

Report on Research and Data Analysis on Academic Teaching Qualifications

December 2016

Report to HEFCE by the Higher Education Statistics Agency and the Higher
Education Academy



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) asked the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) to undertake research to explore the current issues around academic teaching qualifications in the HESA Staff record and to offer recommendations to improve data quality and coverage in future collections.
- 1.2. The teaching qualifications data-collection cycle has been running for three years since the 2012/13 academic year. However, low levels of confidence in data robustness have prevented full publication of the data. In the first year of the data return in England, 51% of relevant staff were returned with 'unknown' teaching qualifications. In the subsequent two years, the percentage of staff returned with unknown qualifications has fallen to 37%, and most recently to 26%. Whilst the improvement in the return is welcome, HEFCE was keen to understand the reasons for the still significant number of staff returned in this category.
- 1.3 Accordingly, HESA (the sector data-collection agency) and the HEA (which accredits much of the training and continuing professional development in higher education (HE) and is responsible for overseeing the UK Professional Standards) were asked to investigate the potential reasons for this. In particular they were asked to explore trends and variability in the data, to identify and explore issues which might be affecting data quality and make recommendations for improvements in data collection and in the provision of information about the teaching qualifications return.
- 1.4 The research is particularly timely and important in view of the Government's intention to introduce the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 'as a way of Better informing students' choices about what and where to study, b. Raising esteem for teaching, c. Recognising and rewarding excellent teaching and d. Better meeting the needs of employers, business, industry and the professions'.¹

2. METHODOLOGY

The subsequent research included:

- an exploratory analysis of the three years of data returns, and in particular the return for 2014/15, undertaken by HESA;
- a comparison of the latter dataset with the records held by the HEA of staff with fellowships deriving from successful completion of accredited teaching qualifications and from direct application;
- interviews carried out by the HEA with a sample of HE providers exploring issues arising from the data analysis.

¹ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2016) *Teaching Excellence Framework: Year Two Specification*

3. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of the research were as follows:

- 3.1 The quality of the data on academic teaching qualifications has improved in each of the last three years in which such data have been collected. This reflects the efforts made by HE providers to collect this information from their staff and to reduce the percentage of staff with unknown qualifications in their data return. However, it is clear from this research that the return is still not a high priority for some HE providers and academic staff.
- 3.2 There are a number of potential reasons for the poor quality of the data returns by some HE providers. These include:

Data-collection systems

Some HE providers' systems for collecting, updating and storing personal information may require improvement. It was clear that some HE providers have recently put in place or were putting in place new electronic systems to capture information about teaching qualifications. Others had yet to do this. This would appear to explain the improving robustness of the return, but also the residual issues with it.

Issues of definition

It is clear that some HE providers were unsure about and/or disagreed about what constitutes an academic teaching qualification. For example, there seems to be a disagreement about whether Postgraduate Certificates in Education (PGCE) (Primary or Secondary) should be considered a relevant HE teaching qualification.

Coding

Whilst some interviewees reported that they had no difficulties with HESA coding, others noted that the guidance was open to different interpretations and practice. For example, some HE providers returned staff with City and Guilds qualifications which did not lead to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). There was also different practice in relation to the return of 'atypical' staff (temporary or sessional staff).

Motivation

The reduction in the percentage of returns with teaching qualifications 'unknown' clearly indicates that the data collection is receiving a higher priority, particularly at senior management level, each year. However, the interviews with staff with a level of responsibility for the return indicated that there was an unwillingness or inability on the part of some academic staff to update their records. This was variously attributed to a lack of clarity about the purpose of the collection or a perception that it was bureaucratic inconvenience.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

This research has led to the following recommendations of ways in which the quality of data submitted and of information about collection might be improved:

Coding and guidance

- that HESA and HEFCE work with relevant sector bodies and HE providers to improve the guidance in the coding framework by creating a comprehensive list of what can and cannot be deemed an academic teaching qualification.

Credibility reporting

- that HESA make changes to credibility reporting, for example ensuring the population used in credibility reporting matches the population of those required to return teaching qualifications data;
- that the HEA continue regular cleansing exercises of its own data;
- that the HEA raise the profile of the email helpdesk (partnerships@heacademy.ac.uk) through which HE providers can check data on individuals accredited by the HEA that are currently recorded as employed at each HE provider;
- that HEFCE, HESA and the HEA work together to conduct comparisons between fellowship data and HESA returns at regular intervals.

Clarification of the purpose of the collection

- that HEFCE clarify the purpose of the collection of data on teaching qualifications and how they will be used (for example, as part of the Government's drive to improve the quality and status of teaching in UK HE);
- that HE providers explain to their staff the purpose of the data collection and its potential institutional benefits (for example, in delivering key performance indicators (KPIs) in targeting the provision of staff development opportunities).

Incentivising more complete returns

- that HEFCE consider ways to incentivise HE providers to reduce the percentage of staff returned with unknown teaching qualifications, for example through publication of the institutional data.

Further consultation

- that HEFCE continue the dialogue with HE providers, for example through workshops to explore:
 - how the quality of the data can be improved,
 - how it can be used in meaningful ways.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

In July 2015 the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) issued a statement providing an overview at sector level of the teaching qualifications held by academic staff in higher education (HE) providers in 2013/14. This outlined the approach being taken by HEFCE to promote the use of this data, but also included encouragement to HE providers to engage with their data and enter into a dialogue with HEFCE about the issues arising from it.

'In particular, we would like to explore how we can continue to support the sector in improving this data, and how it can be used in meaningful ways.'²

The data had been collected for staff at HE providers on a 'teaching' or 'teaching and research' contract as part of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) staff record for the first time covering the academic year 2012/13.³ The statement went on to note that: 'in the first year of collection, over 50% of relevant staff were returned as 'not known'; 113 HEIs have since made improvements in their reporting of teaching qualifications for 2013/14, resulting in a reduction of 'not known' qualifications to 40.8%, and for 2014/15 a further reduction to around 30% of 'not known'. HEFCE and HESA have committed to continuing to work with the sector to improve the quality and utility of the data'.

Teaching qualification data records whether or not individuals hold an HE teaching qualification, another relevant teaching qualification, or have been recognised in other ways for their teaching expertise. Much of this provision is accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), which is responsible for overseeing the UK Professional Standards Framework and provides scope for staff to continue their professional development beyond initial qualification by progressing to higher levels of recognition.⁴

The research is particularly timely and important in view of the Government's intention to introduce the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), 'as a way of Better informing students' choices about what and where to study, b. Raising esteem for teaching, c. Recognising and rewarding excellent teaching and d. Better meeting the needs of employers, business, industry and the professions'.⁵

1.2 RESEARCH BRIEF

HEFCE asked HESA and the HEA to undertake research to explore the current issues around academic teaching qualifications in the HESA Staff record and to offer recommendations to improve data quality and coverage in future collections.

² www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Learning,and,teaching/Wider,information/Academic_teaching_qualifications_statement_July_15.pdf

³ Information on the types of qualifications held by staff at further education colleges is submitted to the Skills Funding Agency.

⁴ The Staff and Educational Development Association and City and Guilds also offer similar professional development opportunities.

⁵ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2016) *Teaching Excellence Framework: Year Two Specification*

The brief from HEFCE summarised the background to the project:

‘The teaching qualifications data collection cycle has been running for three years, the final year of data being from the 2014/15 academic year. Previously, low levels of confidence in data robustness have prevented full publication of analysis. Following receipt of the latest year of data collection, HEFCE have identified an imperative to consider trends across three years; identify areas for further exploration; and consider both publication options and policy implications.’⁶

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The objectives of the project were to:

- provide an analysis of data quality from 2012/13 to 2014/15;
- explore trends and variability at sector, institutional, and subject level;
- identify and explore issues which may affect data quality including:
 - characteristics of returning HE providers
 - characteristics of complete/incomplete returns
 - context of the data return exercise (drivers; limitations)
 - coding frame
 - institutional motivations, processes and aspirations
 - differences and inconsistencies between HEA/HE providers/HESA data;
- highlight policy implications and provide recommendations for improvements of data, and for the provision of information on teaching qualifications more generally.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in several parts:

- an exploratory analysis of the three years of data returns, and in particular the return for 2014/15, undertaken by HESA;
- a comparison of the latter’s dataset with the records held by the HEA of staff with fellowships deriving from successful completion of accredited teaching qualifications and from direct application;
- interviews carried out by the HEA with a sample of HE providers exploring issues arising from the data analysis.

The report focuses on:

- current data quality, findings and trends,
- issues affecting data quality,
- recommendations on improving data quality and information about teaching qualifications.

⁶ HEFCE *Research and data analysis of teaching qualifications: Research brief*

2. CURRENT DATA QUALITY, FINDINGS AND TRENDS

The HESA Staff record is collected in respect of those staff, employed in the UK, who possess one or more contracts of employment with the HE provider and/or for whom the HE provider is liable to pay Class 1 National Insurance contributions. It has been collected since 1994/95.

The Staff record collects individualised data on the personal characteristics of staff, the details of their contracts, and the activities undertaken as a result of those contracts.

All HESA records are collected on the basis of the HESA reporting period, from 01 August, Year 1 to 31 July, Year 2. Data for the Staff record is collected retrospectively, thereby reporting in August of one year on activity which has taken place between August of the previous year and July of the current year.

The HESA data collection system opens at the beginning of August every year and the return date is always 30 September. HE providers are required to have sent full and verified data to HESA by the deadline for last submission.

HESA has collected teaching qualifications data within the HESA Staff record since 2012/13. In August 2015, HEFCE published sector level averages on the types of academic teaching qualifications held by academic staff in HE providers in England, 2013/14.⁷

This section analyses the three years of data that has been returned; the focus of this analysis is for 2014/15 with the rationale that the data quality has improved over time.

The analysis considers both the percentage of staff with 'unknown' teaching qualifications and the percentage of staff with 'No academic teaching qualification held'.⁸ Academic teaching qualification information is not required to be returned for all staff within the record and so analysis is restricted to these staff members as appropriate.⁹ It is only mandatory for:

- staff with 'teaching only' or 'teaching and research' academic contracts;
- the academic contracts that are 'open-ended/permanent' or 'fixed term';
- staff at HE providers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland¹⁰.

Though the main focus of the analysis is for HE providers in England, broad comparisons are made with staff at HE providers in Wales and Northern Ireland.

⁷ http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Learning.and.teaching/Wider.information/Academic_teaching_qualifications_statement_July_15.pdf

⁸ The percentage of staff with no academic teaching qualifications is calculated excluding staff with unknown teaching qualifications

⁹ Staff numbers are Full Person Equivalent (FPE).

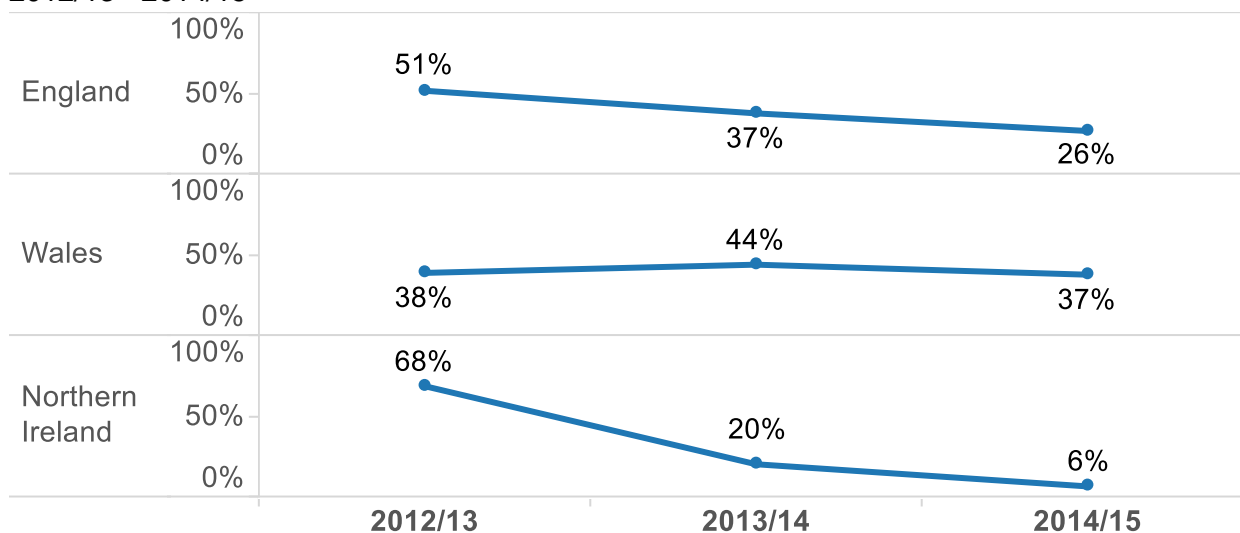
¹⁰ Returning academic teaching qualifications data is optional for HE providers in Scotland and therefore are excluded from the analysis

2.1 ACADEMIC TEACHING QUALIFICATIONS ANALYSIS 2012/13 - 2014/15

Figure 1 shows that the proportion of staff at HE providers in England with unknown academic teaching qualifications data has reduced from around a half in 2012/13 to about a quarter in 2014/15. The equivalent percentage in Wales has remained broadly consistent over the time period. In contrast, Northern Ireland had the highest percentage of unknowns in 2012/13 but this has reduced considerably over the three years to only 6% in 2014/15.¹¹

This shows that some HE providers have made progress, particularly in England and Northern Ireland, in collecting this information from their staff and reduce the percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications in their data return.

Figure 1 - Percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications by country of HE provider 2012/13 - 2014/15



¹¹ In 2014/15, there were 132 HE providers in England, eight in Wales and four in Northern Ireland.

Figure 2 shows that the percentage of staff with no academic teaching qualifications has remained consistent over the three-year period at HE providers in England, despite the percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications falling by a quarter. This shows that the unknowns are not biased towards either those with or without academic teaching qualifications and suggests there are equal challenges collecting this data for both cohorts.

Figure 2 - Percentage of staff with no teaching qualifications by country of HE provider 2012/13 - 2014/15

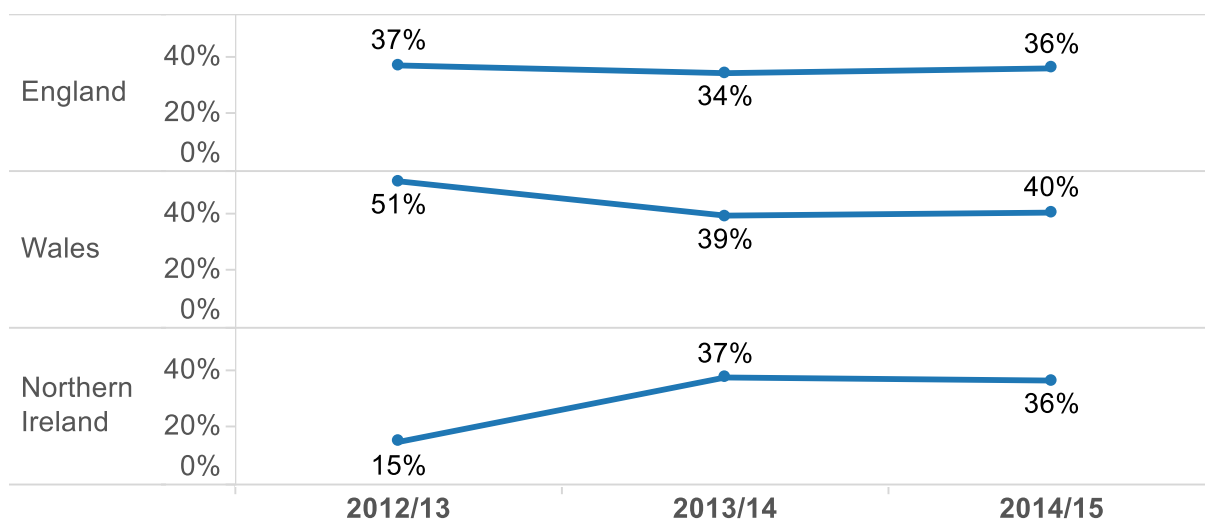
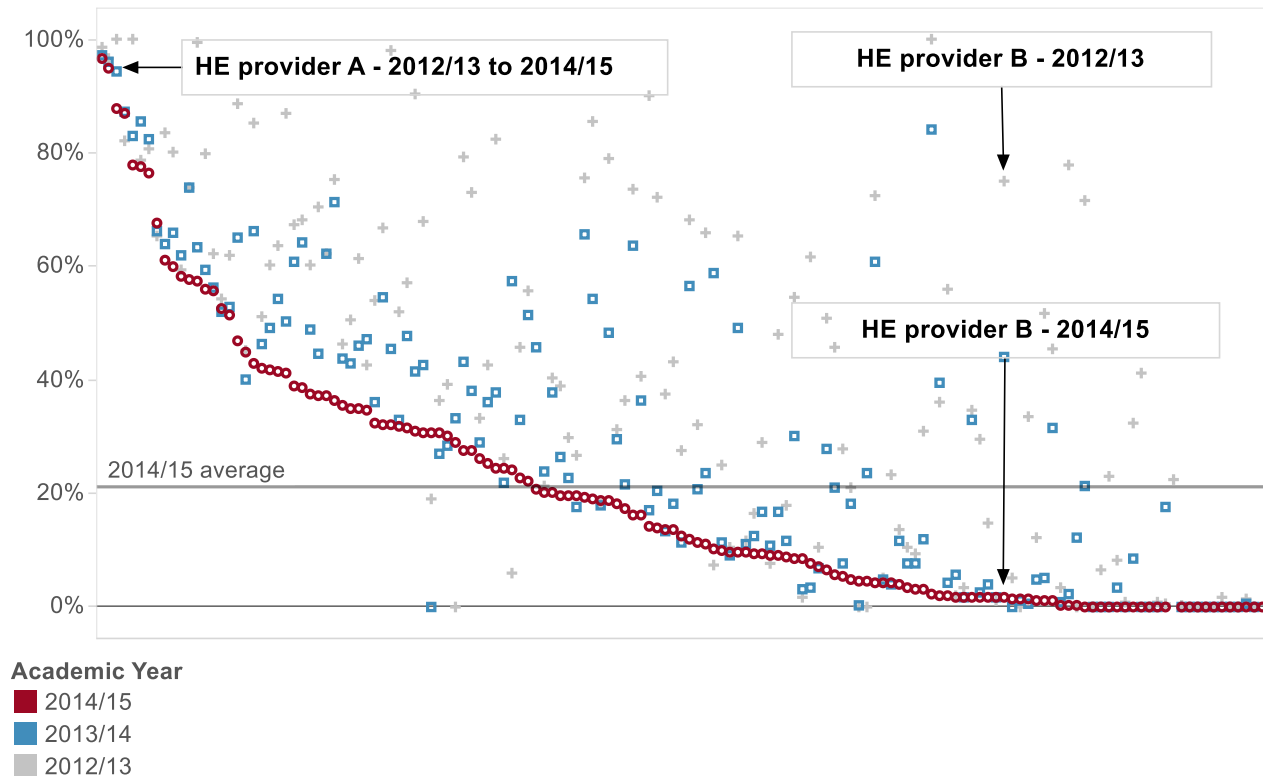


Figure 3 shows the percentage of staff with unknown academic teaching qualifications by HE provider and academic year¹². It can be seen that a large number of HE providers had a high percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications in 2012/13 but by 2014/15 this percentage had reduced substantially.

Figure 3 - Percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications at HE providers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland by HE provider 2012/13 - 2014/15¹³



HE provider A has only improved two percentage points since 2012/13 and still has 95% of staff with unknown teaching qualifications in 2014/15. In contrast, HE provider B had 75% with unknown teaching qualifications in 2012/13, but this had improved by 73 percentage points to only 2% in 2014/15.

¹² Each HE provider is plotted along the horizontal axis and has three data points, one for each year.

¹³ 2014/15 average is the average percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications at HE providers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

2.2 DETAILED ACADEMIC TEACHING QUALIFICATIONS ANALYSIS 2014/15

As in the previous section, the analysis in this section focuses on the percentage of staff with unknown academic teaching qualifications and the percentage with no teaching qualifications at HE providers in England in 2014/15. The analysis incorporates other information that is collected within the HESA Staff record, such as academic employment function, mode of employment and terms of employment, to investigate if any trends emerge. The analysis is split into four main sections themed around: contracts; length of service and age; personal characteristics; and cost centre and current academic discipline.

2.2.1 CONTRACTS

Figure 4 shows how the percentage of staff with unknown academic teaching qualifications and no teaching qualification differs by academic employment function. It is interesting to note that teaching-only staff have both the highest percentage of unknowns and no academic teaching qualifications.

Figure 4 - Percentage of staff at HE providers in England with unknown and no teaching qualifications by academic employment function 2014/15

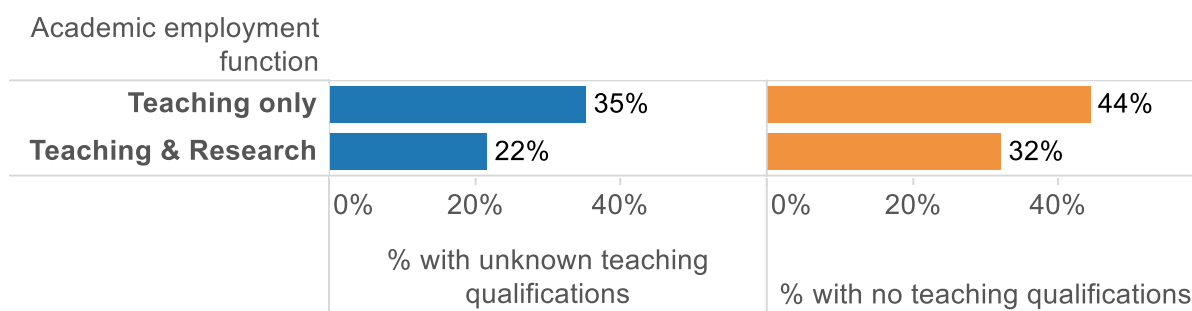


Figure 5 shows that part-time staff have a higher proportion of unknown or no academic teaching qualifications than full-time staff.

Figure 5 - Percentage of staff at HE providers in England with unknown and no teaching qualifications by mode of employment 2014/15

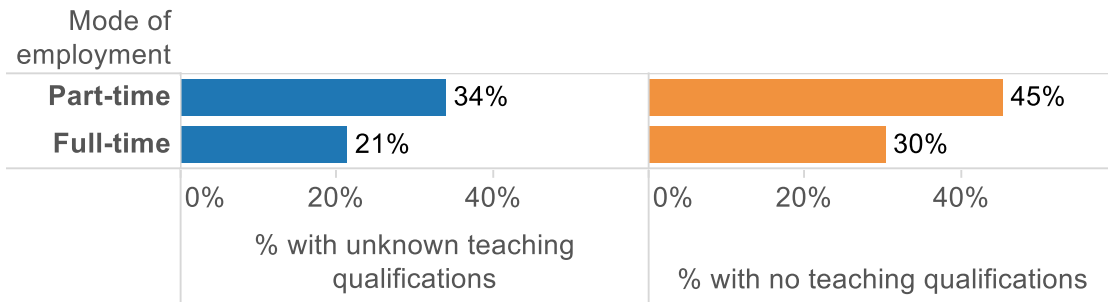


Figure 6 analyses both academic employment function and mode of employment; it shows that part-time teaching-only staff have a higher percentage of unknown teaching qualifications than other types of staff. The percentage is almost double that of full-time teaching and research staff (38% vs 21%). The percentage of staff with no academic teaching qualifications is also highest for part-time teaching-only staff.

Figure 6 - Percentage of staff at HE providers in England with unknown and no teaching qualifications by academic employment function and mode of employment 2014/15

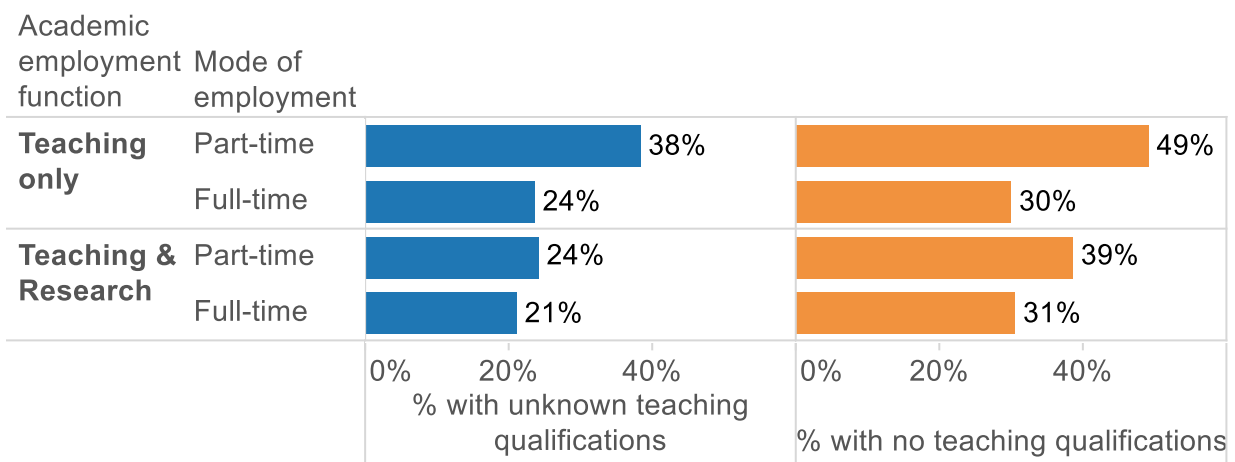
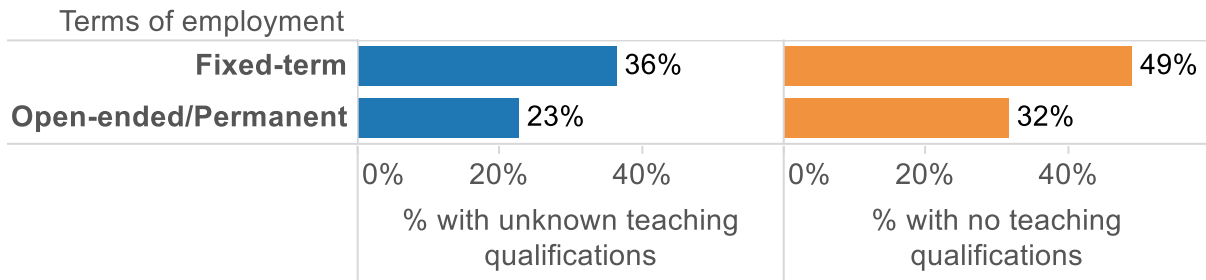


Figure 7 shows that fixed-term staff have both the higher percentage of unknown teaching qualifications and no academic teaching qualifications than open-ended/permanent staff.

Figure 7 - Percentage of staff at HE providers in England with unknown and no teaching qualifications by terms of employment 2014/15



By considering teaching qualification information by academic employment function, mode of employment or terms of employment, the cohort of staff with the highest percentage of unknown teaching qualifications is also the cohort with the highest percentage with no teaching qualification.

2.2.2 LENGTH OF SERVICE AND AGE

The percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications is about the same for staff who have been employed at the HE provider for less than a year as it is for staff who have been employed there for 26 years or more.

Figure 8 shows the percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications decreased from 33% at less than one year's service to 23% at five years' service. A small increase is observed in the percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications as length of service increases.

The percentage of staff with no teaching qualifications shows a similar pattern.

Figure 8 shows the percentage gradually decreases for less than one year of service to six-15 years of service. This is perhaps explained by new staff undertaking training to gain an academic teaching qualification during their first few years at an HE provider.

Figure 8 - Percentage of staff at HE providers in England with unknown and no teaching qualifications by length of service 2014/15

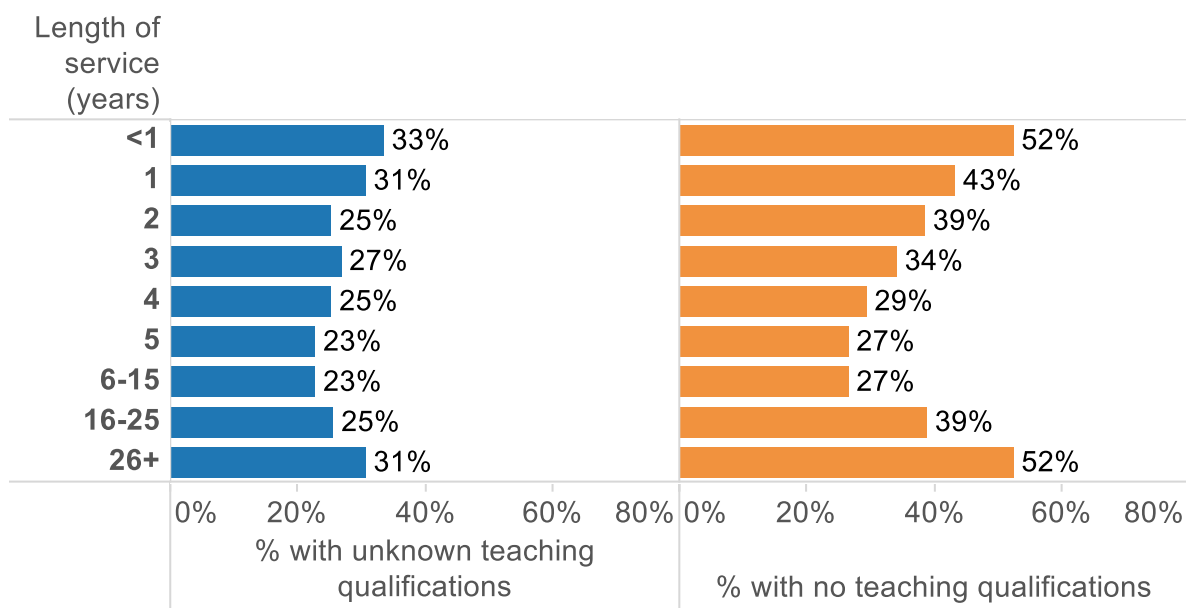
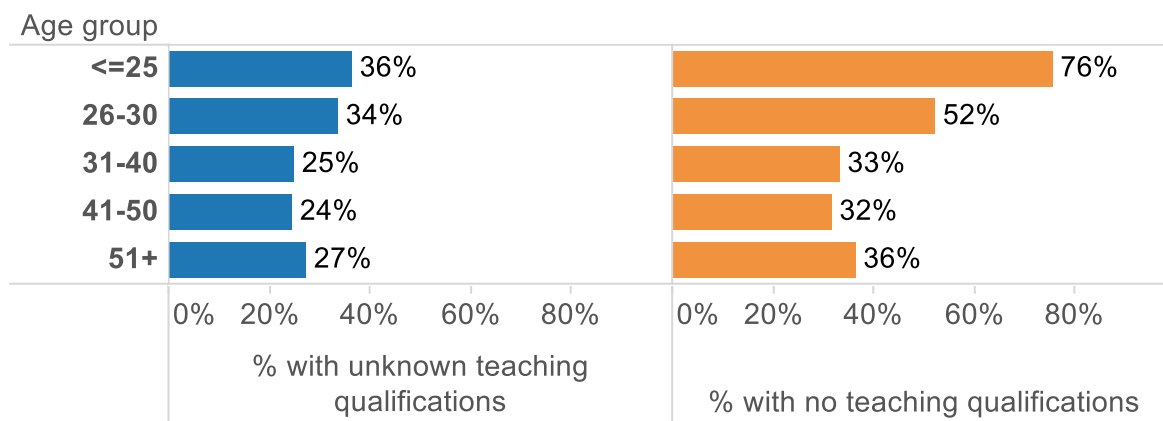


Figure 9 shows the percentage of staff with unknown and no teaching qualification by age group; staff aged 30 and under have both the highest proportion of unknown teaching qualifications and a considerably higher percentage with no academic teaching qualifications. Over three quarters of staff aged 25 and under have no academic teaching qualifications, which is more than twice the percentage of those aged 31 and over. This trend is perhaps to be expected with many staff achieving an academic teaching qualification during their career at an HE provider.

Figure 9 - Percentage of staff at HE providers in England with unknown and no teaching qualifications by age group 2014/15



2.2.3 PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

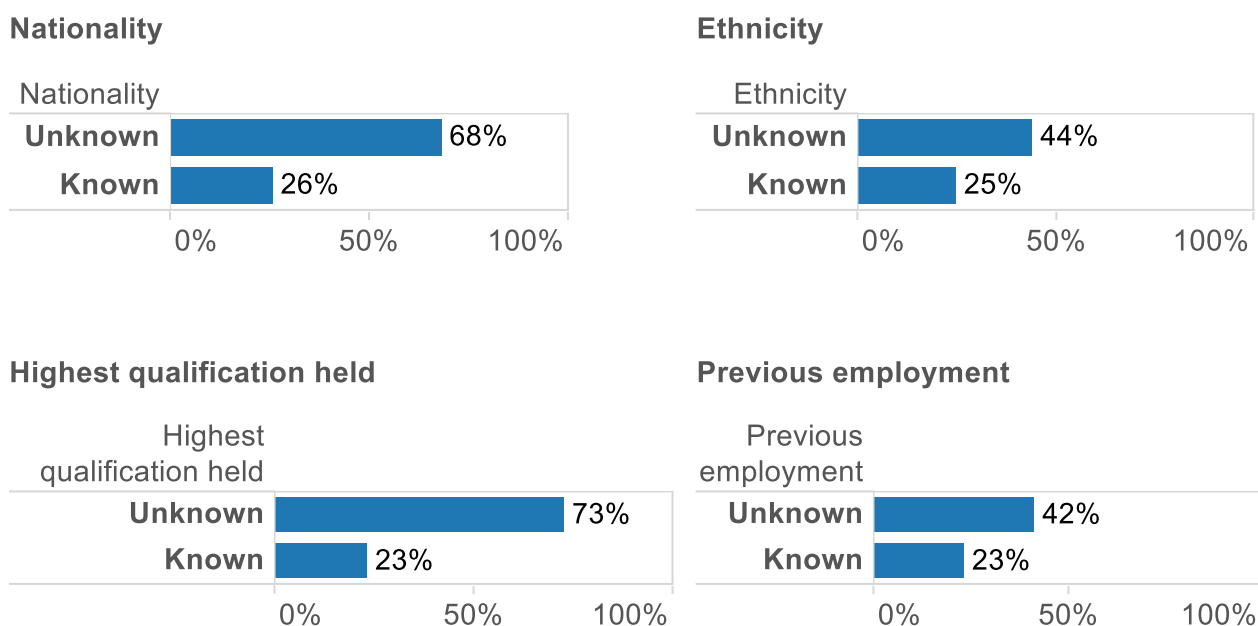
The HESA Staff record collects information about the personal characteristics of staff members as well as their roles within the HE provider. This information includes, but is not limited to, characteristics such as nationality, ethnicity and sex.

An interesting trend is observed when the percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications is compared with the 'unknown' categories from other personal attributes from the staff record.

Figure 10 shows that there is a higher percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications when the member of staff's nationality, ethnicity, highest qualification held or previous employment is also unknown.¹⁴ This suggests that there is a wider set of personal information that HE providers have difficulty collecting, and is not just limited to collecting teaching qualifications data.

¹⁴ At HE providers in England 2014/15 overall, 2% of staff have an unknown nationality, 7% have an unknown ethnicity, 6% have an unknown highest qualification held and 18% have an unknown previous employment.

Figure 10 - Percentage of staff at HE providers in England with unknown teaching qualifications by nationality, ethnicity, highest qualification held and previous employment markers 2014/15



2.2.4 COST CENTRE AND CURRENT ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

HE providers return data to HESA, specifying which cost centres¹⁵ their staff work in. Figure 11 shows that the percentage of staff with unknown and no teaching qualifications widely varies across cost centres, even between related fields which have similar professional pathways. Please note that although the population is restricted to staff with teaching only or teaching and research academic contracts, some of these staff may be assigned to non-academic cost centres.

(103) Nursing & Allied Health Professionals has very low percentages of both staff with unknown and no teaching qualifications (both 13%). (135) Education also has low percentages of both staff with unknown and no teaching qualifications (both 18% and 12% respectively).

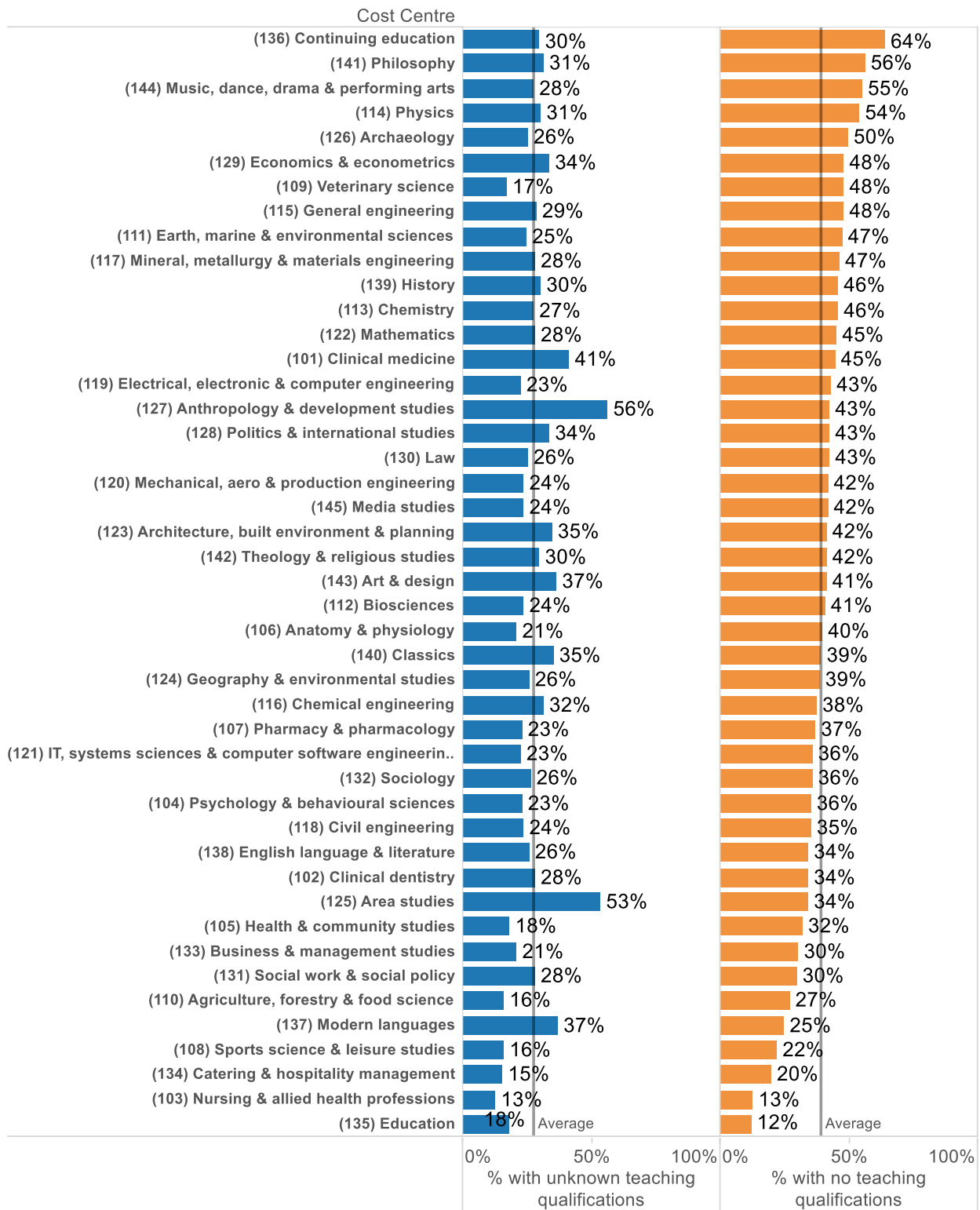
(136) Continuing Education and (141) Philosophy have the highest percentage of staff with 'no teaching qualification', 64% and 56% of staff respectively.

(101) Clinical Medicine has the third highest percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications (41%) and is in the top half of cost centres for percentage of staff with no teaching qualifications (45%).

It should be noted that some disciplines may have their own professional pathways and requirements for those involved in teaching, which may or may not be collected through the HESA Staff return.

¹⁵ There are a total of 49 cost centres. Each member of staff can belong to more than one cost centre.

Figure 11 - Percentage of staff at HE providers in England with unknown and no teaching qualifications by cost centre 2014/15¹⁶



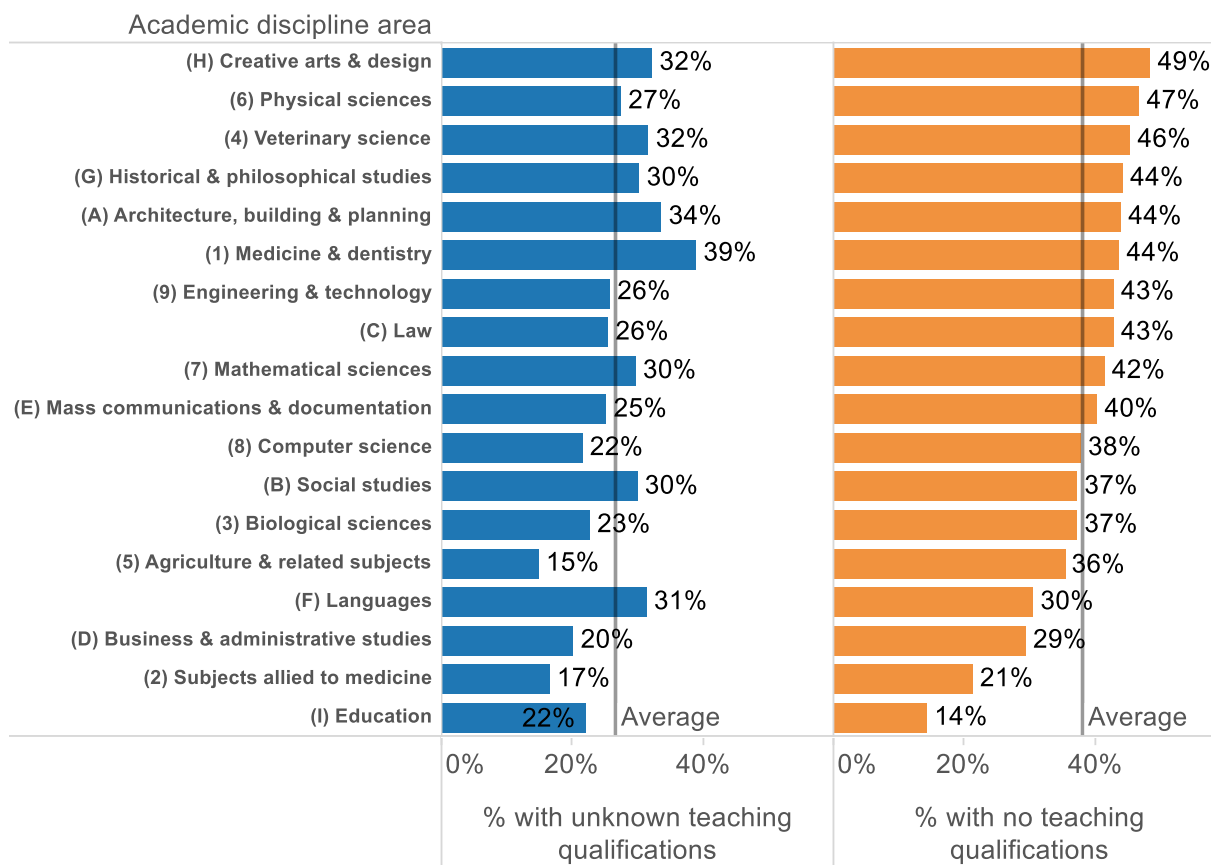
¹⁶ The average line is the average percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications and no teaching qualifications in England by cost centre.

Figure 12 shows how the percentage of staff with unknown and no teaching qualifications differs across academic discipline areas.¹⁷

(H) Creative Arts & Design and (6) Physical Sciences have the highest percentage of staff with no teaching qualifications (49% and 47% respectively). This is in contrast to (2) Subjects Allied to Medicine and (I) Education, having the lowest percentage of staff with no teaching qualifications (21% and 14% respectively).

As would be expected, there appears to be some overlap between academic discipline areas and cost centres. Both (1) Medicine and Dentistry and (101) Clinical Medicine have high percentages of staff with unknown and no teaching qualifications, whilst (103) Nursing & Allied Health Professionals and (2) Subjects Allied to Medicine show the opposite.

Figure 12 - Percentage of staff at HE providers in England with unknown and no teaching qualifications by academic discipline area 2014/15¹⁸



¹⁷ The HESA Staff record collects the academic discipline(s) currently being taught and/or researched by the member of staff. Each member of staff can have up to three academic disciplines. For simplicity the first academic discipline field has been used for this analysis. Academic disciplines are based on the JACS 3.0 coding. Cost Centres 201 to 206 have been excluded from this chart.

¹⁸ The average line is the average percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications and no teaching qualifications in England by academic discipline.

3. ISSUES AFFECTING DATA QUALITY

3.1 COMPARISON OF HEA AND HESA TEACHING QUALIFICATIONS DATA

3.1.1 INTRODUCTION

The data returned to HESA was compared with the HEA's fellowship records in order to identify discrepancies between the two data sets and thereby identify potential explanations of the significant percentage of staff being returned with qualifications unknown. This would in turn inform the interviews with representatives of the sector.

The HEA holds records of all staff who are awarded its fellowship. There are four levels of fellowship (Associate Fellow, Fellow, Senior Fellow, and Principal Fellow). There are two routes to fellowship: via direct application or by the successful completion of an institutional programme of study accredited by the HEA.¹⁹ It should be noted that the HESA and HEA records are not identical. HEA accreditation also encompasses non-academic staff, who support the teaching and learning experience; these staff will not be included in the HESA return. The numbers in this category are relatively small, but expanding. The results of the comparison are therefore necessarily suggestive rather than definitive.

For the current research, the HEA undertook an analysis of HESA and HEA data for 2014/15 held on teaching qualifications by HE providers as of December 2014. The comparison was done on a whole population basis – rather than by matching individual records.

The HEA data cannot be assumed to be correct, and it is possible that in some cases the HEA record may over-report, for example if staff have left HE and not notified the HEA.

3.1.2 ANALYSIS

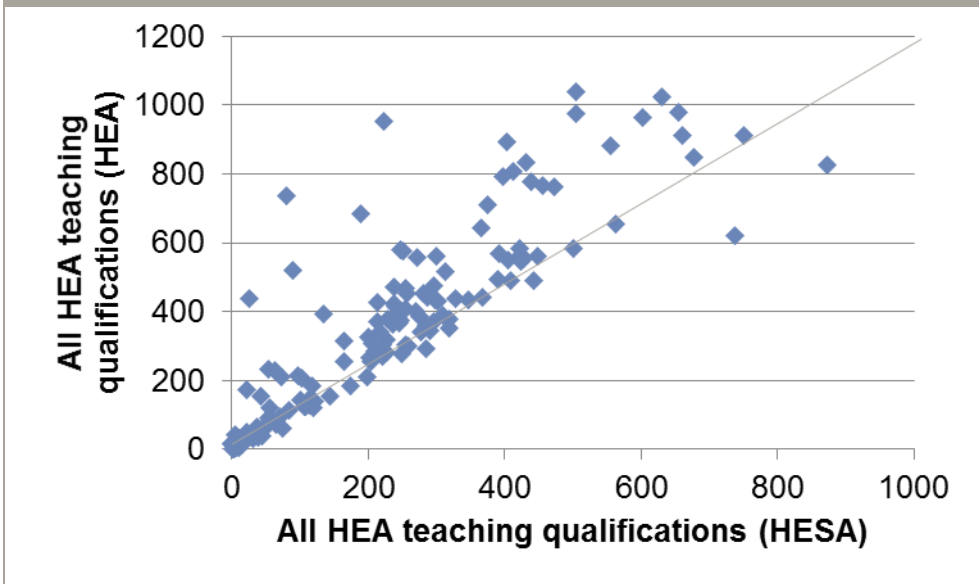
Given the timing of data collection, it would be expected that more teaching qualifications would be reported in the HESA data than the HEA data.²⁰ As Figure 13 shows, the majority of HE providers recorded more HEA teaching qualifications on the HEA records than on the HESA return. The HESA return appears to show a lower number of staff with HEA teaching qualifications by an average (median, n=140) of 92 staff per HE provider, with data from 79% of HE providers showing significant differences.²¹ To explore if this was due to a time-lag in reporting, the 2014/15 HESA return was compared to HEA data for the academic year 2012/13. In this case 34% of HE providers were still significantly different, suggesting that this difference in the datasets is not simply a function of time.

¹⁹ The process by which the HEA collects and seeks to maintain the accuracy of its data is outlined in Appendix C.

²⁰ The HESA data was submitted by institutions in September/October 2015, whilst the HEA data is to July 2015.

²¹ Chi-square tests between the HESA Teaching Qualifications and HEA record of HEA Teaching Qualifications, n=140, p<0.05. Chi-squared analysis only includes under-reporting institutions.

Figure 13 HEA Teaching qualifications, HEA vs HESA by HE provider

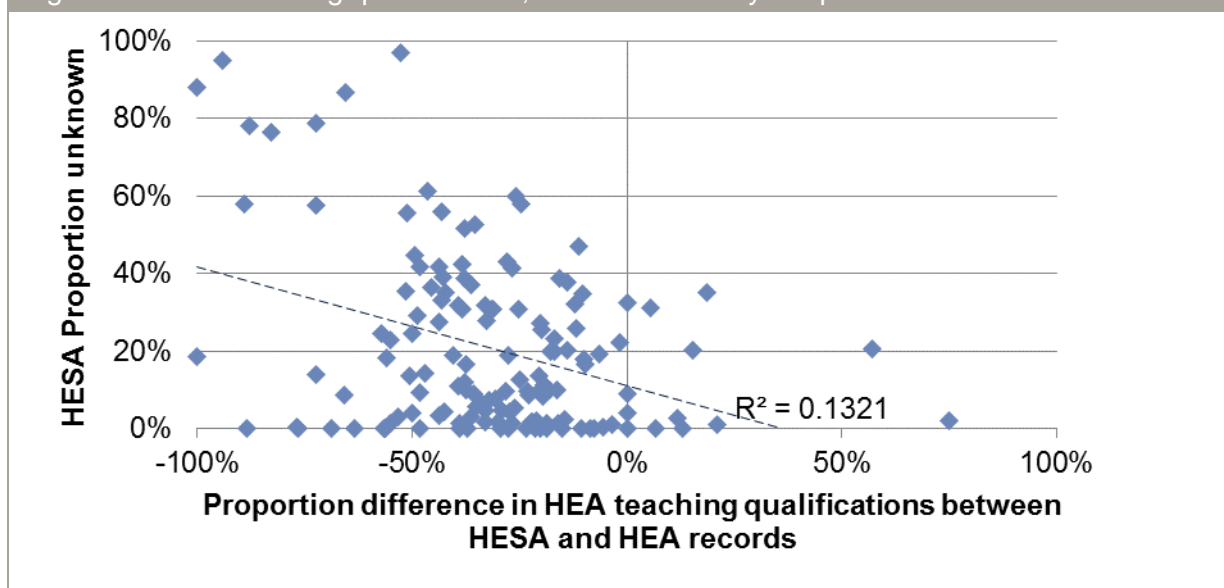


It would be expected that the greater uncertainty of return, the greater the difference between the number of fellows recorded by HESA and the number of fellows recorded by HEA.

As Figure 14 indicates, this was confirmed by the data. Those HE providers with a greater proportion of unknowns were more likely to under-report HEA teaching qualifications. There are a couple of points to note. First, whilst the relationship generally holds, there were a number of HE providers where a complete response was received; however, 58% of these still significantly under-reported HEA teaching qualifications in their HESA return. This will be explored further below.

Second, there were a number of HE providers where more teaching qualifications were recorded in the HESA return than recorded by the HEA. Typically these were relatively small HE providers (fewer than 200 academic staff) where the differences were quantitatively fairly small. One HE provider had a relatively large difference, with 116 more staff with HEA teaching qualifications recorded in the HESA return compared to the HEA records, suggesting a difference in how the sample of staff was defined for that HE provider.

Figure 14 HEA Teaching qualifications, HEA vs HESA by HE provider²²

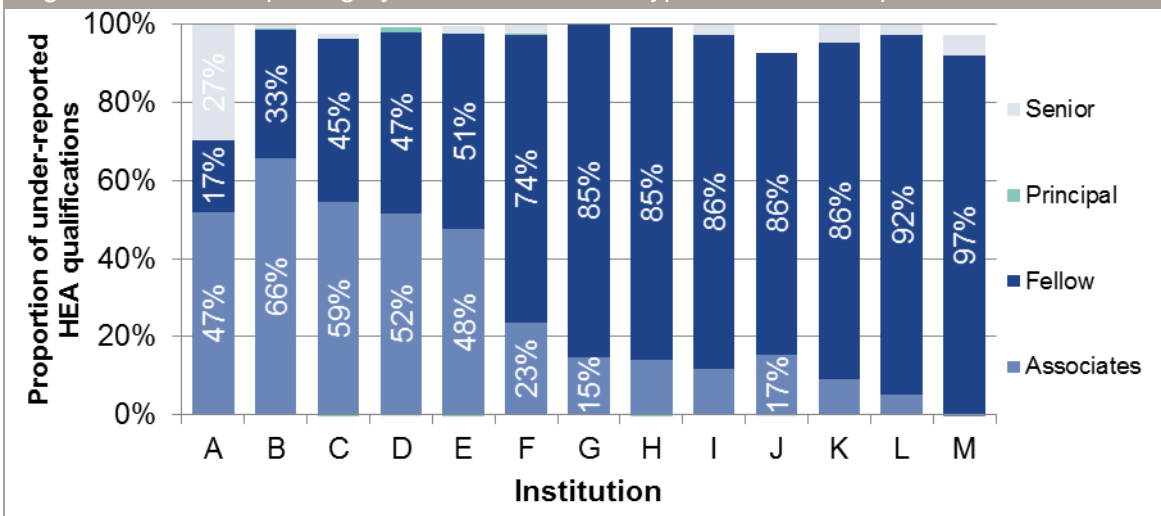


To examine reasons for under-reporting, it is useful to look at those HE providers that have complete (<1% unknown) responses. For these, there was an under-reporting in the HESA data of (median, n=25) 22 staff with teaching qualifications per HE provider. This indicates that there were dual impacts of under-reporting of teaching qualifications in general in the return, as well as under-reporting due to non-response (unknowns). Furthermore, the under-reporting appears not to be a function of time, though that may be one influence.

Figure 15 sets out the proportion of under-reporting by each fellowship type, for those HE providers within the complete response group that under-report most. Unsurprisingly, under-reporting is mainly for Fellows and Associate Fellows. Given that Associate Fellows are more likely to be non-academic staff, which would not be recorded in the HESA return, it might be expected that Associate Fellows would form a greater proportion of under-reporting. Analysing all HE providers, 62% significantly under-reported for Associate Fellows, with an average (median, n=99) under-reporting of 24 staff. For Fellows, 82% significantly under-reported, with an average (median, n=127) under-reporting of 72 staff. This finding does not support the hypothesis that under-reporting is due to staff being categorised as non-academic, though it does not rule it out as a factor. As Associate Fellows are a smaller population, there may be more errors as a proportion of the return for this population, which also makes detecting significant differences difficult.

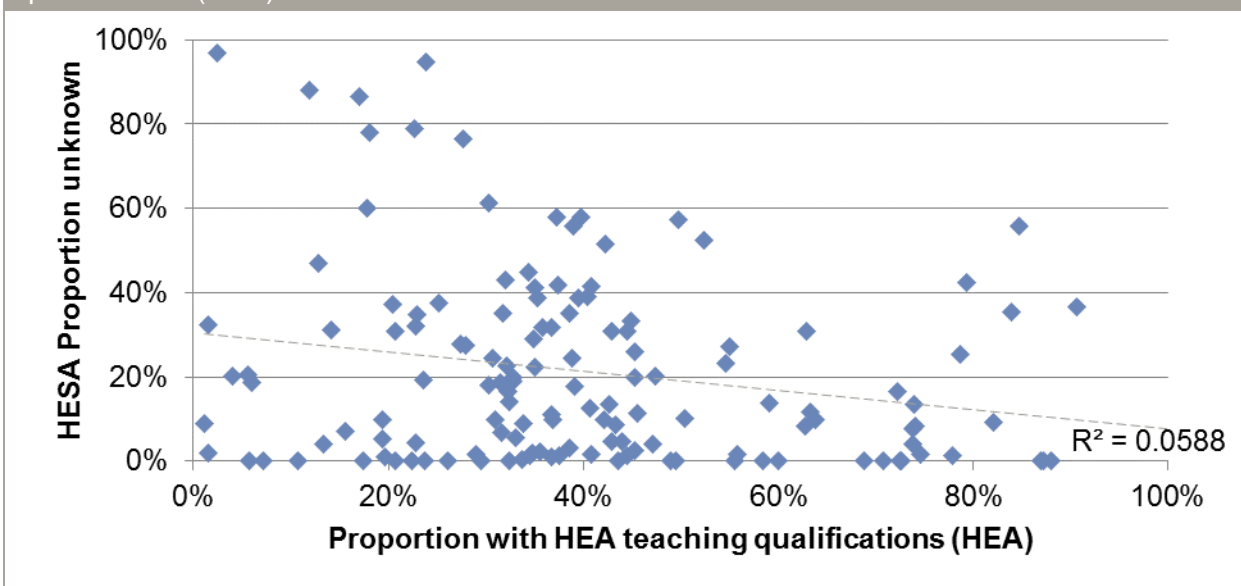
²² The proportion difference in Fellows missing is calculated as the difference between HESA and the HEA, divided by the number of Fellows recorded by the HEA.

Figure 15 Under-reporting by HEA Qualification type, selected HE providers²³



It might be expected that those HE providers that have the lowest proportion of staff gaining teaching qualifications would be most likely to fail to return data on teaching qualifications in the HESA return. Figure 16 indicates that this is indeed the case, though the relationship is fairly weak. HE providers failing to report may lack the ability to report on teaching qualifications, or staff may feel that a response is not applicable to them. It should be noted that there are many HE providers with very good HESA returns that have a low proportion of staff with HEA teaching qualifications, and similarly, some HE providers with poor HESA returns with a very high proportion of staff with HEA teaching qualifications.

Figure 16 HESA proportion unknown against proportion of academic staff with HEA teaching qualifications (HEA)



²³ The selected institutions in Figure 3 were those with over 100 staff achieving HEA teaching qualifications.

One potential cause of difference between the HESA return and HEA records of teaching qualifications is the presence of atypical staff, who are temporary or sessional. To test whether the presence of atypical staff could be a significant cause of the discrepancy, these staff were assumed to be present on the HEA return, but excluded from the HESA return. This might be the case if atypical staff achieved fellowship status whilst working at the HE provider, but were not included on HESA returns.

Analysis indicates that this would reduce the extent of difference between the HESA return and HEA records, with a median difference of 66 rather than 95. However, significant differences remain for three quarters of HE providers. Alternatively, it could be hypothesised that atypical staff may be included on a HESA return but not be recorded by the HEA, if they did not complete their teaching qualification at the HE provider. Whilst this might address one discrepancy, the data suggests that this is not a widespread effect.

One HE provider reported significantly more staff having teaching qualifications to HESA than the HEA records. Following further analysis, it seems that this resulted from the return of staff from university hospitals to HESA, which were not in the HEA records as they were NHS employees. A further possible reason for a small disparity between the two data sets is that some HE providers might return doctoral students who teach in the HESA return if they are on a formal contract of employment.

3.1.3 CONCLUSION

There is significant under-reporting across the majority of the sector in the number of staff with HEA teaching qualifications in the HESA return, as compared to the teaching qualifications as recorded by the HEA. This applies both to under-reporting of teaching qualifications where staff do respond, and under-reporting where the qualification status of the member of staff is not known. This does not appear to be a function of time. The under-reporting occurs across different HEA teaching qualifications, which indicates that the academic categorisation of staff is not a significant factor, though this cannot be ruled out. While there is not a strong association, HE providers with lower levels of HEA teaching qualifications are less likely to submit responses on teaching qualifications on the HESA return.

In conclusion, there is significant discrepancy between the HEA and HESA data on teaching qualifications across most of the sector, but this does not appear explicable in terms of one factor alone; a time-lag in reporting, the academic categorisation of staff, the reporting by HE providers with lower levels of HEA teaching qualifications, and the presence of atypical staff all seem, in differing degrees, to be part of the explanation.

This analysis is tested further in the interviews conducted under the auspices of the HEA (see Section 5).

4 MINERVA ANALYSIS 2014/15 AND INFORMATION FROM LIAISON TEAM

Once HE providers have successfully cleared errors from the in-built validation in the data collection system, further queries can be raised by HESA analysts in the online query database, Minerva, after the data has been manually checked.

These queries are in part raised to ensure that the profile and provision of the HE provider is correct; HE providers are asked to confirm that this data is accurate and provide a response and contextual explanation.

Where HESA has highlighted areas that mean the HE provider needs to amend the data, the HE provider then has the opportunity to correct the data which can then be re-checked by the HESA analyst.

All queries in Minerva must be responded to in a satisfactory manner before they can be set to 'credible'. Where queries cannot be fixed, they may be set as a target for future reporting years in Minerva.

HE providers were queried if they had either more than 10% of staff with unknown teaching qualifications data or more than 40% of staff with no teaching qualifications.

4.1 HIGH PERCENTAGE OF UNKNOWN TEACHING QUALIFICATIONS

The following analysis looks at the 25 HE providers with the highest percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications; this ranged from 39% to 97%.

The HE providers were queried about the high percentage of staff with unknown teaching qualifications in their data and then set targets for improvement in the following collection. These were the responses:

- Several HE providers had or were looking to implement new systems and processes to improve the capture of this information.
- A number of HE providers had new systems in place designed to capture this type of information so coverage should improve in subsequent years.
- Some HE providers specifically mentioned processes being in place to capture this information for all new starters.
- There was no explicit mention of this information being harder to capture for existing staff.
- Their Human Resources (HR) self-service system was not originally available to all staff so coverage should improve once all staff had access.
- Automatic reports were being generated to flag eligible staff who had an unknown teaching qualification and then the relevant departments were encouraged to ensure that this data was completed.
- Improvements were being made to the recruitment process so that the teaching qualification field was mandatory for new starters to complete.
- Improvements were being made to the stability of HR systems to make it easier to use and encourage more staff to manage their own data.

4.2 HIGH PERCENTAGE WITH NO ACADEMIC TEACHING QUALIFICATION HELD

This analysis looks at the 25 HE providers with the highest percentage of staff with no academic teaching qualifications; this ranged from 55% to 100%.

The HE providers were queried about the high percentage of staff with no academic teaching qualifications in their data and then set targets for improvement in the following collection. The responses were:

- The majority were specialist HE providers and they stated that they do not require their staff to have academic teaching qualifications due to the nature of their provision.
- It was assumed that if the question was left blank then the member of staff had no teaching qualification. However, they realised this assumption may be incorrect and would be looking to rectify it for the 2015/16 collection.
- They were making efforts to increase the number of staff with a teaching qualification specifically through HEA accreditation.
- A large, temporary, junior workforce was being used who had not yet undertaken any formal teaching qualification.

4.3 FEEDBACK FROM HESA'S LIAISON TEAM

HESA's Liaison team provide help and assistance to HE providers around the collection of HESA data and have valuable insight on the issues facing HE providers. The main issues for providers were around being unsure what constitutes an academic teaching qualification. This is especially unclear as some of the examples listed (e.g. PGCE) do not seem to relate specifically to HE which causes confusion. The HEA-accredited qualifications are more straightforward for HE providers to supply.

5. ISSUES RAISED BY THE INTERVIEWS

A further vehicle for exploring the issues affecting data quality were interviews conducted by the HEA with pro vice-chancellors (PVCs), heads of HR and directors of centres of learning and teaching or equivalent (directors).

5.1 SELECTION STRATEGY FOR RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

The HEA initially identified 12 HE providers to target for research interviews. These were selected to reflect examples of:

- HE providers with high percentages of teaching qualifications returned as unknown;
- HE providers with low percentage of unknowns;
- HE providers with decreasing percentages of unknowns;
- HE providers with significant discrepancies between HEA and HESA data on HEA-accredited teaching qualifications (as identified through HEA analysis of HEA and HESA data).

The selection included a range of institutional mission types, to better illustrate the diversity of institutional experiences across the sector. However, due to the small number of HE providers involved, the sample cannot be considered as representative of the sector.

The names of HE providers involved have been kept confidential to the HEA and the external researcher conducting the interviews, in line with the ethical framework approved by the HEA's Research Ethics Panel, and circulated to HESA and HEFCE. This was both to encourage openness in the research interviews, and to meet the ethical responsibilities to research participants. The HE providers involved are not named in the research report, and the comments are not ascribed to specific individuals.

5.2 RESPONSE TO INVITATION TO TAKE PART IN THE RESEARCH

The HEA issued an invitation to PVCs in learning and teaching at the selected HE providers using its 'PVC Network'. PVCs were encouraged to invite a colleague who had operational responsibility for this area (e.g. a senior HR colleague) to the interview if necessary or to ask another colleague to attend the interview with them. The response to the invitation to take part in an interview was poor. Two HE providers (interestingly both with high percentages of unknowns) responded quickly in the affirmative, but the HEA had to issue a reminder and then broaden the net to include other providers.

In total, eight interviews have been conducted as part of the research. The HEA was unable to deliver the required number of interviews within the timescale of the project. However, the HEA was able to draw on the unpublished research about the HESA teaching qualification codes undertaken by the Heads of Educational Development Group (HEDG). The research involved a survey conducted on a JISC mailing list (heads-educ-dev@jiscmail.ac.uk). Some colleagues responded with details of their HE provider's guidance on the return. Subsequently, a Google search using the terms 'HESA teaching qualifications guidance' identified the information publicly available on various university websites. This typically took the form of 'guidance to staff' on how to update their records.

This resource has broadened the base of the research quite significantly, albeit that the focus of the HEDG exploration (on the codes exclusively) was narrower than the HEA's brief.

5.3 THE CONDUCT OF THE INTERVIEWS

All those agreeing to be interviewed were sent an overview of the research project explaining the aims of the interview and a consent form which assured participants of (amongst other things) the anonymity of their HE provider and of themselves. The interviews were conducted by an independent research consultant, Professor Philip Martin, former PVC at Sheffield Hallam University and De Montfort University, using the interview schedule agreed with HEFCE and HESA (**see Appendix B**) and notes recorded by a senior member of HEA staff. All the notes were subsequently approved by Professor Martin and were available on request to interviewees.

5.4 AIMS OF THE INTERVIEWS

The aims of the research interviews were to:

- explore the current institutional practices of collecting and returning information on teaching qualifications and the accreditation of staff;
- discuss the different drivers for these practices, and attitudes toward the way data is collected;
- gather perspectives on how the quality of this information could be improved.

The issues raised by the interviewees are grouped below.

It should be noted that, not surprisingly given their differing roles (PVCs, directors of centres of learning and teaching, or heads of HR), some interviewees were more familiar with the strategic factors affecting the return, and others more familiar with the operational aspects. The mix of responsibilities proved helpful in getting a rounded picture.

5.5 MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION OF THE DATA COLLECTION EXERCISE AT THE HE PROVIDER

5.5.1 PROCESS

All interviewees stressed that there was a standardised system for the collection of the data about teaching qualifications across the HE provider. This typically involved the HR department or the registrar collecting the data from staff who self-reported, normally at one time of the year, in response to a request from HR or registry. In some HE providers there was a self-service staff records system, which all staff were asked to update and re-submit at one point in the year. In several HE providers this was supplemented by information from a centre for learning and teaching or an academic development unit, which provided staff development opportunities (from modules required for probation through to continuing professional development) and reported awards/fellowships to HR. Such units were able to monitor claims made.

The responsibility for the return varied amongst the HE providers included. For example, in one HE provider, the operational responsibility lay with HR and the strategic responsibility lay with a PVC; in another, responsibility resided solely in the HR department; in a third, it rested with a strategic planning unit.

For most HE providers the data collection was via an electronic portal, though one HE provider reported using a paper-based system which was about to be replaced. However, two of the interviewees (Directors 06 and 07) admitted that they did not have robust systems in place to collect teaching qualifications data. One of these (Director 07) felt that the HE provider was 'massively under-reporting the qualifications of staff' because of this.

There were occasional additional institutional pushes (e.g. an email from senior management) to encourage updating of HR records, which had a positive effect.

‘For example, the PVC got excited when there were discussions around teaching qualifications potentially being included in the TEF, so there was a flurry of activity.’ (Director 01)

5.5.2 CHALLENGES

When asked what challenges and opportunities the management and organisation of the data collection exercise presented, the predominant view amongst interviewees was that the main challenge was to get staff to update their data. The return in some HE providers was reported to be a low priority. In others, it was clear that it had become higher priority in recent years with leadership from the top, and that staff were now more accepting of the importance of the return. The emergence of the TEF as an extrinsic driver was mentioned in several interviews.

‘The main challenge is cultural, in terms of not considering [the data return] an important agenda, and resisting the idea of what teaching qualifications might be.’ (Director 01)

In addition to this ‘cultural’ issue, a number of other specific challenges were noted:

- varying interpretations of the HESA guidance²⁴ and understanding of the HESA categorisation/categories (For more detail see 5.6 below);
- interpreting the equivalence of qualifications of staff recruited from abroad;
- lack of confidence amongst HR staff about the status of pre-existing qualifications, that is, additional qualifications not awarded by the HE provider;
- capturing the qualifications of those who undertake staff development outside the HE provider.

Some of these observations reinforce the findings of HESA’s Liaison team about the need for more guidance for HR teams about how to interpret the HESA codes to ensure accurate coding and how to advise self-reporting staff.

5.6 OPERATIONAL ASPECTS OF DATA COLLECTION

Interviewees were then asked about the operational aspects of data collection including any challenges and how they were being addressed.

5.6.1 ATYPICALS

Interviewees were asked whether they employed staff on atypical contracts. Some interviewees less closely associated with the operation of the return asked for an explanation of the term. When it was explained that these were sessional staff who might be employed for a short period of time for example, some admitted that they were not close enough to be able to respond knowledgeably. Those able to draw attention to the following issues:

- Where a lot of atypical staff were employed (for example, to do teaching and supervision, and clinical staff doing teaching in medical and veterinary subjects), they would not be returned to HESA, but some would have teaching qualifications (especially in the clinical area). This is the second reference (See 3.1.2 above.) to issues relating to how teaching qualifications of clinical staff are or are not returned and there may be a need for further

²⁴ Unpublished research about the HESA teaching qualification codes conducted by HEDG.

guidance to providers about the returns of such staff or to recognise that there would always be some discrepancy in comparative data.

- Associate lecturers (or visiting lecturers) were treated in the same way as permanent staff in terms of the return.

5.6.2 INCOMING/OUTGOING STAFF

On the issue of accuracy of staff records, it was commonplace to check the qualifications of staff on appointment. On those who left or joined the HE provider during the course of the academic year, some reported that their electronic systems automatically picked up such changes. Another believed that this would result in a time-lag in recording. Others noted that staff new to HE were picked up by the probationary process so that there was a check on their qualifications. This was a key part of the role of centres of learning and teaching or academic development units charged with handling the provision of training. As a result, the data was likely to be of better quality for this group.

The failure of departing staff to notify the HEA of changes would explain in part the disparity between HESA, institutional and HEA records.

5.6.3 HESA CODING

The issue of the use of HESA codes provoked a diverse reaction. Some did not think that there was a problem with the codes. Other interviewees and the HEDG research survey identified what were seen as important concerns. These included the following:

- An element of interpretation is needed (by HR staff and staff self-reporting), for example, about the status of qualifications from overseas: Are they certificated? Are they at undergraduate or postgraduate level? What is the equivalence with UK-based awards? Such qualifications are also often difficult to verify.
- HESA codes do not always match the institutions' own key performance indicators (KPIs). That is, the KPI might specify the number of staff who should have a teaching qualification, but the codes do not match institutional definitions. For example, Associate Fellows of the HEA are not treated by some providers as having a teaching qualification because they are not in many cases undertaking the full range of teaching responsibilities (e.g. direct delivery; assessment etc.) and the award is not mapped fully against the UK Professional Standards Framework (unlike the other HEA fellowships).
- There are varying interpretations of the guidance and then practice on whether to include qualifications e.g. some HE providers include Teaching English as a Second Language and Teaching English as a Foreign Language qualifications, some do not.
- Some of the codes were felt to be ambiguous, for example, the descriptor, 'other qualification in teaching in the HE sector' is too wide (Director 03).
- There are different institutional approaches to the collection and verification (two separate issues) of HESA data.

Table 1 provides an indication of the institutional concerns about specific codes.

Table 1 - Concerns about the HESA codes and descriptions²⁵

HESA code	Description	HE provider concerns
01	Successfully completed an institutional provision in teaching in the HE sector accredited against the UK Professional Standards Framework	There seems to be some uncertainty about whether this includes Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) and Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE (PGCLTHE) or just elements within them, with the full award going into 07.
02	Recognised by the HEA as an Associate Fellow	Should an Associate Fellowship be counted as a teaching qualification as it does not require mapping against the whole of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)?
03	Recognised by the HEA as a Fellow	No concern expressed
04	Recognised by the HEA as a Senior Fellow	No concern expressed
05	Recognised by the HEA as a Principal Fellow	No concern expressed
06	Holder of a National Teaching Fellowship Scheme Individual Award	Does this include only the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme run by the HEA?
07	Holder of a PGCE in HE, secondary education, further education, life-long learning or any other equivalent UK qualification	<p>Some HE providers include people who have done PGCAP equivalents at other universities under 07, while including those who have done it at their own university in 01.</p> <p>Some include PGCE Primary and any other qualification (e.g. City & Guilds) which leads to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS); others exclude PGCE primary. One reported excluding PGCE secondary.</p> <p>Another reported that any City & Guilds awards should be recorded under 07 or 09.</p>
08	Accredited as a teacher of their subject by a professional UK body	Some HE providers assume that this includes a subject-specific accreditation of any kind, while others are using a tighter definition that this should specifically refer to teaching. Some do

²⁵ This table is based on the information supplied by HEDG.

		<p>not currently include their Nursing staff under this classification.</p> <p>One HE provider includes Teaching English as a Second Language or Teaching English as a Foreign Language qualifications and the Certificate Practice for Special Educational Needs in this category.</p>
09	Other UK accreditation or qualification in teaching in the HE sector	Some include any City & Guilds awards that do not lead to QTS under this. Several others include Postgraduate Diplomas, Masters and Doctorates in HE under this definition.
10	Overseas accreditation or qualification for any level of teaching	<p>Most agree that this is any overseas qualification that includes teaching at <i>any</i> level.</p> <p>However, some HE providers are concerned about the equivalence of overseas teaching qualifications. They would like a table of equivalence of the type produced by the National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC).</p>
90	Not Known	
99	No Qualification Held	Some indicated that Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) qualifications should be included in this category.

These concerns highlight the need for more precise guidance from HESA about the codes.

5.6.4. ACCESS TO INFORMATION HELD BY THE HEA

It was clear that interviewees were aware that they had access to information which the HEA holds about the fellowship status of staff. Some use it regularly to corroborate their own data (or to correct the HEA's); another uses it occasionally for the same purposes. Some felt that the HEA's data would be inaccurate and out-of-date because it relied on individuals to update their records.²⁶

²⁶ See Appendix C - How the HEA keeps records up to date.

5.7 MOTIVATION FOR ENGAGING WITH THE DATA COLLECTION EXERCISE

5.7.1 MOTIVATION

The interviewees were asked how important it was to them to collect and report teaching qualification data and was this shared across the HE provider.

Most responded that it was an important priority for them because of their roles, but, on its importance to the HE provider, there was more variety:

- Some indicated that the level of priority depended on seniority:

‘a sense that institutional importance placed on the collection of teaching qualification data at the senior level is directly proportional to external pressures. Further down the HE provider this may vary.’ (Director 01)
- Two indicated that priority depended on institutional mission:

‘It was important on two levels: the HE provider wants to be seen as excellent in teaching as well as research; it is ethically committed to the notion of improvement.’ (Director 02)
- For some, the level of priority depended on external drivers:

‘The TEF was an important lever [for change].’ (Director 03 and PVC 02)

‘It is a shared priority in terms of written policy, but in reality there is less commitment to collecting this information than there is to collecting that for the REF.’ (Director 03)
- All understood the requirement to record but there were mixed levels of enthusiasm for process; for example, some questioned whether fellowship via the individual application route makes you a better teacher.
- One felt that the collection was perceived as a distraction from core business:

‘The data collection is seen as a bureaucratic inconvenience that gets in the way of teaching and research, but that tension is not a bad thing – it can be creative.’ (PVC 02)

5.7.2. CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF STAFF RETURNED IN TEACHING/TEACHING AND RESEARCH CATEGORIES

When asked why they thought the number of staff returned in the teaching/teaching and research categories across the sector had changed, there was no consensus. Responses included:

- that numbers of teaching contracts had gone up because of the impact of student opinion expressed in the National Student Survey, or the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (Director 01);
- that across the Russell Group, teaching-only contracts were gaining higher esteem than in past; ‘formerly they were the poor cousin.’ (Director 02);

- that league tables were driving policy: there might be ‘gaming’ by some HE providers to ensure that they ‘returned more teaching staff and had better staff-student ratios as a result’ (PVC 01):

‘more staff at senior levels may be plotting how to respond to the environment of league tables and the NSS. They want to optimise their positioning and be strategic...[this] may increase as the sector shifts with the evolution of the TEF.’ (PVC 02)

5.7.3. DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN HEA AND HESA DATA

Interviewees were asked why they thought there might be discrepancies between the number of fellows listed in institutional HESA returns and HEA records of fellows.

A common explanation was staff mobility: staff were moving HE provider and not informing the HEA. Two had experienced ‘misleading claims’ by a small number of new staff (they said they were fellows when they were not). (Director 3 and PVC 02). One felt that some staff did not think to declare their fellowship when prompted to update their CV (Director 05) as they did not recognise the importance of the fellowship to the return and to the HE provider.

5.8 HOW TO IMPROVE DATA QUALITY AND HOW SHOULD IT BE USED

5.8.1 BENEFITING HE PROVIDERS, SECTOR, STUDENTS?

One interviewee felt that the return was perceived institutionally to be of limited value and a low priority (Director 01); another doubted its value, as teaching qualifications did not reflect teaching quality (Director 6). The remaining interviewees articulated the following benefits of the return to HE providers:

- ‘the information is used in a developmental way to target academic development activities and support individuals to gain fellowship/qualifications and undertake continuing professional development.’ (Director 04/HR 01)
- collecting the data provided ‘an extrinsic motivation for the pursuit of teaching qualifications.’ (Director 02)
- ‘it gives students a message that the university takes teaching seriously.’ (PVC 01)
- ‘It’s ... important that teaching staff are seen to be equal.’ (Director 05)

On the other hand, there were doubts about whether students should have access to the data because:

- teaching qualifications were only one measure of teaching excellence: ‘some excellent teachers do not have teaching qualifications.’ (Director 02);
- the information was only useful to students if available at departmental level (Director 03);
- ‘...not happy with open access to the data at the moment because it is not robust enough.’ (Director 03);
- it was uncertain whether there was an appetite amongst students for such information.

5.8.2 EVIDENCE OF A LINK BETWEEN TEACHING QUALIFICATIONS AND BETTER STUDENT OUTCOMES

Interviewees were asked if they had evidence – quantitative or qualitative – suggesting that teaching qualifications resulted in better student outcomes in all or some circumstances. None had any quantitative evidence of this, but some had qualitative evidence. Some of it was anecdotal, for example, that staff with HEA-accredited programmes appeared to do better in teaching awards, especially student-led awards (Director 01). One noted that evidence is presented in claims for individual fellowship or apparent in module feedback (Director 02) and another that it has ‘qualitative evidence (surveys and interviews with staff) which indicate increased confidence, creativity and higher status accorded to teaching’ (Director 03). Several noted, however, the problem of establishing a definitive causal link between qualified teachers and improved student outcomes.

5.8.3. THE HIGH NUMBER OF ‘UNKNOWN’S

The interviewees were asked what underlay the relatively high number of staff returned with teaching qualifications ‘unknown’. Their responses were varied:

- Several laid the blame on staff unwillingness or inability to update their records:

‘Many without teaching qualifications would not think to change their staff record on this point.’ (Director 01)

‘Some staff do not see fellowship as a qualification (just a recognition)’ and therefore might not include this on the updated record (Director 02)

‘it’s an internal problem – about herding cats.’ (Director 03)

- It may not be a high priority for some HE providers.
- There were lax data collection systems.

5.8.4 HESA CRITERIA

When asked whether the HESA criteria captured all teaching qualifications at discipline level, several were unsure or perceived no need for change. Some however wanted a broader range of qualifications considered as being relevant to teaching. There was marked difference of opinion on the value of the doctorate to teaching:

‘One improvement would be the recognition in HESA categories of PhD and Ed D or full masters.’ (Director 02)

‘What does it say about an academic’s ability to teach their subject when they don’t have a PhD in the subject they are teaching?’ (Director 01)

Another, however, explicitly asserted that a doctorate was not an indication of an ability to teach.

One interviewee stressed that the HESA guidance should be more like that of NARIC, that is, it should have more precise guidance about what qualifications should be included and what should not.

They were also asked whether data on the currency of qualifications gained should be collected. All doubted the relevance of such information:

- One felt that qualified staff were already 'predisposed to do CPD' (Director 03) and therefore there was no need to check how recently they had undertaken a qualification;
- Another felt there was no need unless there was a good reason, for example to establish whether staff were of good standing in terms of recent training, but defining good standing had proven difficult (Director 02).
- All thought that collecting this information would be extremely difficult.

5.8.5 IMPROVEMENTS IN THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

When asked how the data collection process might be improved e.g. changes in the data collection cycle, the interviewees were very largely of one mind. There was no perfect timing for the collection but the cycle was now established and built into institutional systems, so the message was do not change it.

5.8.6 PLANNED CHANGES TO COLLECTION AND RECORDING

When asked about planned changes to the collection and recording of teaching qualifications within HE providers, there were no specific changes afoot. Some had already invested in changes in the past; two felt that there would be opportunities provided by improvement in the institutional use of technology e.g. a new HR record system. One was going to look at the other qualifications which staff bring with them and another at changes to the form used to collect information to specifically direct staff to update their teaching qualifications.

5.8.7 ADVICE ON THE IMPACT OF CHANGES IN DATA COLLECTION

When asked what advice they would give on the impact of changes in data collection, there was an interesting range of views. Most interviewees stressed the need for improved communications about the data collection and its use:

- '...a key issue here is around balancing the cost and the benefit. They perceive they could put more effort into the data-collection exercise, but would need to get more out of it... It's not always clear what the benefit is to the HE provider and the sector.' (Director 01)
- One advised HESA 'not to rush the timing and to explain more clearly what the new codes mean.' (Director 02);
- Another suggested that a drop-down menu with HESA categories and equivalent qualification might help. (Director 05).
- There was a need therefore for improved internal as well as external communication about the return (PVC 02).
- Some staff did not realise that the data was intended for HESA.

- People don't always remember to include their HEA fellowship status, especially if they are in a more research-focused role.
- 'They don't necessarily understand the impact on the HE provider.' (Director 05).

There was general concern about the burden on HE providers. One cited an unhappy precedent: 'the cost and burden to HE providers [is] significant. The QAA IR (the Quality Assurance Agency's Institutional Review) was a nightmare and no evidence that all of the data collected was utilised in the lead up to the visit – so a sense of masses of work for little impact.' (Director 03)

There was a realisation by some (including Director 03) that it was information which HE providers ought to be collecting anyway:

'so bizarrely this may be the most useful aspect – a lever for me to push a certain agenda around teaching and learning.' (Director 03)

One offered advice on the pace of change:

'Do not demand that all staff get teaching qualifications within a limited period. The HE providers need time to adjust to the 'new world order' and to the TEF. HE providers will take a steer from the TEF.' (Director 02)

5.9 CONCLUSIONS ON THE INTERVIEWS

The interviews with staff highlighted a number of issues, outlined below.

5.9.1 CULTURAL

The responsiveness of HE providers and their staff reflected the prevailing culture within the HE providers. It was clear that there was a trend towards greater recognition of the value of recording and returning teaching qualifications:

'It is important to understand the institutional trajectory of this return.' (Director 02)

Nevertheless, it was still a low priority for some, particularly in comparison to the importance attached to data collected for the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

5.9.2 PROCESS

While several HE providers had established effective systems to collect data for the return and subjected it to detailed cross-checking with HEA records, others did not. All systems relied upon staff self-reporting teaching qualifications and clearly some staff did not recognise the importance of doing so. Interviewees noted the need for clearer internal communication about the nature of the return (e.g. that it was intended for HESA, not just for the HE provider) and its importance.

Some drew attention to what they perceived as a measure of ambiguity in some of the HESA guidance which might lead to differential practice in respect of the return.

5.9.3 DRIVERS

There appears to be a need for a clearer articulation of benefits and potential uses of the return. Some quite clearly recognise its value in driving strategic change and targeting staff development initiatives, others are not convinced. The emergence of the TEF is perceived to be a considerable potential extrinsic driver of change.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

The key objectives of this project on the issues affecting the data quality of the teaching qualifications return to HESA were to:

- identify and explore issues which may affect data quality;
- highlight policy implications and provide recommendations for improvements of data, and for the provision of information on teaching qualifications more generally.

6.1.1 CONTEXT

It is recognised that the quality of the data on academic teaching qualifications have improved in each of the last three years in which such data have been collected and that this reflects the efforts made by HE providers to collect this information from their staff and to reduce the percentage of staff with unknown qualifications in their data return. However, it is clear from this research that the return is still not a high priority for some HE providers and academic staff.

6.1.2 REASONS FOR THE POOR QUALITY OF THE DATA RETURNS BY SOME PROVIDERS

This research has identified a range of potential reasons for the number of data submissions with academic teaching qualifications returned as 'unknown'.

Data collection systems

The relationship (identified in the HESA data) between the percentage of staff with unknown qualifications and those with other unknown personal attributes seems to suggest that some providers' systems for collecting, updating and storing personal information require improvement. This suggestion was corroborated by the Minerva analysis and some of the interviewees, during which several providers reported that new electronic systems were in place or being put in place to capture information about teaching qualifications, and others reporting that teaching qualifications for new starters were not being captured. This would appear to explain the improving robustness of the return, but also the residual issues with it.

Issues of definition

Information from the HESA Liaison team, from the HEA's interviews and from the HEDG research all indicate that some providers were unsure or disagreed about what constitutes an academic teaching qualification.

The non-inclusion by some providers in the HESA return of Associate Fellows (typically staff new to teaching or non-academic staff involved in supporting teaching and learning) in the HESA return indicated a clear difference of opinion. There seems also to be a disagreement about whether Postgraduate Certificates in Education (PGCE) (Primary or Secondary) should be considered a relevant HE teaching qualification.

Coding

While some interviewees reported having had no difficulties with HESA coding, others noted that the guidance was open to different interpretations and practice. This point was illustrated clearly in the HEDG research. It noted that the Code 07 description 'holder of a PGCE in higher education, secondary education, further education, life-long learning or any other equivalent UK qualification' was ambiguous. The research also indicated that some HE providers returned staff with City & Guilds qualifications which did not lead to QTS. There was also different practice in relation to the return of 'atypical' staff (temporary or sessional staff).

Motivation

The reduction in the percentage of returns with 'teaching qualifications unknown' clearly indicates that the data collection is receiving a higher priority each year, particularly at senior management level. However, interviews with staff with a level of responsibility for the return indicated that there was an unwillingness or inability of some academic staff to update their records. This was variously attributed to a lack of clarity about the purpose of the collection or a perception that it was bureaucratic inconvenience.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

This research leads to the following recommendations of ways in which the quality of data submitted and of information about its collection might be improved:

6.2.1 CODING AND GUIDANCE

HESA and HEFCE should work with relevant sector bodies and HE providers to improve the guidance in the coding framework by creating a comprehensive list of what can and cannot be deemed an academic teaching qualification.

6.2.2 CREDIBILITY REPORTING

- HESA should make changes to credibility reporting, for example ensuring the population used in credibility reporting matches the population of those required to return teaching qualifications data;
- HEA should continue regular cleansing exercises of its own data;
- HEA should raise the profile of the email helpdesk (partnerships@heacademy.ac.uk) through which HE providers can check data on individuals accredited by the HEA that are currently recorded as employed at their HE provider;
- HEFCE, HESA and the HEA should work together to conduct comparisons between fellowship data and HESA return at regular intervals.

6.2.3 CLARIFICATION OF THE PURPOSE OF THE COLLECTION

- HEFCE should clarify the purpose of the collection of data on teaching qualifications and how they will be used, for example as part of the Government's drive to improve the quality and status of teaching in UK HE;
- HE providers should explain to their staff the purpose of the data collection and its potential institutional benefits (for example, in delivering KPIs, in targeting the provision of staff development opportunities).

6.2.4 INCENTIVISING MORE COMPLETE RETURNS

HEFCE should consider ways to incentivise HE providers to reduce the percentage of staff returned with 'unknown' teaching qualifications, for example through publication of the institutional data.

6.2.5 FURTHER CONSULTATION

HEFCE should continue the dialogue with HE providers, for example through workshops to explore:

- how the quality of the data can be improved;
- how it can be used in meaningful ways.

APPENDIX A - GLOSSARY AND ACRONYM LIST

Definitions for the HESA Staff record, to support understanding of the terminology used within this report can be found at www.hesa.ac.uk/support/definitions/staff

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CPD	Continuing professional development
FPE	Full Person Equivalent
HE	Higher education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEDG	Heads of Educational Development Group
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HR	Human Resources
KPI	Key performance indicator
NARIC	National Recognition Information Centre
PVC	Pro Vice-Chancellor
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
REF	Research Excellence Framework
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UKPSF	UK Professional Standards Framework

APPENDIX B- INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHING QUALIFICATIONS RESEARCH WITH PVCS AND HR DIRECTORS

INTRODUCTION

Introduce the researchers conducting the interview.

Interviewees will have received a copy of the consent form and overview of the research projects.

Reiterate main aims of the research: to explore current institutional practices of collecting and returning information on the teaching qualifications and accreditation of staff; to discover the different drivers for these practices, attitudes toward the way data is collected and used, and to gather your perspectives on how the quality of this information could be improved.

This is one part of a research project that HESA and the HEA are working on together, that aims to provide HEFCE with recommendations around possible issues affecting data quality and how data quality and information about teaching qualifications can be improved. The outcomes of the research will be provided in analysed/summarised form to HEFCE to inform future policy.

Ask interviewees if they have any questions or concerns before we start. Go through consent issues.

The interview will not be recorded and transcribed but we will be making detailed notes throughout. We are happy to send a copy of these notes to you after the interview, on request.

Section 1

This first section is designed to find out more about the management and organisation of the data collection exercise at your HE provider, including any challenges you currently face and how you are addressing these.

1. Can you tell me broadly how you currently approach the data collection exercise in order to complete and return this information to HESA?
2. Who is responsible for this work?
 - a. Does this vary across the HE provider?
3. What processes and systems are in place to collect this data?
 - a. Is there a standardised approach across the HE provider?
4. What challenges and opportunities does the management and organisation of the data collection exercise present?
 - a. How are you addressing these?

Section 2

The next few questions relate to the operational aspects of data collection, including any challenges you currently face and how you are addressing these.

1. How do you currently identify and record staff teaching qualifications?

- a. Do you have staff on atypical contracts? Could you tell me about these? How do you capture and record these?
 - b. If members of staff leave/join the HE provider part-way through the year, or are also employed by another HEI, how do you record and return their information?
2. What information do you draw on to help you go about completing the recording and reporting process?
 - a. How do you use the coding framework/criteria provided?
 - b. Were you aware you have access to information the HEA holds about the fellowships status of your staff? Do/would you use this data?
3. What challenges do you face in how you record and return this data? How are you addressing these?

Section 3

The next few questions relate to motivations for engaging with the data collection exercise.

1. As PVC (or Director of Human Resources), why do you think it is important to collect and report teaching qualification data?
 - a. Is this an institutional priority for you?
 - b. Do you think this is shared across the HE provider?
2. Could you tell me a bit about how the HE provider supports professional development and the attainment of teaching qualifications?
3. There have been changes in numbers of staff returned in teaching/teaching and research categories across the sector, what do you think the reasons for this are?
4. From comparative analysis we have carried out, we have found discrepancies between the number of fellows listed in institutional HESA returns and HEA records of fellows. Why do you think this might be? Are there different processes for collecting this data within HE providers?

Section 4

The final questions focus on your perspective on how data quality can be improved, and the potential uses and purposes for information on teaching qualifications.

1. How do you think this information could be used to benefit your HE provider? And the sector? To students?
 - a. Are there any ways in which you think the data should not be used?
 - b. Who should have access/not have access to this data?
 - c. Do you have quantitative or qualitative evidence which suggests that teaching qualifications lead to better student outcomes in all or in certain circumstances?
2. What do you think underlies the relatively high number of staff returned with teaching qualifications 'unknown' across the sector?
3. In terms of the HESA criteria currently used²⁷
 - a. Do you think these enable the capture of all teaching qualifications at the discipline level? If not, what could be improved?
 - b. Should these collect information on the recency of teaching qualifications gained?

²⁷ HESA criteria are available here:

www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_studrec&task=show_file&mnl=15025&href=a%5e%5eACTCHQUA.html

4. How do you think the data collection process could be improved to improve quality and accuracy of information on teaching qualifications? E.g. would changes in the data collection cycle help?
5. Are you planning to make changes to the way you collect and record teaching qualifications which you think will improve data quality? Could you tell me about these?
6. What advice would you give on the impact of changes in data collection e.g. cost and burden to HE providers; student satisfaction with information provided; utility to HE providers?

APPENDIX C - HOW THE HEA KEEPS RECORDS UP TO DATE

The HEA keep its records up to date through two main mechanisms: HE providers and individuals:

HE providers

- All subscribing HE providers have access to and can update fellow records via their institutional contacts or nominated colleague/s. These individuals can see their institutional data (equivalent to what was in the Annual Institutional Reports). This includes access to all fellow records by category, their job title and the date when they were recognised. The onus is on HE providers to keep their fellow data up to date. This mechanism has been in place since the HEA launched its current Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system in the summer of 2013 which has greatly improved the accuracy of the records.
- Through institutional data view in CRM, HE providers have access to an HEA CRM report which pulls in live data from CRM about those who are fellows at their HE provider within any given year – this also is aligned to one of the HESA teaching qualifications categories and the HEA has encouraged use of this report as part of institutional data returns to HESA.
- Programme leaders of accredited programmes are responsible for letting the HEA know which of their staff have become fellows. This is done via CRM where names, email addresses and employer are uploaded by an institutional representative periodically – usually the admin or programme lead does this soon after, for example, exam boards or when cohorts have confirmed final assessments.
- At any time, should records not be deemed to be accurate by the HE provider, it has the option to alert the HEA should they find any discrepancies. The most frequent changes come from ongoing scenarios where staff leave an HE provider and go somewhere else or new staff joining an HE provider who are already HEA fellows.

Individuals

- The HEA periodically carries out data cleaning with individuals. It recently sent out marketing and communications messages to all its fellows, including a request to update individual records, personal and employment details, which in turn yielded a good number of responses.
- There will be occasions where some individuals do not let the HEA know they have left their HE provider and perhaps may have left HE altogether, having become a fellow previously and sought employment elsewhere. These individuals will count towards the overall institutional figures until the HEA is otherwise informed by the HE provider – there are not many of these.