

In-year HESA student record data collection – expectations and funding for Welsh higher education providers

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To: Heads of higher education institutions
Principals/Heads of further education institutions and alternative
higher education providers that subscribe to the Higher
Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Respond by: 29 May 2026

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This publication sets out our expectations relating to the collection of in-year student data for Welsh higher education (HE) providers via the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student record. We are also notifying providers of allocations of funding to be used in the implementation of in-year student data collection.



Introduction

1. This publication sets out our expectations relating to the collection of in-year student data for Welsh higher education (HE) providers¹. via the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) [student record](#). We are also notifying providers of allocations of funding to be used in the implementation of in-year student data collection.
2. Data about higher education in Wales is a vital source of information that is used for many of Medr's [strategic aims](#). At present, information and insights about higher education in Wales are only available at a detailed level retrospectively after the end of the academic year.
3. A major development on the horizon for higher education data collection is the implementation of the collection of higher education student data on an in-year basis, starting from academic year 2028/29. Importantly, this means that we and others across Wales will be able to gain insight about what is happening in the higher education sector earlier than we do now, and more aligned to the information we have relating to the rest of the tertiary sector. Some of the uses of the data that will be collected are set out in paragraph 7.
4. This important change will require additional resource to ensure HE providers, working with Medr and Jisc, can successfully implement the new collection. Insufficient resource risks staff welfare, timely return of data and data quality. We are contributing funding towards that additional resource, as set out in paragraph 18.

In-year data collection

5. This publication follows on from [correspondence from Jisc](#) on 4 March 2026 to accountable officers in the UK about the sector transition to in-year student data collection. Through collection by Jisc on the HESA student record, we are requiring Welsh HE providers to return student data in-year at one collection point in addition to the current end of year collection point, from academic year 2028/29. Details of how Jisc, Medr and bodies in the other UK nations are working towards this can be found on the [Jisc website](#).
6. This is a major change to the HE student data landscape. The availability of high quality data about the Welsh higher education sector is of great importance for many aspects of Medr's work and having data on a more timely basis will provide benefits to Medr and to the sector.
7. In-year student data is being required in order to:
 - Have a more timely indication of recruitment of students starting in the autumn term, in particular UCAS entrants and full-time undergraduates, including

¹ Higher education providers in this context include universities, further education colleges that are either regulated or funded for their higher education provision by Medr and further education colleges or alternative providers that subscribe to HESA in order to return data on the HESA student record because they have specifically designated course provision.

international students, and take up in particular areas. This can be used to inform financial sustainability and identify areas of risk in providers.

- Better align information about higher education with information available about the rest of the tertiary sector in Wales which is available throughout the year.
- Make fewer ad hoc requests to providers for information during the academic year, and potentially discontinue our Higher Education Students Early Statistics ([HESES](#)) survey request.
- Provide more up to date data to be used for funding purposes.
- Have early indications of progress towards measures and indicators developed as a result of Medr's operational plan.
- Respond to requests from colleagues and external bodies such as the Welsh Government with more timely information and insights.
- Generate the National Student Survey target list with more up to date information.

8. The in-year return will also provide more timely data to use for planning and forecasting purposes by HE providers, including sector data that will be available through the Jisc Heidi Plus data analysis tool.
9. Not all benefits of having in-year student data will be seen in the first year of implementation and achieving these benefits will be an iterative process over the first few years of implementation. Jisc have also set out the benefits in the in-year data collection area of their website.

Funding for the implementation of higher education student data collection

10. To recognise that this will incur additional burden and costs at providers to implement in a time of financial constraints in the sector, we are allocating some funding towards the implementation of in-year data collection to each HE provider that we are requiring to return in-year data (see Category A below).
11. In allocating funding, we are also responding to concerns raised by data returns staff at HE providers about the ability to make an in-year data return in an environment of cuts to resource at providers, and the potential effect on staff welfare in the event of no additional resource being available. Data returns staff also reported that not all senior staff in providers were fully aware of the new requirements for in-year student data, and so this publication also aims to aid understanding of the requirements within HE providers.
12. Funding for this specific purpose aids providers in meeting Medr's [Staff and Learner Welfare regulatory condition](#) and builds on the recommendations of the [independent review](#) of the implementation of the Data Futures programme.
13. We are also concerned that HESA's risk status for Welsh HE providers puts Welsh HE providers at a higher risk on average with respect to student data returns than the UK as a whole and so want to ensure that we provide some mitigation for that risk for in-year student data collection.
14. We require providers to return in-year data if they are either regulated or funded by Medr for their HE provision. This means that if an HE provider has a HESA

subscription and currently returns annual end of year student data on the HESA student record, they will be required to return in-year student data if they have a Medr fee and access plan, are on the Medr HE register and/or Medr provides funds to them for their HE provision. HE providers that currently fall into this category are:

Category A

University of South Wales
Aberystwyth University
Bangor University
Cardiff University
University of Wales Trinity Saint David
Swansea University
Cardiff Metropolitan University
Wrexham University
Open University in Wales
Grŵp Llandrillo Menai
Grŵp Colegau NPTC Group of Colleges
Gower College Swansea
Coleg Cambria

15. HE providers that are subscribed to HESA that return data because they have specifically designated course provision and are not regulated and not funded by Medr for their HE provision, would not fall into the above category, this currently includes:

Category B

Coleg Gwent
Cardiff and Vale College
Centre for Alternative Technology
St Padarn's Institute

16. If a provider in Category B were to become a regulated provider by applying and succeeding to be on the HE register, they would move into Category A, and would become eligible for the in-year data collection implementation funding.
17. The total implementation funding available for the sector is £650k for academic year 2026/27. We are starting the funding in 2026/27 to acknowledge the work needed in the run-up to the implementation of the collection. We are aiming to provide similar levels of funding in academic years 2027/28 and 2028/29, subject to availability of funds. Funding will be shared between HE providers, with universities receiving a fixed amount and smaller providers receiving a lesser fixed amount according to their size. Funding is allocated with the expectation that it will only be spent on costs relating to the implementation of in-year student data collection.

18. Funding allocations per provider are set out below:

Type of HE provider (regulated and/or funded for HE provision)	2026/27 funding per provider (£)
University	65,000
FEC or AP with \geq 500 HE enrolments in AY 2024/25	15,000
FEC or AP with $<$ 500 HE enrolments in AY 2024/25	10,000

FEC = further education college; AP = alternative provider; AY = academic year

Data source for enrolments = HESA student record 2024/25 standard registration population

19. Our expectations on how this funding will be spent are set out below:

- Funding is to be spent on implementation costs for in-year data collection and should be in addition to any current resource or expenditure, or planned resource or expenditure, relating to student data returns.
- Funding should be spent on activity that is in addition to business as usual for the end of year student return.
- Funding can be spent on staff resource in data returns or IT teams, IT and systems improvements and other costs relating to being able to successfully return an in-year student return, such as improvements in data capture to enable data to be available for return earlier.

20. HE providers are expected to ensure that sufficient resource is available, including any that utilises the Medr implementation funding, to be able to successfully implement in-year data collection to the required timescale, without detriment to staff welfare or the usual end of year student data collection.

21. HE providers are strongly encouraged to take part in trial activity in 2027/28 relating to the in-year return in order to be fully prepared for the first full in-year return in 2028/29. Details of the activity and how to be involved will be communicated to providers by Jisc.

Internal audit requirements

22. We expect HE providers in Category A to include checks on the implementation of the in-year data collection and how it is resourced as part of their [annual internal audit of HE data systems and processes](#). The audit report for the internal audit is returned to Medr in the summer of each year and we expect the report returned to us in summer 2027 to include a view of the readiness and risk relating to the in-year student data return as well as confirmation that the Medr implementation funding is being utilised to prepare for the return and to reduce the associated risks. More detail will be included in the updated internal audit notes for guidance to be published at the end of the year.

Response required

23. Heads of higher education providers in both Categories A and B are asked to confirm receipt of this publication and understanding of the expectations set out in this letter, by responding to Hannah Falvey, Head of Higher Education Statistics, hestats@medr.cymru, by 29 May 2026.

Further information

24. Any queries regarding this publication should be directed to Hannah Falvey (hestats@medr.cymru).

Medr

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