Graduate Outcomes Survey

# Guidance for higher education institutions

# Introduction

A pilot of the new annual graduate outcomes survey is in place for the survey of graduates of 2017, taking place in Q2 2018. The survey is collected in respect of graduates of higher education institutions (HEIs) approximately nine months after their completion of study. The data submitted in the record is obtained through a survey instrument, centrally defined by the HEA and locally managed by HEIs.

This document provides guidance on how to undertake the survey. This content is liable to change each year and will take account of feedback from the exercise.

# Survey timeframe

The annual graduate outcomes survey has one census date, 31 March of each year. The date chosen aims to provide a picture of graduate activity approximately nine months after completion of the graduate’s programme of study.

Therefore, completed questionnaires should be stored safely until the data needs to be returned to the HEA.

There is a contact period for each survey which sets out when HEIs should contact graduates. Each HEI should identify the most appropriate time period for contacting graduates.

The data return file the survey is to be returned to HEA by the end of July.

# Method of survey administration

The survey is undertaken by graduates answering a number of questions by way of a questionnaire. A centralised system using Banner self-service has been developed for institutes of technology. However, an institution may use any system it feels most appropriate for administration of the survey.

In relation to the Banner system (IoTs), the survey should first be sent to all relevant graduates electronically and graduates should be able to log into the system using their login details and fill in the survey from there. The HEI can then follow up with graduates who have not responded after a period of time. The results of the survey will be captured in a file that can be downloaded by the HEI. There will also be a file to be uploaded to the HEA by the end of July 2017.

In order to obtain good response rates, HEIs will likely need to make follow-up phone calls to graduates. Therefore, the survey will also be carried out by HEI staff who fill in responses on behalf of the graduate.

# Occupation and Sector coding

One of the most detailed parts of the questionnaire relates to the coding of a graduate’s occupation and employment sector.

Institutions might find that the following tools could be of use when undertaking phone calls with graduates.

Occupation: <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/dev3/ONS_SOC_occupation_coding_tool.html>

A graduate’s occupation can be entered into the “Job Title” search box. This will then provide a list of potential matches. The first digit associated with the correct match will give the correct occupation code. This should assist caller staff in identifying the correct occupation heading.

Sector:

<http://www.cso.ie/px/u/NACECoder/NACEItems/searchnace.asp>

A graduate’s employment sector can be entered into the “Search Nace” search box at the top of the page. This will then provide a list of potential matches. The first digits associated with the correct match will give the correct sector code.

# Cohort to be surveyed

The cohort of graduates to be included in the survey is set out in a separate document.

# Items required for response

The code book sets out the fields that require response as part of a valid and complete return to the HEA.

It can been seen from the documentation that not all fields/responses are compulsory for return to the HEA. This means that the HEA will accept empty responses in the case of a number of questions. However, institutions should ensure that all such questions are asked of graduates. The purpose of allowing some empty responses is to maximise the number of graduate records returned to the HEA. In the case where a graduate might skip a question, or leave an answer blank, the HEA would not wish for an otherwise complete record to be invalid for return to the HEA. However, this should not be mistaken as meaning that the question should not be asked of the graduate at all. This approach has been taken following feedback from HEIs on the disposition of graduates to respond to all survey questions, and will be kept under review by the HEA.

# Feedback on 2018 survey

As with the institute of technology pilot implementation, the HEA will request feedback on the survey process and so that the survey and this supporting documentation can be developed further.