

UK Performance Indicators Technical Group

Minutes of the UK Performance Indicators Technical Group (UKPITG) held at 13.00pm on Friday, 7 March 2014 at Northavon House, Bristol

Present:

Members:	Jonathan Waller	Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) [Chair]
	Gordon Anderson	Scottish Funding Council (SFC)
	Matthew Bollington	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
	Suzie Dent	HESA
	Hannah Falvey	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)
	Jovan Luzajic	Universities UK, Universities Scotland, Higher Education Wales, GuildHE
	Michael MacNeill	Department for Education and Learning, Northern Ireland (DELNI)
	Richard Puttock	Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
	Chris Williams	Welsh Government
Secretariat:	Alison Brunt	HEFCE
	Mark Gittoes	HEFCE
Observing:	Lauren Smith	DELNI
Apologies:	Awaiting nomination	UCAS

1. Welcome from the chair

1.1. Following introductions, the chair welcomed members to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

2.1. The group accepted the minutes of the previous meeting as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

2.2. Several of the actions arising in the minutes of the previous meeting would be addressed through the course of the meeting. DELNI reported that the action arising under paragraph 6.6 related to a longer term piece of work, the plan for which had been revised. It was noted that it was important to maintain an awareness of this work in the context of a review of the Widening Participation UKPIs, and DELNI confirmed that when the work reached an appropriate stage, they would bring a summary paper to a future meeting of the UKPITG.

Action: A paper summarising work to explore the feasibility of looking at intersections of categories of disadvantage to be prepared by DELNI and taken to a future UKPITG meeting at an appropriate point in that project.

2.3. The group acknowledged that in light of the review of the WP UKPIs they had agreed to postpone the action arising at paragraph 8.1 until a later meeting, and would need to revisit the potential use of linked pre-HE administrative data in the UKPIs at an appropriate point in that review process.

Action: A paper based on UKPITG 13/12 and considering the use of linked pre-HE administrative data in the UKPIs to be taken to a future UKPITG meeting at an appropriate point in the WP UKPIs review process.

2.4. The UK Performance Indicators Steering Group had noted that there was shared content across a paper UKPISG 14/01 and the minutes of the November 2013 meeting of the UKPITG, which discussed the on-going development of WP review processes. As a consequence, the UKPITG had been asked to redact sections of their minutes which related to this discussion. Members agreed that they should comply with the request and that all of section 6 of those minutes, and their associated actions, should be redacted in the version to be published at this time. It was agreed that the redaction should be acknowledged and explained in the publication, with clarity provided on *when* in the WP review process the redacted sections could be reinstated.

Action: Secretariat to redact section 6 of the minutes of the UKPITG November 2013 meeting, and any associated actions, prior to their publication.

Action: HESA to publish the minutes of the UKPITG November 2013 meeting on their website alongside associated content relating to governance of the UKPIs.

3. Update from the February 2014 meeting of the UKPISG (Oral item and UKPISG minutes from February 2014)

3.1. JW updated the group on the key points of the UKPISG discussion. The steering group had been receptive to the idea of establishing a series of 'roundtable' discussions to progress the considerations and review of the WP UKPIs. It was noted that the UKPISG had been clear on their own role in terms of moderating the range of opinions likely to be floated during those roundtables, and identifying the key policy requirements to address.

3.2. It was reported that the assessment of fit of the current WP UKPIs carried out by the UKPITG had been warmly received by the steering group, and that the principles proposed for UKPIs had now been formally agreed by the UKPISG. However, it had also been recognised that policy focus continued to shift towards student retention, and that there may be a drive to consider the retention UKPIs earlier than previously suggested. In response to issues regarding the current UKPI relating to students in receipt of Disabled Student's Allowance, the UKPISG had identified a requirement to better understand what constituted a WP indicator and what constituted a diversity indicator, and what the intersections might be between the two. It had been requested that these requirements were explored as part of the WP roundtable discussions.

3.3. The UKPITG were informed of the UKPISG's decision to discontinue the current set of Research UKPIs, and that the 2014 publication would be the last time they were published in their current form. The group had acknowledged that there would most likely be a gap in the publication of Research UKPIs, but suggested that the Research Excellence Framework would fill this gap to some extent in the short term. The outcomes of the engagement with stakeholders and the sector via the "invitation to comment" issued in December 2013 would be published alongside the second tranche of UKPIs in July 2014, and this publication would seek to make clear the reasons for the discontinuation.

3.4. The UKPITG would discuss the potential inclusion of HE delivered by further education colleges in UKPIs under item 6 of the agenda, but JW noted that the UKPITG were not being asked to consider the potential inclusion of HE delivered by alternative providers at this time on account of the lack of clarity regarding their number, spread across UK nations, and data reporting requirements. It was noted that one alternative provider was already included in the UKPIs and that this could suggest a model whereby alternative providers would be included in UKPIs if they chose to submit a full HESA student return.

4. Next steps in the review of the WP indicators (UKPITG 14/01†)

4.1. JW introduced the paper and noted that the UKPITG were being asked to provide suggestions of representatives to join a roundtable discussion of future WP UKPIs. The group were advised that while the involvement of organisations represented in UKPITG and UKPISG membership was welcome, wider representation was also required and it would be important to strike an appropriate balance.

4.2. A number of organisations, groups, committees and departments with some potential for inclusion in the discussions were suggested:

BIS	Department for Education (DfE)
Cabinet Office	Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
DEL NI, Scottish Government and Welsh Government representatives	UK HE funding body heads of policy (HEFCE, HEFCW, DEL NI, SFC, Skills Funding Agency)
Office for National Statistics (ONS)	Ministerial Data Sharing Group
Social Mobility Transparency Board	Four Nations Deprivation Working Group
Widening Access Officers Group (in Wales)	Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission
National Union of Students (NUS)	Sutton Trust
Brightside Trust	Office for Fair Access (OFFA)
Institutional representatives	Academic research community: UK and international

4.3. The UKPITG noted that the suggestions made seemed to indicate a large group with a broad range of interests and perspectives, which had the potential to become quite

unwieldy and unfocussed. This was confounded by the need to consider measures of both educational disadvantage and financial/economic disadvantage. It was agreed that not all of the suggestions provided necessarily required roundtable representation, but that an appropriate balance needed to be struck; some of the representation suggested could be engaged with separately on specialist topics at later stages in the review process whereby their expert knowledge would be put to best use in the refining or shortlisting of ideas generated. For example, while it may be beneficial to develop an understanding of approaches to measures of WP used internationally their inclusion at an initial roundtable discussion could warrant further consideration and guidance from the UKPISG.

Action: UKPITG members to provide further recommendations to the secretariat as soon as possible as to representation in a WP roundtable discussion of future UKPIs. Recommendations should include nominations of individuals within organisations and contact details where possible. They should also indicate whether the nomination would have a particular interest in educational disadvantage or financial/economic disadvantage, and whether they were a strong candidate for inclusion in the roundtable discussions as opposed to providing more focussed advice at a later stage.

4.4. The UKPITG proposed that roundtable discussions of future WP UKPIs be structured as two groups; one to focus on educational disadvantage and a second to focus on financial/economic disadvantage. Agreeing that this approach was likely to generate more manageable discussions, but acknowledging that there would be overlaps to disentangle, it was proposed that both sessions were held on the same day with some potential for interaction or for some representatives to attend both parts of the day.

Action: Secretariat to circulate proposals regarding the structure of the WP UKPIs roundtable discussions to members of the UKPITG and the UKPISG for consideration and agreement.

4.5. Members recognised that the roundtable discussions would need strong chairmanship to ensure that they did not lose focus, and that any questions posed to the roundtable would need careful and specific wording. They reinforced the need for discussions to be underpinned with consideration of the principles agreed for UKPIs.

4.6. The group felt that it would be useful for the roundtable to engage in an initial exercise to generate a number of ideas, reduce the suggested ideas to those which complied with the principles for UKPIs and then make further consideration of their purpose as well as issues such as burden and data availability. Aware that the roundtable would report to the UKPISG, members suggested that once this had happened and a steer had been provided UKPITG's own role might be to consider the practicalities of the ideas under consideration and, with help from appropriate experts, refine, shortlist or develop those ideas into feasible UKPI measures.

5. Review of benchmarking approach (UKPITG 14/02†)

5.1. MG introduced the paper and noted that at this stage the UKPITG were being asked to consider the appropriate timing of a review of the benchmarking methodology. Members confirmed that review of the factors used in the application of the

benchmarking methodology to individual UKPIs would be included in the in-depth review processes of those indicators, and at later stages of their development.

5.2. The benchmarks published alongside the UKPIs were said to be pivotal to the interpretation of any new or existing measures published as UKPIs. As such, the UKPITG agreed that it was important to begin a fundamental review of the approach to benchmarking within UKPIs and the methodology employed as early as possible in order to help inform the wider review work. It was agreed that the secretariat would seek approval from the UKPISG for this work to begin as soon as possible, and that a critical element of the work would be to develop a set of principles for benchmarks to follow.

Action: Secretariat to circulate a proposal to the UKPISG that work to review the approach and methodology used with respect to benchmarking within UKPIs begin at the earliest opportunity.

5.3. Members of the UKPITG agreed that the group held the expertise to undertake a review of this nature within its membership and that they were willing and able to lead that process. They agreed that bringing experts in to UKPITG discussions would provide some of the external peer review that would necessarily be required as part of this review process. While it was felt that there would be value in exploring other approaches used elsewhere with regards to peer review, and in particular the selection of appropriate 'peers', the group expressed an initial intention to seek input from an independent academic as well as organisations such as the Royal Statistical Society, the UK Statistics Authority and the ONS Methodology Unit.

Action: The UKPITG to propose to the UKPISG that they be tasked with undertaking a fundamental review of the benchmarking approach and methodology used in UKPIs, seeking external peer review as necessary.

6. Incorporation of HE in FECs into future UKPIs (UKPITG 14/03†)

6.1. MG introduced the paper and noted that while this was an issue that the group had visited previously, it was one where they were now being asked to specifically consider issues relating to data and collection in the potential extension of future UKPIs to include HE registered at FECs.

6.2. As an initial indication members representing the four UK administrations noted the following issues:

6.2.1. HE provision registered at FECs was known to be significant in Scotland, and data collections from those providers were established. However, data collections were not as extensive as those operated by HESA so concerns were raised regarding the availability and comparability of any data to be used in future UKPIs.

6.2.2. There were only four FECs in Wales delivering directly funded HE: three of these were said to be very small with one FEC with a larger amount of HE provision. Data are collected via the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) though data collection arrangements are currently being reviewed.

6.2.3. Northern Ireland was said to have around 4,000 full-time HE learners at FECs and 7,000 part-time, and reported that they published limited information on some of these students in their own existing indicators. It was unclear whether the 11,000 HE in FE learners were registered at the FECs in question, or taught there under franchising arrangements (and hence already captured in the UKPIs), and whether or not this sector was expanding or contracting in Northern Ireland.

6.2.4. It was noted that HE provision registered at FECs was significant in England and that progress had been made in aligning data and reporting across all publicly-funded HE providers.

6.3. With regards to future UKPIs all nations noted that it would be difficult to assess the issues in this regard without a clear understanding of what those future UKPIs might be seeking to measure. The UKPITG noted that it was important to understand whether future UKPIs should seek to measure HE provision according to the institution with formal responsibility for the student (registering institutions) or according to the point of delivery (the teaching institution). It might also be that future indicators considered data other than that relating to individual students and so the data issues to be considered in this area might not be limited to one source: it was proposed that the availability of HE in FE data should be tested in the development stages of an indicator rather than as a stand-alone exercise. As such, it was suggested that these were some fundamental questions to be addressed by the UKPISG before the group could consider these issues further with a forward-looking perspective.

6.4. The UKPITG agreed that it would be necessary for the secretariat to liaise with the four nations separately to summarise the particular issues with HE provision registered at FECs in their nation, and the associated data issues currently known or relating to the existing UKPIs. These summaries should capture the size of the provision as well as any known issues regarding the quality and comparability of data currently collected in relation to that provision or the existing UKPIs.

Action: The UKPITG to seek guidance from the UKPISG as to the fundamental questions identified with regards to the inclusion of HE provision registered at FECs in future UKPIs.

Action: Secretariat to liaise with representatives of the four UK nations to summarise the particular issues with HE provision registered at FECs in their nation.

7. Papers proposed as exempt from immediate publication (marked with †)

7.1. Members agreed that paper UKPITG 14/01 should be considered exempt from publication on the basis that it related to an ongoing review in development. A publication date with respect to this paper would be agreed by the UKPITG at a future meeting.

7.2. While papers UKPITG 14/02 and 14/03 also related to review processes in development there were no particular sensitivities regarding their content at this stage of the process and as such they could be considered non-exempt from publication.

Action: HESA to publish the agreed non-exempt papers from this March 2014 meeting on their website alongside associated content relating to governance of the UKPIs.

8. Date of next meeting

8.1. Given the requirement to commence work on the fundamental review of the benchmarking approach and methodology used in UKPIs, members agreed that the group would next meet in September 2014, with dates to be agreed by correspondence.

Meeting closed 14.40

Actions arising:

Paragraph 2.2: A paper summarising work to explore the feasibility of looking at intersections of categories of disadvantage to be prepared by DELNI and taken to a future UKPITG meeting at an appropriate point in that project.

Paragraph 2.3: A paper based on UKPITG 13/12 and considering the use of linked pre-HE administrative data in the UKPIs to be taken to a future UKPITG meeting at an appropriate point in the WP UKPIs review process.

Paragraph 2.4: Secretariat to redact section 6 of the minutes of the UKPITG November 2013 meeting, and any associated actions, prior to their publication.

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Paragraph 4.4: Secretariat to circulate proposals regarding the structure of the WP UKPIs roundtable discussions to members of the UKPITG and the UKPISG for consideration and agreement.

Paragraph 5.2: Secretariat to circulate a proposal to the UKPISG that work to review the approach and methodology used with respect to benchmarking within UKPIs begin at the earliest opportunity.

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