

### HESA Review of Graduate Outcomes

This paper sets out the background, rationale and detail of the proposed changes for the DLHE (Destination of Leavers from Higher Education) survey and the response proposed by the City Careers service to be submitted to HESA. Questions and comments regarding the content of this paper should be addressed to Gemma Kenyon.

### Recommended action

Education & Student Committee is asked to **receive** an update on the review of the DLHE

# HESA Review of Graduate Outcomes

## The current DLHE (Destination of Leavers from Higher Education) survey methodology:

The Destination of Leavers from Higher Education, otherwise known as DLHE, survey measures the employment and further study outcomes of graduates 6 months after graduation. The survey is a census of all graduates and response rates as high as 80% are required. The administration of the survey is the responsibility of individual HEIs, some of whom decide to outsource the collection of the data to a third party supplier and some of whom administer the collection of the data themselves. At City the DLHE survey is managed in-house by the Careers Service. The data collected as part of the DLHE survey produces the employability metrics reported within university league tables and more recently the TEF and so its importance to universities, prospective students and the government shouldn't be underestimated.

## Rationale for proposed changes to the DLHE methodology:

There are three key drivers for change to the DLHE methodology:

### **1. Reliability and consistency of data:**

As the collection of DLHE data is the responsibility of individual HEIs there is a perception in the HE sector, the media and the government of data inaccuracy and / or inconsistency in some data returns. Given the growing significance of DLHE data in the TEF and for demonstrating the long-term value of the higher education experience for individuals and society there is a drive to ensure that the data reported is totally reliable.

### **2. The availability of earnings data:**

Changes in government legislation have enabled the linking of earnings data from HMRC to self-reported DLHE data. Currently there is a question in the DLHE which asks graduates what they are earning but many graduates refuse to answer and there are data quality issues regarding accuracy of answers given. The availability of HMRC data enables this question to be removed from the DLHE survey.

### **3. Interest in longer term data:**

There has long been a recognition that the 6 month census period is too soon to capture the full value of the higher education experience the graduate has had. A significant number of graduates may choose to take time after graduation to travel or to fully evaluate their career options or choose a first job which technically is classified as non-graduate level but which is an established path to developing a career in that sector, e.g. becoming a teaching assistant as a route into teaching. There is a general consensus that increasing the time period after graduation at which the survey is undertaken would provide a better snapshot of employment outcomes.

## Proposed changes to the DLHE methodology:

Full details of the proposed changes were published by HESA on March 6<sup>th</sup> for implementation from December 2018. The 2016/17 DLHE collection (April 2017 and January 2018 surveys) will run as normal. The most significant changes will be as follows:

### **Methodology**

<b>Current DLHE</b>	<b>New DLHE</b>
Graduates surveyed 6 months after graduation	Graduates surveyed 15 months after graduation
Survey conducted twice annually over an 8 week period in January and April	Survey conducted four times annually over a 1 week period in September, December, March and June.
Survey conducted individually by HE providers with the option to complete in-house or use a third-party provider.	Survey conducted centrally by HESA using a third-party contractor.

Response rate of 80% UK full-time students required of each HE provider.	Anticipating response rate of at least 70%, as the shared responsibility of HESA, survey contractor and HE providers.
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## Survey Design

Current DLHE	New DLHE
Core questions addressing the graduate's activities, reasons for taking their job, and opinions on how their course prepared them for employment, future studies and entrepreneurship.	Core questions slightly revised, salary questions removed, and questions on meaningfulness/importance of their current activity to the graduate, skills utilisation and progress toward future goals added.
No optional question banks.	Optional question banks on research students and newly-qualified teachers; subjective well-being; net promoter measures; graduate choice; the impact of HE; and salary questions for overseas graduates. HE providers will be able to choose their supplementary question banks and add their own questions to the end of the survey.
HE Providers can add their own questions at the end of the survey.	HE Providers can add their own questions at the end of the survey.

## Use of Linked Data

Current DLHE	New DLHE
No linked data	Study data from HESA Student Record (starting January 2020); Salary data from Longitudinal Educational Outcomes dataset (starting May 2020).

## Funding

Current DLHE	New DLHE
Funded by individual HE providers	Subscription fee levied on providers, comprising a fixed fee based on service level, provider size, and complexity, plus cost per response.
About £6.3 million overall cost for the sector	Savings of about £1.5 million for the sector
City's internal cost for DLHE approx. £54,000	City's cost paid to HESA TBC

## Implications for City as a result of New DLHE

- **Increased work with alumni**

With the survey period increasing to 15 months we may wish to consider providing more proactive employability support to our alumni in order to maximise our DLHE results as some alumni will face career change and opportunities for promotion in this longer time frame.

- **Longitudinal Educational Outcome (LEO)**

It is currently unclear what impact the inclusion of linked HMRC earnings data will have on how DLHE data is reported, e.g. league tables and TEF. Should the LEO data become a key external performance metric for City work will need to be undertaken to understand our performance in this area and how it can be maximised.

- Response rates**

City regularly achieves the required 80% response rate for UK full-time students, which allows us to provide detailed data at the course level for most courses. Achieving this response rate requires a concentrated effort to promote the online survey and hiring students to work as survey callers. The DLHE proposal includes these methods, but in future it may be difficult to achieve high response rates with a shorter contact period and a longer time that the graduate has been out of university. This would affect the quality of the data that City receives and could affect our ability to provide detailed course data if not enough responses are achieved.
- Maintaining contact details**

The New DLHE proposal requires HE providers to maintain and provide up to date contact details for the survey population. This is currently the remit of the Alumni department who may find it challenging to maintain accurate details over this longer timeframe.
- Staffing implications**

The Careers Service has one FTE staff member (on a fixed term contract) with the sole responsibility of completing the DLHE survey. Centralising the service will have implications for this role, as the New DLHE will require less staff resource time from the individual HE providers. City regularly hires student callers to support the DLHE, which will no longer be required with a centralised collection.
- Availability of useful data**

The lag time between graduation and release of outcomes data is already often seen to be too protracted. A 15 month survey census date will extend the time between graduation and release of outcomes data to approximately 2 years. City's Careers Service supports graduates for up to three years from graduation, and this support can often improve our graduate outcomes in the DLHE. In order to continue to support our graduates finding new ways to collect preliminary destinations data with in-house research will become a priority. We would explore shifting the current Graduate Survey Administrator role to more internal research when staff time becomes available as a result of centralisation of the DLHE.
- 'Graduate voice' results**

The 'graduate voice' questions proposed in the New DLHE may provide another source of analysis of graduate outcomes, e.g. league tables and TEF. Should the 'graduate voice' data become a key external performance metric for City work will need to be undertaken to understand our performance in this area and how it can be maximised.
- Financial implications**

The current DLHE costs City approx. £54,000 annually. It is not clear yet what the subscription and per response costs of the New DLHE will be.

### **City's response to the proposed changes**

The responses below are the proposed responses from the City Careers Service. These are intended to be submitted ahead of the HESA deadline on April 7<sup>th</sup>. Note: options are *strongly support, support, neither support nor oppose, oppose, strongly oppose, or not applicable*.

#### **Proposed responses:**

City **supports** the proposed survey design for our new model of collecting graduate outcomes data.

Comments: The graduate voice question regarding fit with future plans assumes that the graduate has well thought through future plans. Should this not be the case a 'don't know' option may be useful.

City **supports** the proposed practicalities and management of our new model of collecting graduate outcomes data (methodology, governance, linked data and data outputs)

Comments: Care should be taken to award the contract to an organisation that has a proven track record in this area in order to have full confidence in their ability to deliver. The details published to date don't differentiate the 70% response rate target by different groups (e.g. international students, part-time etc.); we feel that achieving a 70% response rate across all student groups is unrealistic and therefore consideration should be given to having differential response rate targets similarly to the current arrangement.

City **supports** the proposed financial plan for our model of collecting graduate outcomes data.

Comments: No further comment.

City **supports** the proposed implementation plan for our new model of collecting graduate outcomes data.

Comments: Further clarification on the arrangements regarding data submission for the TEF and league tables during the transition period between the current and new DLHE would be appreciated.

As far as you are able to assess at this stage, what are likely to be the key areas of impact of the proposed changes for your organisation?

- The provision of more in depth employability support for alumni and greater work to maintain contact details for alumni.

What measures could be taken to support your organisation in implementing this model?

- The efficacy of the national marketing campaign will support the achievement of high response rates.

Any further comments:

- No further comment.