



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government usage of Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student data

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects a range of higher education student and graduate data every year from UK universities, higher education colleges and other differently funded providers of higher education. This data is then provided to UK governments and higher education funding bodies to support their work in regulating and funding providers. In addition, information derived from the data is published as anonymous official statistics and in many accessible formats for use by a wide range of organisations and individuals (including higher education providers, academic researchers, students, prospective students, private companies, professional bodies and the press and media).

HESA publish a [collection notice](#), explaining how data are collected and processed. This statement does not attempt to replicate HESA's collection notice, but describes how Welsh Government uses the data collected by HESA on students and graduates.

What does Welsh Government receive from HESA?

Welsh Government receives data from HESA on students enrolled at UK higher education providers and the activity of graduates completing the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey. Some of the data received by Welsh Government from HESA is personal data and/or special category data, as defined in the General Data Protection Regulation.

What does Welsh Government do with HESA data?

HESA data is used in a variety of ways by Welsh Government, such as policy monitoring and development, the publication of statistics on Welsh higher education and to respond to requests for data and analysis from stakeholders or the general public. Any statistics published or responses to requests for analysis are anonymised, meaning that individuals cannot be identified.

Monitoring student numbers

HESA data is used to monitor where students are studying, including cross-border flows of higher education students in the UK. Welsh Government also uses HESA data to monitor the flow of students into Welsh higher education institutions, from all over the world. Numbers of students from Wales studying in the UK, and all students studying in Wales, are monitored on an annual basis, according to variables including:

- year of study;
- location of study;
- domicile (e.g. Wales, England, EU, as well as lower geographies as required);

- level of study (undergraduate or postgraduate);
- mode of study (full-time or part-time);
- subject of study;
- equality characteristics (e.g. age, disability, gender, ethnicity).

Projecting student numbers

HESA data is used (along with other sources, such as UCAS and population projections) as a basis to produce student number projections. Welsh Government projects numbers of students from Wales entering higher education and students from outside Wales predicted to study at Welsh higher education institutions. These student number projections are used to forecast the cost to Welsh Government of student support policies, as well as forecasting the amount of tuition fee income to the Welsh higher education sector. This involves the identification of any cohort or grouping of students, to monitor or develop specific policies.

Student support forecasting

On a more detailed level, Welsh Government uses HESA data to estimate the number of students eligible for support under specific student finance policies. This includes the number of full-time undergraduate students from Wales eligible to receive, for example, a tuition fee loan. In this way, Welsh Government uses HESA data to help ensure sufficient budget cover is available to meet the costs, as well as evaluate the future sustainability, of such policies. The student number projections are also used in forecasts of the predicted costs for any future policy changes that may be considered by the Welsh Government.

Policy development and evaluation

Policy proposals need to be fully costed and the required breakdowns of student numbers are used to support this. As a specific example, HESA data was used to evaluate the affordability of the recommendations from the Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance (Diamond Review) and provide analysis to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and wider Cabinet, to inform the Welsh Government response. HESA data is also a fundamental source for the Equality Impact Assessments accompanying student support legislation, to ensure decisions made by Ministers consider any implications for groups of students with differing equality characteristics (e.g. age, disability, gender, ethnicity).

Outcomes from higher education

Welsh Government also uses HESA data to analyse higher education outcomes, including qualifications obtained by students and the destinations of graduates; both Welsh domiciled leavers from higher education providers across the UK and all leavers from Welsh providers. Welsh Governments links the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey data with other HESA student data to analyse student and graduate flows, from their area of domicile, to where they study higher education, through to their location and activity (i.e. in work, further study or otherwise) after graduation. A specific example of this type of analysis tracked trainee teachers from their home region, to their location of study, through to their region of employment after qualifying. This analysis has been used to inform the monitoring of Welsh Government policies relating to teacher training and recruitment.

Welsh language monitoring

HESA data is also used in the routine monitoring of Welsh language use in higher education, particularly the numbers of students receiving some teaching through the medium of Welsh. Welsh Government uses this information to monitor progress against targets for numbers of students studying set numbers of credits in Welsh. This is part of wider Welsh Government priorities relating to the Welsh language strategy.

Data linking

HESA data is used for linking to other educational records held by the Welsh Government, such as the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census, the Welsh Examinations Database and the Lifelong Learning Wales Record, as well as to other records held by UK Government, including employment data. This data linking is used to analyse the progression of learners through the education system and their outcomes, by variables such as deprivation, gender, ethnicity and disability. This is used to inform the monitoring and development of wider Welsh Government policies relating to social mobility, widening access to post-compulsory education and training and education outcomes.

Sharing data for analysis and research

HESA data is shared with third party contractors conducting data analysis, linking and research or evaluation commissioned by the Welsh Government. London Economics Ltd currently carries out data matching for Welsh Government, including HESA data. Other organisations and researchers may also be provided with anonymised HESA data, with Welsh Government approval. The Welsh Government has a formal data sharing agreement in place whenever we share HESA data with a third party. This means the third party will have to sign a confidentiality agreement relating to the data, to show that they operate satisfactory information security procedures and that copies of the data will be destroyed when the timescale for the data sharing agreement expires. They can only use the data for the reason they sign up to and nothing else. All copies of data transfers are logged and recorded.

Contacts

Statistician

Email: post16ed.stats@gov.wales

For further information about the information which Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you wish to exercise your rights under the GDPR, please see contact details below:

Data Protection Officer

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

dataprotectionofficer@gov.wales

To contact the Information Commissioner's Office, please see details below:

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF

029 2067 8400 (Wales helpline) or 0303 123 1113 (UK helpline)

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