

Unistats: Where does the data come from?

Unistats is operated by the four UK higher education funding bodies (The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland (DFE), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Its purpose is to ensure that prospective students and their advisers have access to robust, reliable and comparable information to help them make informed decisions about what and where to study.

When considering the wide range of data available to students to help them make decisions about higher education, it is worth thinking about where that data has come from to understand what it can, and cannot, tell them and how reliable it is. This guide gives an overview of Unistats data sources and how they are used in the Unistats website. The key sources are:

- The National Student Survey (NSS)
- The Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey
- Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student Record and Individualised Learner Record (ILR)
- The Key Information Set (KIS) data collection

The National Student Survey (NSS)

The information on student satisfaction that appears on Unistats is taken from The National Student Survey (NSS). The NSS is a UK-wide annual survey which gathers opinions from final year higher education students about their experience of their course. It has a high response rate – over 70 per cent – so can give a good indication of a student's likely experience.

In the survey, statements are put to students who then answer on a five-point scale from 'definitely disagree' to 'definitely agree'. On Unistats each of the 23 statements are displayed in the groupings used in the survey along with the percentage of who agreed with them. The groupings include:

- The teaching on my course
- Assessment and feedback
- Academic support
- Organisation and management
- Learning resources
- Personal development

Responses are only shown on Unistats where at least 10 students on the course have completed the questionnaire and where the respondents make up at least half of all the students on that course. If there are less than 10 responses, we group responses (initially over two years for the same course, then with those for students in the same subject area if there are still not enough to publish). Sometimes we can't publish any data

The NSS is undertaken by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the funding bodies. For more information, visit the National Student Survey website <http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/>

The Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey

Unistats also includes data from the DLHE survey, which asks previous students about what they are doing six months after completing the course. We display average salary and the percentage of graduates in employment or further study, along with the types of jobs they are doing. Response rates are high, with around 80% of eligible graduates responding, although the percentage providing salary data is lower than this.

A further survey, the Longitudinal DLHE, follows up a sample of respondents three and a half years (40 months) after graduation. The response rate to this is about 40%. The data shown on Unistats is for all similar courses as it is based on a sample, in contrast to the early survey which is a broad census.

A more detailed guide to graduate destination data for students is available on the HEFCE website:

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE.2014/Content/Learning.and.teaching/dlhe/student_guide_graduate_destination_data.pdf.

The Key Information Set (KIS)

The Key Information Set (KIS) was introduced in 2012 to help prospective students make informed decisions about higher education courses and includes some of the data from the NSS, the DLHE survey and information provided by universities and colleges in a dedicated data collection. This information includes:

- Tuition fees
- Accommodation costs
- Proportions of scheduled learning and teaching
- How the course is assessed
- Accreditations granted to the course by professional bodies.

Other information

Unistats also includes information on the number of students continuing on the course after a year, qualifications on entry to the course and tariff points held by those who were previously admitted. This data is taken from the student data returns that higher education providers make annually to HESA, HEFCE or HEFCW.