

# Further and Higher Education Data

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 **The Scottish Government**

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# Introduction

## First, a disclaimer...

- As far as Further and Higher Education data are concerned, the Scottish Government (SG) is not really a 'data owner'.
- But... SG does have full access to some of these datasets i.e. access to individual records or "microdata".
- Data landscape in FE and HE sector could be considered slightly fragmented – data for different parts of the system owned by different organisations/agencies.

## Scottish Government uses data from:

- Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
- Scottish Funding Council (SFC)
- Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

# Key data owners and datasets (FE and HE)

## Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

- HESA collect individualised data about students in all UK universities - collection known as the *student record*
- Student record contains data on student characteristics, course studied, funding, qualifications etc.
- Key figures published every January for previous academic year (i.e. 2014-15 this year): <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/sfr224>
- Other HESA datasets include admin data on staffing and finances in universities and a graduate destination survey.

# Key data owners and datasets (FE and HE)

## Scottish Funding Council (SFC)

- SFC collect individualised data about students in all Scottish colleges – collection known as *Further Education Statistics (FES)*
- FES contains data on personal characteristics, course studied, funding, qualifications etc.
- Key figures published every January for previous academic year (i.e. 2014-15 this year): <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/communications/Statisticalpublications/2016/SFCST022016.aspx>
- **Infact Database** is an online system you can use to extract data on further education colleges in Scotland: <https://stats.sfc.ac.uk/infact/moredetails.htm>
- Other SFC datasets include a new college leaver destination survey

# Key data owners and datasets (FE and HE)

## Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

- UCAS collect individualised data about applicants to full time courses at UK universities
- UCAS data include personal characteristics, courses and institutions applied for, qualifications, offers made etc.
- Figures published throughout application cycle, final figures every December for previous academic cycle (i.e. 2015-16 applicants in December 2015):  
<https://www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/ucas-undergraduate-analysis-reports/ucas>
- UCAS also offer an 'EXACT' service which provides data sets to a particular specification.

# Key players and datasets (FE and HE)

## Limitations of key datasets

### Coverage and consistency

For example:

- HESA microdata does not cover all HE in Scotland – 17% carried out in colleges
- UCAS don't cover applicants to college HE in Scotland (but do in England)

### Missing data

- not all variables are available for all students
- data required for operational purposes tend to be more complete

### Accuracy

- some variables rely on self-declared information
- generally not verified unless required to make decisions on funding or support

# Accessing published data

## Demonstration..

- HESA - <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/>
- SFC - <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/>
- Infact Database (SFC) - <https://stats.sfc.ac.uk/infact/>
- UCAS - <https://www.ucas.com/>



# Developments in FE and HE sector

## Unique Learner Number

- In the pipeline for a number of years
- Fresh impetus after recommendation from Commission on Widening Access
- Would allow easier data linkage between education stages

## New legislation – DWP/HMRC data linkage

- Allows linking of education data to tax and benefits data
- Potential to improve quality of destinations information for schools, FE, HE, etc.
- Early stages, unclear how accessible microdata will be – aggregate outputs only?

# Accessing (unpublished) FE and HE data

## Who to contact

- HESA – bespoke data request form available online.
- SFC – contact directly (details on their website)
- UCAS – contact details on their website

## What to consider

- Scope – individual level data or aggregated data?
- Available variables - use metadata available online to help with this.
- Be specific and only request necessary data items.

# Thank you

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# Questions to consider - all 3 areas (early years, schools and FE / HE data)

- **What are the practice, policy or research questions that need to be addressed?**
  - What level/type of data does this *actually* require?
    - Coverage..?
    - Scope..?
    - Level of disaggregation..?
- **How can we make better use of the available data?**
  - What particular outcomes, and therefore what datasets (assuming they exist and are accessible) do you think we should focus on first?
- **What other data would be useful?**
  - coverage, variables, level of detail....?
  - What would be the most useful outputs from this longitudinal analysis of LAC data?