1, T2)'. These references would provide a link to the more detailed description in the 'Definitions of terms' section.

### **Further information**

9. For further information contact Suzie Dent (Phone: 01242 211109; e-mail: [suzie.dent@hesa.ac.uk](mailto:suzie.dent@hesa.ac.uk)) or Alison Brunt (Phone: 0117 931 7166; e-mail: [a.brunt@hefce.ac.uk](mailto:a.brunt@hefce.ac.uk)).