



Consultation on the NewDLHE: The future of graduate outcomes data

Response from the Chartered Association of Business Schools

The consultation documents are available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/newdlhe>

The closing date for responses: **Friday 7 April 2017.**

Chartered ABS response to the *NewDLHE: The future of graduate outcomes data consultation*

The Chartered Association of Business Schools is the voice of the UK's business and management education sector. The UK's business and management education sector represents 1 in 5 university students and contributes £3.25b to the UK economy. Its management students go on to lead global businesses and its entrepreneurs contribute to our dynamic economy. Its research has an impact across society and helps to turn our capacity for invention into viable businesses. Our members consist of 120 business schools and higher education providers, as well as affiliate stakeholders, corporate members and international partners.

We are pleased that many of our comments in the previous consultation exercise have been listened to, and are happy to follow up with a response to this much shorter consultation. We believe that overall the NewDLHE is looking more robust and useful than its predecessor.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

6. To what extent do you support the proposed survey design for our new model of collecting graduate outcomes data?

The tailored approach to the questionnaire, including rooting, is a good improvement and will enhance the graduates' experience and hopefully make it quicker to complete.

Having looked at the online version of the questionnaire, what happens if, for example, in question one the respondent only answers part of the question and then tries to move on?

It seems redundant to ask people if they have been in their current job for a) more than one year, or b) less than one year, and then move on to ask how many months they have worked for their employer, and then proceed to how many years.

The graduate voice element is very welcome, and will hopefully count towards a more appropriate way of looking at student outcomes, including what the graduate themselves considers to be success. This can also help institutions make improvements to the programmes they are delivering.

We are also pleased to see that setting up your own business has been included as an option, as this too reflects reality. We are also pleased at the inclusion of entrepreneurship, as this is receiving greater emphasis in the curriculum.

Equally, we are pleased that additional questions may be requested by the institutions.

7. To what extent do you support the proposed practicalities and management of our new model of collecting graduate outcomes data (incl. methodology, governance, linked data and data outputs)?

Whilst we argued against a third party collecting the information, we understand the reasoning and appreciate that the importance of the data being available to institutions on an almost immediate basis has been accommodated as this will enable institutions to respond in a timely manner in aligning curriculum planning based on the outcomes. It will be important for those doing the data collection to be well versed in reasons why it is in the students' best interests to respond to the survey.

We are pleased with the proposal to conduct the survey from 15 months after graduation, but would suggest that this will inevitably reduce the response rate. We do not feel this has been recognised. It will inevitably add to the burden on institutions to keep the students engaged with their institution for long enough to engage fully with the survey. We note that the NewDLHE includes non-UK domiciled students and also note that hard copy returns will not be an option. This may also have a negative impact on response rate.

We are particularly concerned with the statement "Response rates below 70% per provider will not be accepted". What will be the consequences for those institutions with response rates below 70%, especially if this data feeds in to the TEF? It seems a nonsense to penalise so harshly institutions whose response rates fall when a) they are not the ones collecting the data and therefore they have little influence over the effectiveness, b) the time lapse between graduation and the survey has been extended by one year, c) the pool of students to survey increases dramatically as it includes non-UK domiciled students (whose response rates can be safely assumed to be lower than their UK domiciled counterparts. The Australian Graduate Survey which preceded the GOS showed about 20 percentage point difference between domiciled and non-domiciled student response rates), d) one form of data collection has been removed, and e) the Australian version saw a dramatic decline when the collection process and survey timing after graduation was changed (from 57.6% in 2015 to 40% in 2016).

Furthermore, we know from our members who outsource collection that the collection rate can be less than 50%, and then requires direct institutional intervention to raise the response rate above 80%. Therefore, it would be wrong to implement a minimum response rate as high as 70% until the new system beds in and is assessed. It could lead to acute embarrassment for HESA if very few institutional response rates reach the 'minimum 70%' at the first hurdle.

It is vital that there is strong governance over the collection of the data and the survey contractor. It is vital that there are safety checks in place to ensure a quality approach and consistency from the contractor leading on the data collection and it is right that this is the responsibility for this monitoring is conducted by HESA.

We are supportive of the use of linked data.

It is assumed that HESA will provide a set form of words for approval by students for the institutions to hand their contact details on to the survey contractor.

8. To what extent do you support the proposed financial plan for our model of collecting graduate outcomes data?

It has been estimated that there will be a small cost reduction for the sector by using a centralised process for collection. We believe this to be overly optimistic, but would welcome a commitment from HESA that no institution will pay more than they currently do, with an inflation adjustment.

There is concern that by handing a monopoly to the HESA appointed survey contractor that the fees for additional questions could be adversely affected. A possible remedy would be for there to be a

review process whereby the institutions are given a say on the reappointment or otherwise of the survey contractor. There should also be a requirement for the survey contractor to have a fixed term contract, with competitive tenders called.

9. To what extent do you support the proposed implementation plan for our new model of collecting graduate outcomes data?

The implementation plan assumes either a small number of responses to the latest consultation, or that any suggestions for change are not welcome. The consultation ends on 7 April and by “end of April” the results will be published. This is less than three weeks, given that Easter falls within this period. This should be moved further out to enable proper consideration of the views of the respondents to the survey. That may mean going out further than December 2018 for the first surveys, but this would be preferable if it meant getting it right.

There may be an issue with the short timescale between the appointment of the supplier and the first survey. It assumes the supplier will be able to be able to prepare all that is needed within a three-month window.

10. As far as you are able to assess at this stage, what are likely to be the key areas of impact of the proposed changes for your organisation?

It will likely require permissions to be sought to share student contact details with the survey contractor. The timing on this is not ideal as the supplier will be appointed as the summer break begins.

There will be additional burden in keeping in very close contact with alumni over this time period, although overall there will be a reduction in the number of staff required; both full time and the students who are often employed to assist with the collection of data.

11. What measures could be taken to support your organisation in implementing this model?

12. Any further comments...

While we are pleased with the overall direction the NewDLHE is taking we do have a key concern around the required response rate. Again, we reiterate that this new collection method needs to be tested before any such targets are firmly set, especially when the consequences for the institutions is so great.

We hope that there will be less importance placed on salary levels and more on employability and student determinations of success.

It should be noted that there are an increasing number of surveys that students and institutions are required to complete. In order to minimise ‘survey fatigue’ it is preferable to keep surveys brief.