Graduate Outcomes Survey Audit Process

# Introduction

The annual graduate outcomes survey is in place for the survey of graduates of 2024, taking place in Q2 2025. 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 the audit process for data submission will take place. This content is liable to change each year and will take account of feedback from the exercise.

# Data Return Timeline

The data return file is to be uploaded to the HEA **strictly** by **the first Friday of September** each year. This is as set out in the Data Sharing Agreement between the HEA and your HEI.

HEIs should ensure that a closing date for the survey is selected so that the quality assurance processes that are carried out on the data internally are completed well in advance of the submission deadline.

* The compilation of a dataset for return to the HEA might require input, scrutiny and / or sign-off from careers offices, IT / MIS offices, registrars, etc. within the HEI.
* Those responsible for managing the survey should ensure that relevant staff are available (e.g., not on leave) from these areas at key points of the process.
* Data must be submitted on or before **the first Friday of September**. Failure to upload data by this point will be considered a late return.
* The upload facility will be open well in advance of this deadline and submissions can be made during the summer months.

# Audit Process

A further fortnight is given for the HEA auditing and sign-off process, and data returns must be finalised by **the third Friday of September**. During this process, HEIs will be provided with audit files for scrutiny and sign-off. In some cases, a reload of data might be required.

The HEA will provide you with audit files upon submission for the following reasons:

* To ensure the data you intended to submit to the HEA is what has been received.
* To ensure the data you have submitted to the HEA is correctly coded and is in line with expectations (based on your knowledge of your institution and graduates, and the previous year’s data return).
* To provide you with some useful summaries of the data, as submitted.
* To highlight or query any unusual or unexpected data found in the return.
* For sign-off by Careers Officer and Registrar/VP Academic.

Your responsibilities before and during the upload process is to ensure:

* Data and coding should be as accurate as possible before submission to the HEA and the upload facility should not be used as a means of returning incomplete data with multiple reloads required.
* Reloads must require input, scrutiny and/or sign-off from careers offices, IT/MIS offices, registrars, etc. within the HEI. Sign-off will require signature from careers offices and registrars.
	+ **This sign off is not to just ensure coding accuracy, but also so careers and academic management are satisfied that the data is consistent with year-on-year trends and form an accurate picture of your HEI’s graduates.**
* Those responsible for managing the survey should ensure that relevant staff are available (e.g., not on leave) from these areas at key points of the process.
* The final sign-off of data must be completed on or before **the third Friday in September**. Failure to meet this deadline will be considered a late return.
* The upload facility will be open well in advance of this deadline and submissions can be made during the summer months. The HEA will facilitate sign-off of the data well in advance of these deadlines.

Consideration should be given well in advance of either deadline of the availability of key staff to successfully provide the HEA with accurate and timely data that can be signed off by the deadlines above.

Any HEI with a response rate of 30% or less will have their additional audit reviews carried out due to the difficulty in reporting on a reduced sample size, and implications for the representativeness of the data. It should be noted that nearly all HEIs currently exceed this 30% threshold, with the national average response rate is just over 50% with some HEIs with response rates of 80%.