

EXTERNAL DATA RETURNS POLICY

Introduction

The College is required to submit a number of data returns to its funding bodies and other agencies, including HEFCE, TDA and LSC, and HESA. The information is used to inform funding and league tables, as well as providing a general picture of the College and its activities to the outside world.

The policy explains the College's arrangements for the preparation and review of external data returns and identifies the significant roles and reporting lines. This list of returns covered by this policy is set out in the External Data Returns Schedule, annexed to this document.

Principles

Goldsmiths recognises the importance of external reporting requirements with respect to funding and reputation and seeks to produce external data returns that present an accurate and coherent picture of the College and its activities. It seeks to ensure that:

- all data returns are prepared and submitted on a timely basis, and are supported by a clear and complete audit trail.
- data which are used for external reporting are subject to rigorous verification, and to senior management approval.
- responsibilities for the preparation of external data returns are clearly defined.
- responsibilities for the scrutiny of external data returns are clearly defined.

Roles

In accordance with the HEFCE Financial Memorandum and Accountability and Audit Code of Practice, Audit Committee is required to give, as part of its annual opinion, an assurance about the management and quality assurance of data provided by the College to HEFCE, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and other public bodies. Audit Committee receives reports from SMT and other senior officers, and will be advised by Internal Audit who conduct an annual review of arrangements for the assurance of data quality and the preparation of external data returns.

SMT is responsible for approving the policies relating to data quality and external returns. It receives reports about the status of returns and is advised about key issues arising from returns, with particular regard to funding implications and audit findings. A member of SMT is normally responsible for signing off each return before final submission to the relevant funding or statutory body.

The Registrar and Secretary has strategic responsibility for ensuring that arrangements are in place for the preparation and review of external data returns. This includes assigning responsibility for the

preparation of individual returns to the appropriate Head of Service. Current responsibilities are shown in Annex A.

All Heads of Departments must comply with the Corporate Framework for the Assurance of Data Quality to ensure that the data that are input into external data returns are accurate, current, and reliable. They are responsible for ensuring that requests for information relating to statutory and funding body requirements are met promptly, and for assuring the quality of the data provided.

Heads of Support Services charged with the preparation of external data returns are responsible for ensuring that returns are completed in good time, that adequate staff resource and time has been allocated to these processes, that staff are adequately trained to perform their duties with respect to returns, and that recommendations arising from internal or external review of returns have been implemented. In particular, they should ensure that at least two members of staff have been trained and are able to complete external returns, and that staff are available throughout the review period to respond to the questions posed as part of the scrutiny process and to make amendments to returns as required. They must ensure that all processes are documented and that audit trails are maintained.

The Director of Quality, Planning and Academic Governance is normally responsible for ensuring that external data returns have been subject to management review before signoff by the appropriate senior officer.

The External Returns Group is an informal group comprising individuals from the support services involved in the preparation and scrutiny of returns. It provides a cross-departmental forum for members to meet and discuss matters relating to external data returns, including progress on completing returns, new data requirements issues arising and technical support.

External Data Returns Schedule

There will be a schedule of returns showing the responsibilities for the preparation, review and signoff of returns. This will be maintained by the Department of Quality, Planning and Academic Governance, and stored on a shared drive accessible to members of the External Returns Group and other staff as appropriate. This will be updated annually.

Preparation of returns

The Registrar and Secretary will nominate a support department to assume responsibility for each external data return. This department is responsible for ensuring that:

- Data returns are completed according to agreed timetables, allowing sufficient time for the review and subsequent amendment of returns as required
- Data from corporate systems has been accurately transferred, input or transcribed, as appropriate into the format required by HESA, funding body or other agency
- Sufficient time and resource has been allocated to the preparation of returns
- Staff regularly attend training and information sessions held by HESA, funding bodies and other agencies, thus keeping abreast of changes to requirements and taking the appropriate action to ensure that data capture and transfer mechanisms remain current and relevant
- Staff are available to respond to requests for information and issues arising through the scrutiny, and to make amendments to returns as required.

Scrutiny of returns

Each return should be subject to scrutiny before final submission to HESA, funding body or other agency. The purpose of scrutiny is to provide an extra level of checking, to challenge assumptions and to provide assurance to senior management about the quality of the return. The scrutiny should be undertaken by staff not directly involved in the preparation of returns. Responsibilities for scrutinising returns are set out in the External Data Returns Schedule. The actual process for scrutiny for each individual return will be set out in the procedures and documentation relating to it.

Reporting

Members of SMT will routinely receive reports about the status of external returns. Reports will comment on any funding implications and highlight any areas of concern or issues that need to be addressed.

Following the completion of each return, the departments involved in the preparation and scrutiny, should arrange a review of the process and issues that have arisen and ensure that a plan is in place to address issues as appropriate.

Audit reports and management responses will be presented to SMT, Audit Committee and the External Returns Group, and copied to relevant heads of support services.

Documentation

The final submission or other appropriate output will be stored securely on a shared network drive.

All procedures relating to external data returns should be documented. A copy of this documentation should be stored on a shared network drive.

Annex A

		Responsibilities for preparing and submitting returns						Responsibility for reviewing return	
Type of Return	Return	Lead Department	Others involved					Lead	Sign off
Student-related	DLHE	Careers	UOL Careers Group					Careers	Warden
	HESA (Students)	Student Services						QPAG	Warden
	HESES	Student Services						QPAG	Warden
	LSC	Student Services	PACE					QPAG	Warden
	TDA (Census/Performance Profiles, GTC registrations)	Student Services	Educational Studies Department	Design Department				QPAG	Deputy Warden
	OFFA Monitoring Return	Student Services	Planning Office	Finance				PW (SLD)	Deputy Warden
	Widening Participation Strategic Assessment	Marketing, Recruitment and Communications	Student Services					TBC	Deputy Warden

Finance	HESA (Finance)	Finance						QPAG	Warden
	HEBCIS	BDO	Research Office	Finance				QPAG	Warden
	TDA (Audit Grant)	Finance	Planning Office	Educational Studies Department	Design Department	Student Services		QPAG	
	TRAC	Finance	Estates	Research Office					Chair of Finance and Resources Committee
	Annual Accounts	Finance							Council
Staff	HESA (Staff)	Finance and HR	HR	Research Office				QPAG	Warden
Research	RAS	QPAG	Research Office	Graduate School	Human Resources	Finance	Student Services	QPAG	Warden
	REF	Research office	HR	Graduate School	Student Services			SMT	Warden/PW (R&E)
Estates	EMS	Estates	Finance	RCCS					
Planning	CPS/AMS	QPAG						Registrar and Secretary	Warden
Development	Ross-CASE	Development Office	Finance					TBC	TBC