

FAQs: Performance Agreement Process

Updated on 09/11/2023.

1. Context

In Section 1.1 of the Performance Agreement, ‘Overview of the institution and its context’, what level of detail is required when outlining the institutional profile, and where the template indicates that 'total number of staff by category of post' should be provided, what ‘categories’ does this refer to?

The purpose of Section 1 is to outline the context (scale, mission, location, strategy) that shapes the institution’s contribution to the delivery of national priorities and outcomes as set out in the performance agreement, and to capture high-level information on the factors that frame and influence institutional strategy and the selection of performance objectives in the performance agreement.

Section 1.1. ‘Overview of the institution and its context’ should provide a brief introduction to the institution, including any relevant contextual information. High level information on the institution’s profile should be provided, including student enrolment figures by programme type and staff figures by category of post.

‘Category of post’ here refers to Academic, or Professional, Management and Support. The institution may provide further breakdown of these figures or other supporting contextual information as it considers relevant to the performance agreement.

When outlining the profile of the institution in Section 1.1, including total number of staff by category of post and the total number of student enrolments by programme type, what year should these figures reflect?

When outlining institutional profile in the first draft Performance Agreement, institutions may provide figures based on the most up-to-date data available at that point in time. It is appreciated that the period to which figures relate may vary for different data (e.g., staff figures, enrolment figures, research income figures) depending on data collection and verification process timelines. Any figures included should be contextualised by noting the period to which they relate.

Figures should be updated in subsequent drafts as more current data becomes available. This is to ensure that the final Performance Agreement reflects as accurately as possible the current picture at time of publishing (Q2, 2024) as this will provide the context for the commencement of implementation of the agreement in September 2024.

Can appendices be included as part of the Performance Agreement, for example, to highlight alignment of performance objectives and targets in the Performance Agreement with the institution’s strategic implementation plan?

Yes, where institutional strategies, policies, or other institutional documents are referenced in the performance agreement, these should be hyperlinked where possible, or attached as appendices, where appropriate.

When outlining staff or students figures in Section 1.1., is it acceptable to include graphs or charts?

High level information on student enrolment figures by programme type (i.e., UG or PG) and staff figures by category of post (i.e., Academic, or Professional, Management and Support) should be provided in Section 1.1. The institution may provide further breakdown of figures as it considers relevant to the performance agreement. The inclusion of a table or graph to present numerical data is acceptable, with the understanding that any text within these would contribute to overall word count. Supporting contextual information on figures or trends may be provided within the narrative.

Our institution's Governing Body will not meet again until after the first draft has been submitted. How should we address this in our Performance Agreement?

The development of institutions' Performance Agreements under the System Performance Framework 2023-28 will be an iterative process over year one of the framework and it is understood that depending on the scheduling of meetings, the first draft may not have been formally approved by a Governing Body when submitted. In the Context section of the draft Performance Agreement, HEIs should capture the involvement of the Governing Body and any management and/or committee structures, or student representative bodies in the development process to date and should set out their planned and/or ongoing processes for authorising the Performance Agreement.

2. Performance Objectives

How many Performance Objectives are HEIs required to set out in their Performance Agreement; is the requirement for 4 Performance Objectives only?

HEIs are required to identify a minimum of one Performance Objective under each pillar of the framework (Teaching and Learning; Research and Innovation; Access and Participation; Engagement). Further Performance Objectives may be set out by an institution but this is optional.

Can the KPIs under each pillar in the System Performance Dashboard be used as the indicators to support the Performance Objective under that pillar?

Indicators and targets under a Performance Objective should be specific to the Performance Objective. They should set out the intended outcomes of the pursuit and/or achievement of the objective to support evaluation of the effectiveness of strategy and implementation. An institution may identify that a KPI used in the dashboard under Teaching and Learning, for example, would be a suitable indicator to support the Teaching and Learning Performance Objective set by the institution. It is not expected that this would be true in all cases.

For some supporting indicators, we are currently in the process of gathering the baseline data through a survey and other data gathering mechanisms and it will not be available in time for the submission of the first draft. How should we address this in our Performance Agreement?

Data gaps, such as the unavailability of baseline data, should be identified clearly in the Performance Agreement and explained. Information on how the data gap is being addressed should also be provided. Where it is anticipated that a data gap will be addressed in a subsequent draft, this information can be noted as a comment on the relevant indicator in the indicator and target table (Section 2.4).

Where baseline data is available but will not be the most current data available by time of publishing in Q2, 2024, this should be noted in a comment on the indicator, and the baseline figure should be updated in subsequent drafts.

Where a gap in data cannot be addressed before the Performance Agreement is published, this should be identified and explained under the 'Implementation, monitoring, assessment and reporting' section (Section 2.3) for that Performance Objective, and information on how the data gap is being addressed should be provided.

For one Performance Objective, there is an indicator for which our HEI would like to focus on maintaining the current level of performance. For this indicator, can we set the same annual target for each of the four years?

Where maintenance of performance indicator under a Performance Objective is aligned to institutional strategy, it may be appropriate to set as a target the maintenance of current performance. However, as with all indicators, the annual target should be expressed as both number and proportion, and should be benchmarked appropriately.

3. Framework Matrix

Can one transversal area of impact be referenced in relation to two different pillars, and if so, should this be a single Performance Objective spanning two pillars, or two separate Performance Objectives?

HEIs may reference the same transversal area of impact under two or more pillars. This should be done by setting out a distinct Performance Objective under each pillar, each referencing the same transversal.