

Colleges Scotland's Response to the Scottish Funding Council's Consultation on Taking Account of Associate Students in the Higher Education Students and Qualifiers Statistical Publication

Possible approaches to this issue for future editions of the Higher Education Students and Qualifiers publication are detailed below. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) would welcome any additional thoughts that users may have on this matter.

Option 1: Continue to count the Associate Students in both sectors

The Associate Students would continue to be counted in both sectors, and reported on as instances of study. This is in line with current Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) reporting methodology, so would enable consistency of figures with HESA's published data.

Due to the growth in funded Associate Students places we would expect to count around 2,000 of these students in both the college and university sectors from 2014-15. SFC would include an additional table in the publication providing a profile of these students, and acknowledge these students appropriately in any accompanying commentary in the publication.

Colleges Scotland's Response: This is the option that is favoured by Colleges Scotland as it avoids the drawbacks associated with the alternatives as detailed below. It also allows for continuity in the series of published statistics and cross-year comparisons.

Option 2: Count the students in the University sector only for all years of study

These Associate Students would only be counted once. These students enrol on their course with the ultimate aim of achieving a degree qualification from the university, so they would be counted under that sector.

However it is possible that some of the students reported as attending the university in these early years would not be retained to year 2 or 3 and never actually attend a class at the university. With this option, colleges would not receive recognition for the achievements of Associate Students in any tables where numbers of qualifiers are presented.

Colleges Scotland's Response: Colleges Scotland agrees that there could be a substantial drawback to this option as detailed in the paragraph above therefore this proposition is not a viable option.

Option 3: Count the students in the college sector for years 1 and/or 2 of their study and in the university sector for later years of study

These Associate Students would only be counted once. They would be reported against the institution delivering the course.

The student may not agree with this classification as they have enrolled with the aim of achieving a degree at a university, but are reported under a lower award at college. This option would deviate from HESA's reporting methodology, meaning we would expect that university sector total figures produced by SFC would differ from those derived by HESA.

Colleges Scotland's Response: Colleges Scotland acknowledges that it would be the more sensible option to only record the student in the institution in which the bulk of the delivery will take

place. However it is also aware of the argument put forward in the preceding paragraph – namely that students would expect that they are classified as degree undergraduates. This is not our preferred option.

Colleges Scotland
November 2015