

National data governance in UK higher education

History, current approach, and future directions

Dan Cook presentation to NIAD-QE University Quality Assurance Forum, 2023-09-26



HESA

Agenda

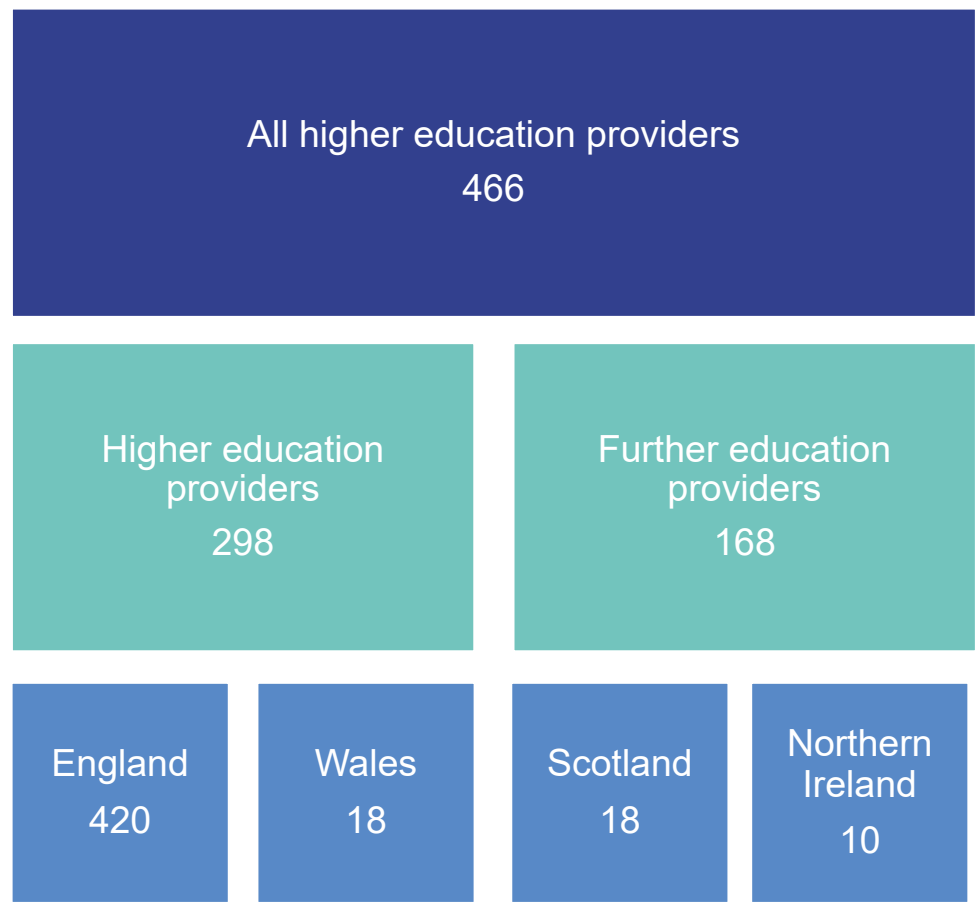
- UK Context
- The Higher Education Statistics Agency and Jisc
 - Outline of HESA's responsibilities
 - History and background of HESA and Jisc
- About the HESA datasets and processes
- Future plans as a part of Jisc



The UK context



Data constituency 2022/23



What do we mean by ‘Higher Education’ in the UK?

- UK is aligned with international education standards and we see ISCED level 5 and above as “higher education” (HE). However, we also have the concept of “further education” which is typically concentrated at ISCED levels 4 and 5, but can span ISCED levels 3-6.
- Each HE **provider** is an independent organization (or a group), which may be legally constituted using any one of the wide variety of corporate forms that exist in the UK, each with its own type of governing instrument. They may be charities, or private businesses.
- There is no “official” list of HE providers, but HESA data shows that in 2022/3 there were 466 providers that were funded and/or regulated by the main government organizations with responsibility for oversight of the sector. “The sudden closure of higher education providers is virtually unknown among publicly funded higher education institutions in the UK, but “market exit” is commonplace among private higher education providers.” [1]
- However, studies indicate that there were some 813 private providers in operation in the UK in 2017 [2]. Not all of these were captured in the HESA data. Studies indicate that this larger number of mostly smaller private HE providers operate in a part of the sector characterized by risk factors that lead to “an increased likelihood of market exit” [1]

[1] Hunt, S. A., Boliver, V. 2021

[2] Hunt, S. A., Boliver, V. 2019, pp. 1–3

The UK context (1)

- Education is a devolved competency in the UK, with each nation setting policy
 - Higher and Further Education and Skills policy in **England** is set by the UK parliament in Westminster and implemented by the Department for Education (DfE). The Office for Students (OfS) is the main regulator. Most funding for teaching comes from student tuition fees, with income-contingent loans for tuition and maintenance administered by the Student Finance England (SFE)
 - Tertiary education policy in **Scotland** is set by the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh and implemented by the Scottish Government, mainly through the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Tuition is free, and income-contingent bursaries and maintenance loans are provided by the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS)
 - Tertiary education policy in **Wales** is set by the Senedd in Cardiff. Arrangements for policy implementation are currently transitioning to a new structure led by the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER). Most funding for teaching comes from student tuition fees, with income-contingent bursaries and loans administered by Student Finance Wales (SFW)
 - Higher Education and skills policy in **Northern Ireland** is set by the Assembly at Stormont (which is not currently sitting) and administered by the Department for the Economy. Most funding for teaching comes from student tuition fees, with income-contingent bursaries and loans for both tuition and maintenance administered by Student Finance Northern Ireland.

The UK context (2)

- Funding for **teaching** mostly comes from tuition fees, but there is some direct government funding, which varies by nation, and subject of study
- Funding for **research** mostly comes from competitively-awarded grants and contracts from governments, charities, and businesses. A quality-related block grant is awarded on the basis of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) which is assessed every 5-7 years.
- Funding for **knowledge exchange** capacity is awarded by formula or agreement in each nation, but most funding comes from the HE providers themselves, derived from earned income.

The UK context (3)

- **Regulation** of Higher Education is undertaken in a different way in each nation, with a variety of risks assessed and plans produced to meet requirements
- Higher education is also directly impacted by general regulatory regimes applied at UK-level, for example:
 - International student and staff mobility requires close integration with the **visa application** routes and processes managed by the Home Office
 - Technology **export controls** affect student admission through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's Academic Technology Approval Scheme, and research partnerships through the Export Control Joint Unit
 - Most HE providers are considered to be 'public authorities' which brings them in scope of legislation on **freedom of information** and duties with respect to **procurement**, and additional duties with respect to pursuing **equality**.
 - There is a wide range of voluntary accreditation that most HE providers engage in to support their operations and brands (e.g. academic quality assurance, license to practice registration restrictions in the professions, etc.)



The Higher Education Statistics Agency and Jisc



What is HESA?

HESA are trusted experts, with 30 years' experience in collecting, processing and publishing data

- We are a sector-owned shared service, set up as a charity by agreement between relevant government departments, higher education funding councils and universities and colleges
- We operate under statutory frameworks on behalf of the government departments and executive bodies that fund and regulate higher education
- We are an official statistics producer regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation, supporting parliament in policymaking and policy analysis
- We are mainly funded by subscriptions from higher education (HE) providers who we help to navigate and fulfil the many requirements for data placed upon them
- In 2022 HESA merged with Jisc, the UK's National Research and Education Network (NREN).

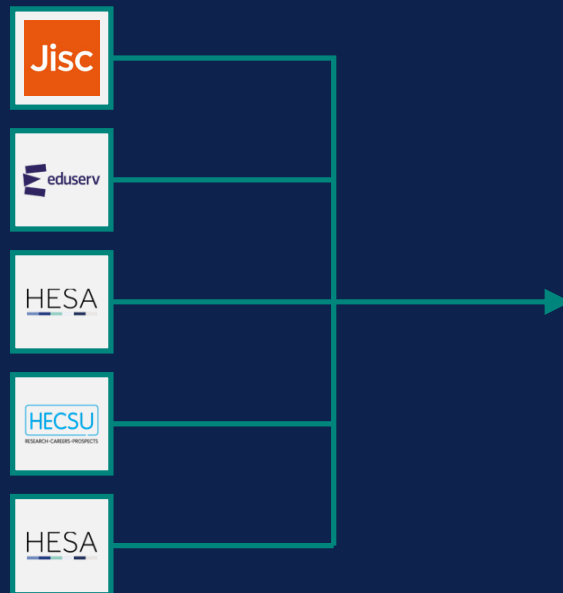
Who are Jisc?

We serve the whole UK:

- All traditional universities and some independent providers
- FE colleges
- All research institutes
- Schools
- Key sector agencies and national institutions such as AdvanceHE, UCAS and NCSC (National Cyber Security Centre)
- Local authorities and adjacent sectors, and global customers

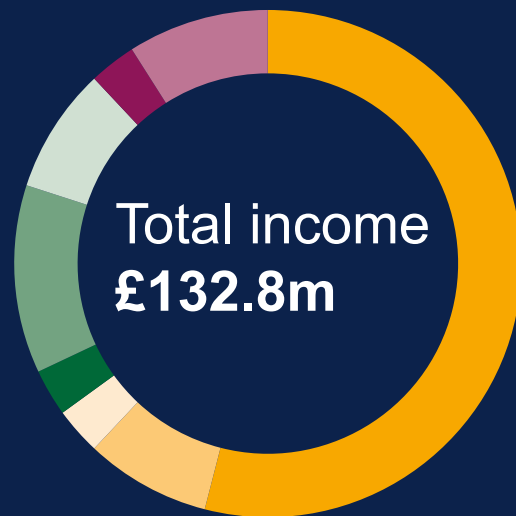


The Jisc story so far...

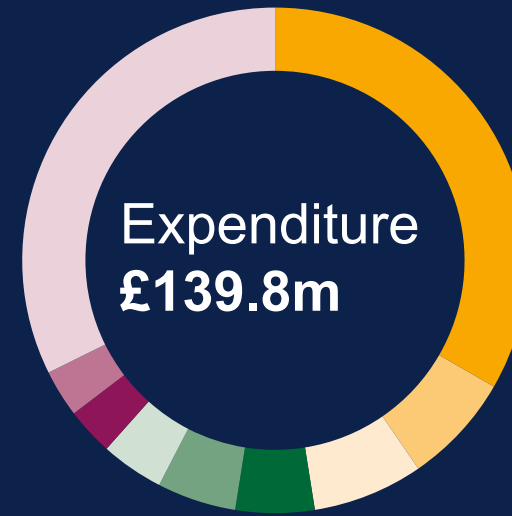


- **1993: Jisc and HESA** established as charities
- **2019: Eduserv** merger brings trust and verification specialisms (OpenAthens, VerifID and CHEST services)
- **2019: Transfer of HESA Enterprise** to Jisc raises data capability (Heidi Plus, Tailored Datasets, dashboards and consultancy services)
- **2020: HECSU** merger (Careers advice, Prospects, HEDD degree verification and Luminate services)
- **2022: HESA** merger cements Jisc as the UK's education Data Body (Statutory data collection and publication UK-wide, administrative data, surveys, official statistics and data engineering)

Income and expenditure 2021-22



- Donations from UK funding bodies, 54%
- Jisc membership subscription, 8%
- Cloud, 3%
- Prospects.ac.uk, 3%
- Connectivity, 12%
- Trust and identity, 8%
- Library, learning and research, 3%
- Other, 9%



- Connectivity, 33%
- Library, learning and research, 7%
- Cyber, 7%
- Advice and guidance, 6%
- Student experience, 5%
- Data analytics, 4%
- Trust and identity, 3%
- Cloud, 3%
- Other, 32%

Funders and owners

Owners



Funders

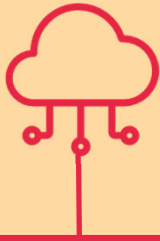


Cyngor Cyllido Addysg
Uwch Cymru
Higher Education Funding
Council for Wales



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government

Cloud



**Connectivity and
cyber security**



**Content and
discovery**



Data analytics



Jisc provides critical services in...

Licensing



**Open
research**



**Student
experience**



**Verification
and trust**





About the HESA data and processes



How much data does HESA collect?



- 2,862,620 higher education (HE) students
- 774,715 graduates surveyed (52% response rate)



- 234,930 academic staff
- Governing body composition



- Accounts of HE providers totalling £44 billion of income
- Data on a physical estate of around 15,000 hectares
- Data on 18,773 active spin-out and start-up companies worth £12.8 billion

Code of Practice for Statistics

Ensuring official statistics serve the public



Trustworthiness is a product of the people, systems and processes within organisations that enable and support the production of statistics and data.



Quality means that statistics fit their intended uses, are based on appropriate data and methods, and are not materially misleading.



Value means that the statistics and data are useful, easy to access, remain relevant, and support understanding of important issues.

The HESA data collections

Students

- Complete administrative microdata (~300 variables)
- Aggregate data for all transnational (TNE) programmes run worldwide by UK HE providers

Graduates

- The UK's largest annual social survey of the full population of all recent graduates (linkable to microdata)

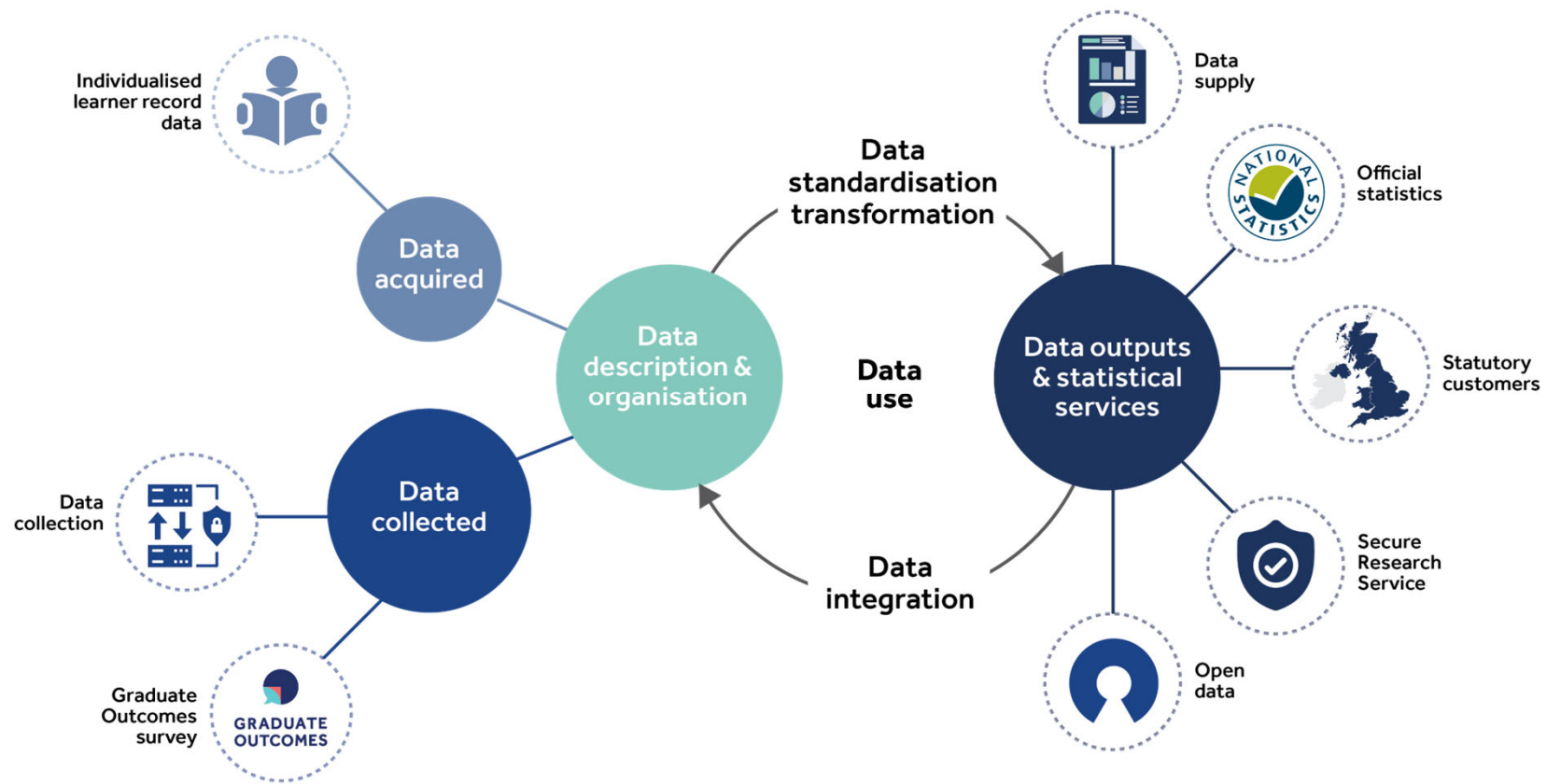
Academic staff

- Administrative microdata on all academic employees of HE providers (~150 variables)

Organizational data

- Academic **course catalogue** data
- **Financial accounts** with additional detailed analysis
- **Knowledge Exchange**, spin-outs, licensing, patents
- **Estates** data with detailed environmental reporting

HESA data journey – core process



Administrative data collection and quality process

Data collected and collated by higher education (HE) provider

- HESA offers training, a helpdesk, and publishes comprehensive coding manuals in advance to aid HE providers in this task

Data submitted to HESA systems

- An XML schema is applied to ensure the data is structured correctly, and variables are in a valid format

Data validated by HESA data collection system

- Automated business rules provide feedback on the completeness, uniqueness and validity of data
- HE providers take action before committing their data for further quality checks

Data quality checked by HE provider and HESA

- Automated and manual comparisons for reliability and consistency are made, by HESA, HE providers, and Statutory bodies, and further sample reports produced, before the data is deemed credible

Final data submitted and signed off by HE provider

- The head of the HE provider (VC or Principal) warrants the accuracy of the submitted data by signing it off.
- A timetable backed by penalties, is adhered to, ensuring punctuality

The Graduate Outcomes survey



Annual population survey



15 months after graduation



Run centrally



Independent brand identity

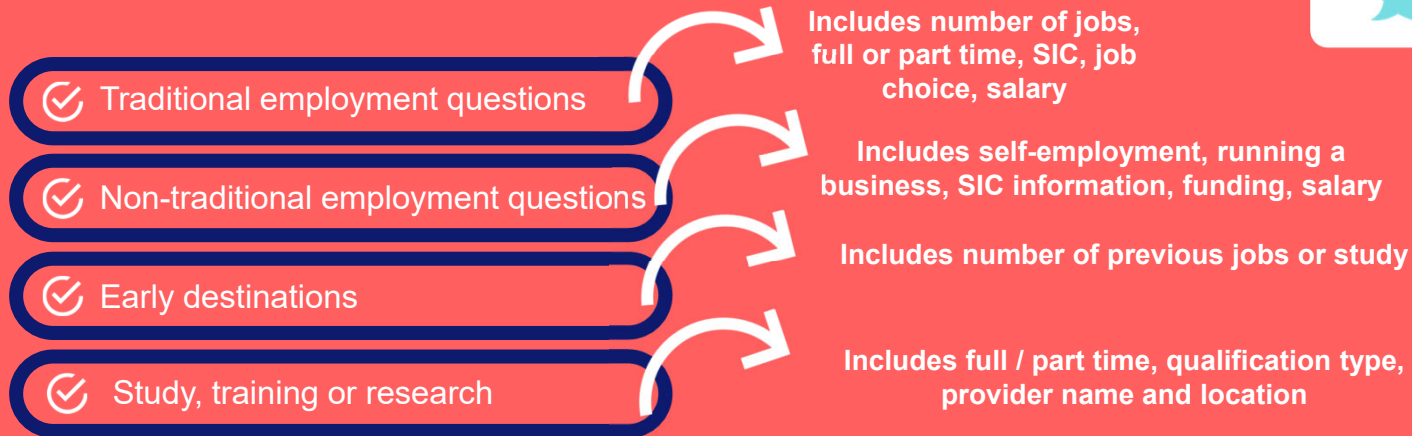


Utilising linked data*



**GRADUATE
OUTCOMES**

The survey questions



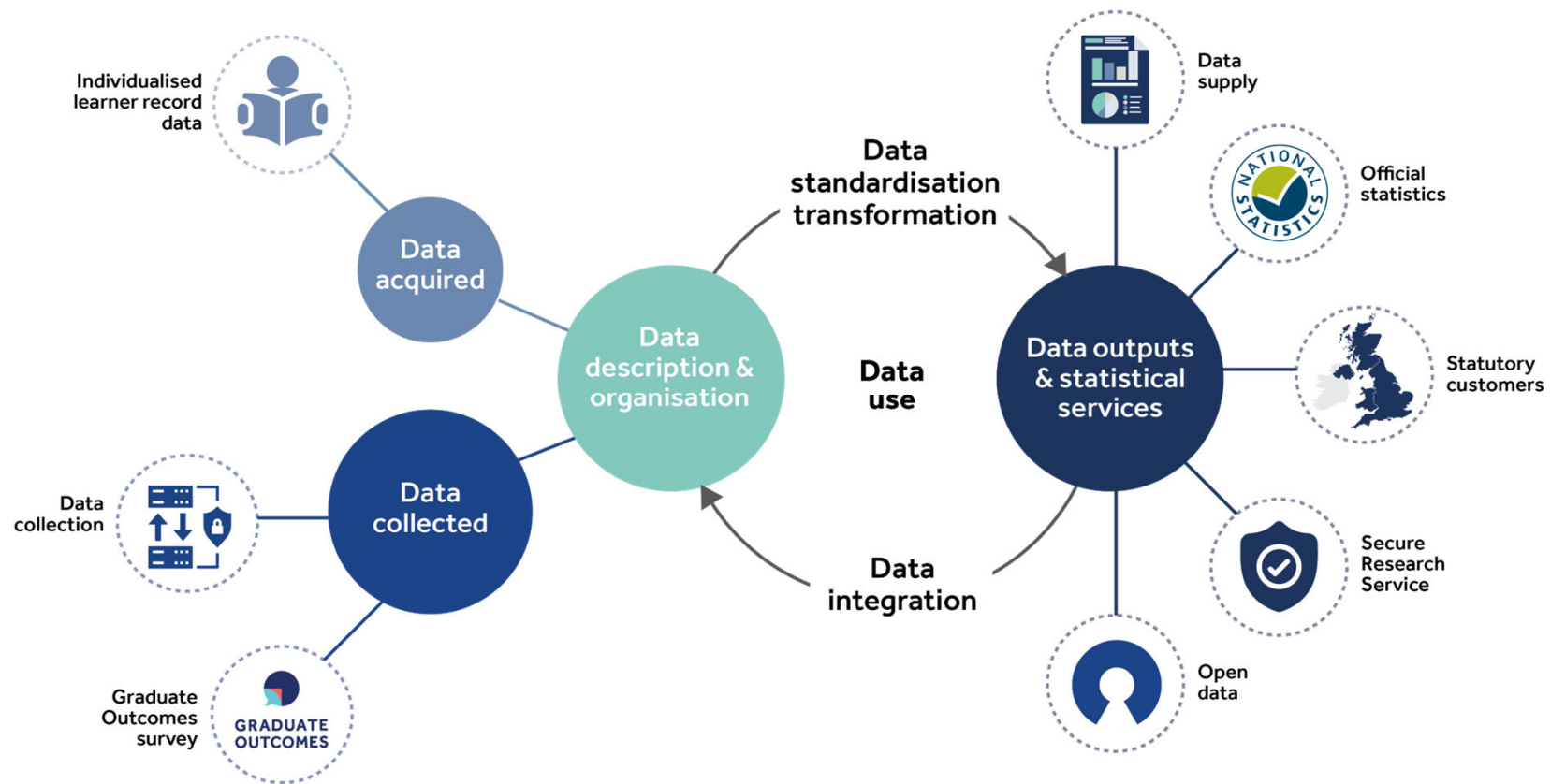
Graduate voice measures

- My current work / study fits with my future plans
- My current work / study is meaningful
- I am utilising what I learnt during my studies in my current work / study

Subjective wellbeing measures

- How satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- To what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
- How happy did you feel yesterday?
- How anxious did you feel yesterday?

HESA data journey – core process



HESA

Part of 

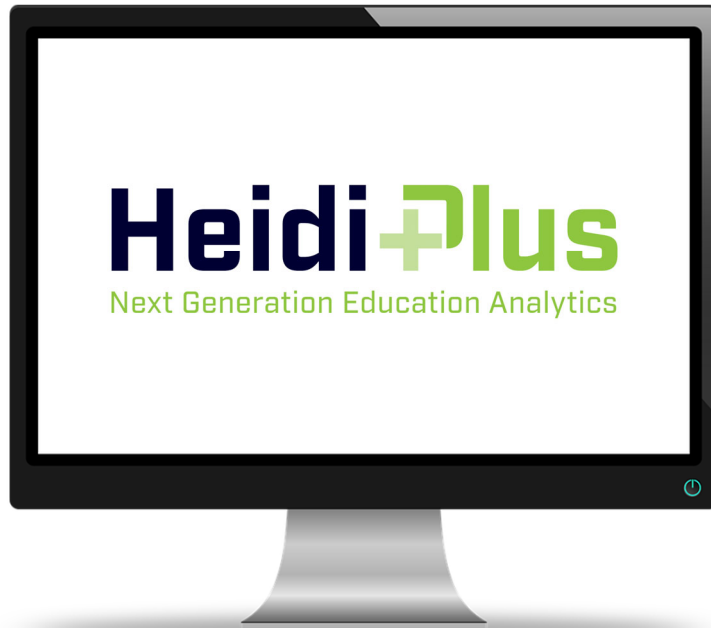
Data for prospective students



HESA

Heidi Plus

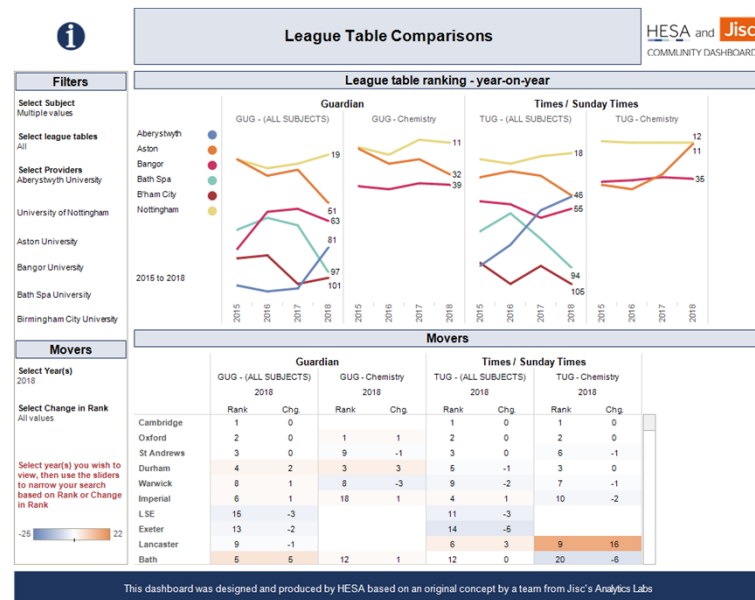
Part of 



- A web-based business intelligence tool for the higher education (HE) sector (developed with Jisc).
- Allows users to intuitively and powerfully view and manipulate a range of HESA and other datasets
- Used for benchmarking, decision-making, and planning
- Available to staff from UK-based HE providers, alternative HE providers, and not-for-profit organisations

Tailored dataset example: league tables

- League tables remain an important metric for planning in the higher education (HE) sector
- The Guardian, Times and Complete University Guide are market leaders:
 - The Guardian and Times/Sunday Times are available as Heidi Plus interactive dashboards back to our HE provider members



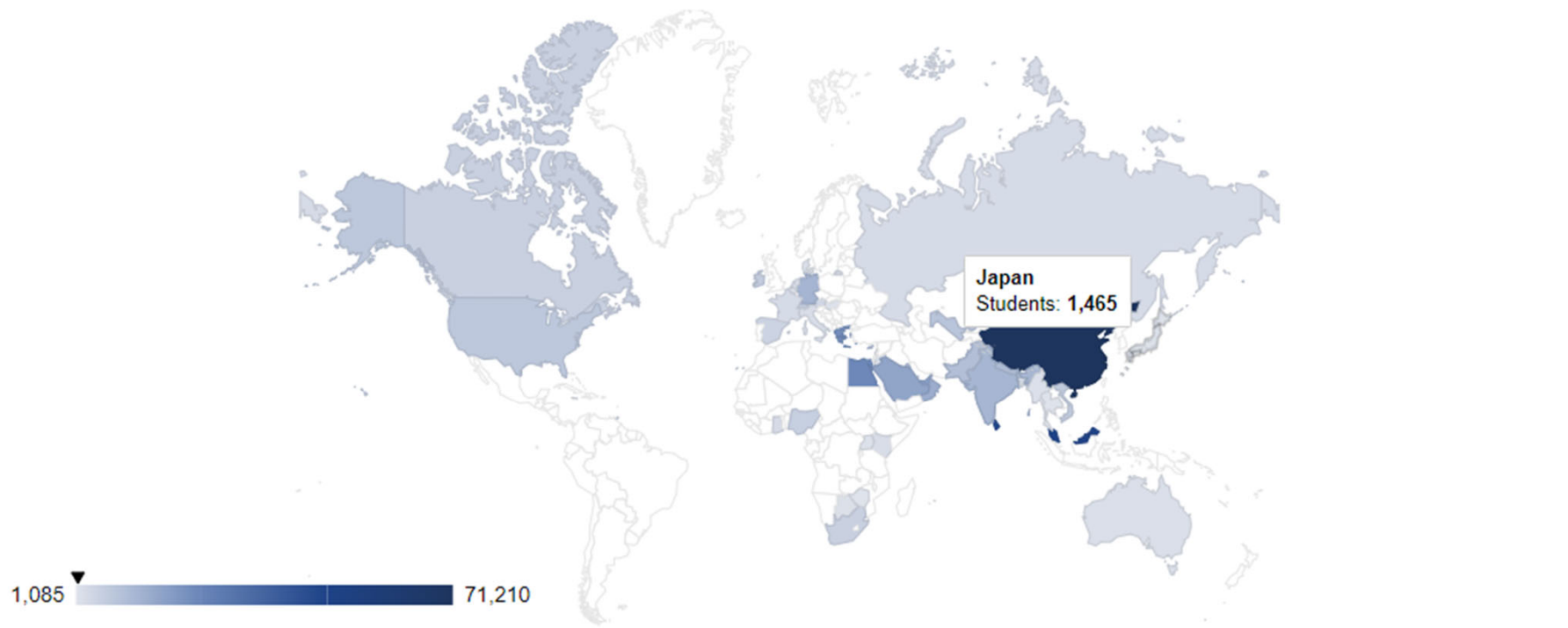
Research and statistics

- Statistical Bulletins that lead the narrative about the Higher Education sector
- Open Data releases add depth and provide further detailed tables at HE provider level
- *Ad hoc* and experimental statistics offer new outputs that follow topical issues and serve unmet user needs
- Research publications on topics including:
 - The financial returns to a degree
 - Graduate employment, mobility and wellbeing
 - Small-area measures of disadvantage
 - Data quality (including COVID-19 impacts)



Transnational students studying wholly overseas for a UK higher education qualification Academic years 2014/15 to 2021/22

Academic year



[Download chart data \(csv\)](#) | [Download source data \(csv\)](#) | [About OC051 Chart 5](#)

Source: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/where-from#tne>

Table 28 - Non-UK HE students by HE provider and country of domicile
Academic years 2014/15 to 2021/22

Source:

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-28>

Show:

European Union
 Other Europe
 Africa
 Asia
 Australasia
 Middle East
 North America
 South America

Academic years

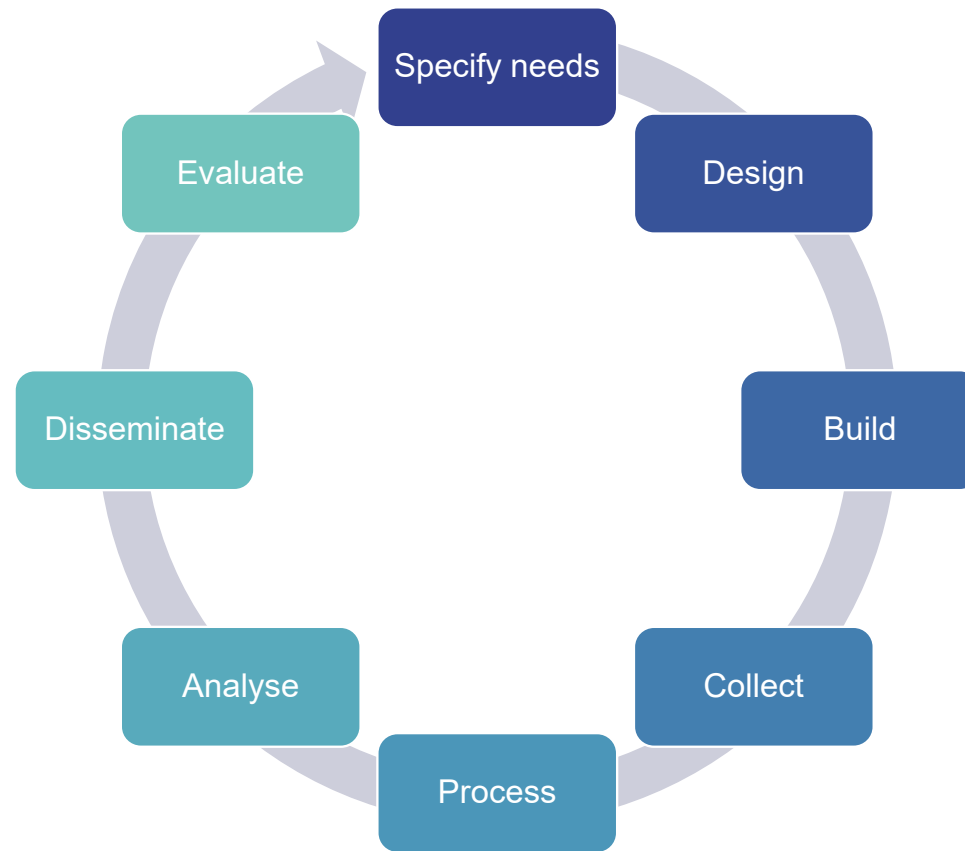
Search by HE provider

Country of HE provider Region of HE provider

Level of study Mode of study

	Afghanistan ↑	Bangladesh ↑	Bhutan ↑	Brunei ↑	Cambodia ↑	China ↑	East Timor ↑	Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China) ↑	India ↑	Indonesia ↑	Japan ▼	Kazakhstan ↑	Korea (North) ↑	Korea (South) ↑	Kyrgyzstan ↑	Laos ↑	Macao (Special Administrative Region of China) ↑	Malaysia ↑	Maldives ↑
Total	335	12,700	40	710	285	151,690	5	17,630	126,535	3,690	3,000	1,120	15	5,075	100	85	560	12,135	250
University College London	5	50	0	15	5	10,785	0	1,195	745	245	200	45	0	345	0	0	65	680	5
King's College London	5	55	0	5	10	6,360	0	600	920	120	135	40	0	205	0	5	20	390	5
University of the Arts, London	0	5	0	0	0	5,540	0	420	560	80	135	20	0	505	0	5	20	35	0
The University of Edinburgh	0	40	0	25	5	6,855	0	425	785	110	125	10	0	125	0	0	35	480	5
The University of Sussex	10	70	0	5	5	1,340	0	215	345	45	105	15	0	65	0	5	10	45	5
The University of Manchester	0	55	5	25	5	9,065	0	485	1,010	165	90	35	0	180	5	0	30	695	30

Statistical Business Process

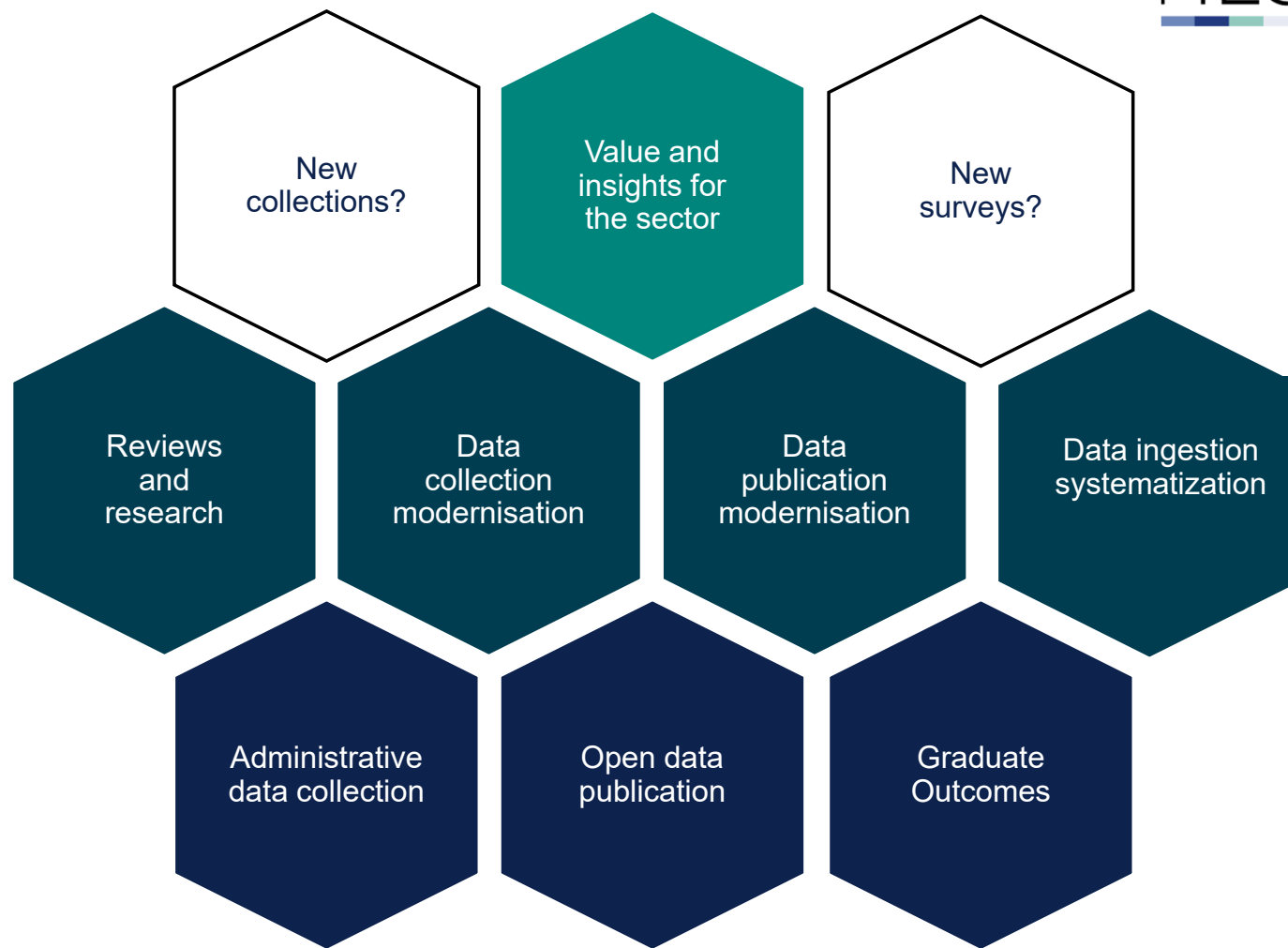




Into the future



Ingredients for future success



References

- Office for Statistics Regulation, and UK Statistics Authority. *Code of Practice for Statistics*. UK Statistics Authority, Feb. 2018, <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/>
- Hunt, S.A., Boliver, V. Private providers and market exit in UK higher education. *High Educ* 81, 385–401 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00546-x>
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<https://www.researchcghe.org/publications/working-paper/private-providers-of-higher-education-in-the-uk-mapping-the-terrain/>

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