

09/02/2018

HEIMS Data Collections
Economic and Market Analysis Branch
Department of Education and Training
GPO Box Canberra ACT 2601

To whom it may concern,

The Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Redevelopment and Audit of the Higher Education Data Collection – Discussion Paper.

The ATN is a national collaborative group of five major universities including Queensland University of Technology (QUT), University of Technology Sydney, RMIT University, University of South Australia and Curtin University.

The ATN recommends that any proposed changes to the collection be implemented with adequate timeframes such that universities can develop and test new or updated systems and ensure that all staff are familiar with the new requirements. Any proposed changes to the Higher Education Data Collection need to be cognisant of the impost this will place on providers to adapt existing IT systems. Further, the Department should consider any impacts the changes will have to the quality of the data if changes are hastily enforced. The ATN is supportive of efforts from the Department to increase usability and timeliness of the data while reducing reporting costs. The ATN is pleased to liaise with the Department as the proposed changes are refined, planned and implemented.

Single Touch Reporting

The ATN acknowledges the intent of the proposed change, namely reduced data entry and re-entry and increased timeliness of the data. The ATN has long advocated the need for increased timeliness of Higher Education data, noting the importance of having timely, high quality data to perform meaningful analysis. It is unclear from the discussion paper how a new methodology would bring the release of the data forward by four months. All ATN universities look forward to further consultation with the Department in regards single touch reporting scope, design and processes.

Identifying Students

The ATN supports the introduction of a Unique Student Identifier (USI). The ability to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' higher education experience and facilitate more effective, targeted student support by both government and providers is welcomed by the ATN. There will need to be robust processes implemented in the rollout of such an identifier to limit issues that have plagued previous identifiers such as duplicate IDs, or how the USI will be implemented in legacy systems and linked with CHESSNs. However, we would note that if properly implemented, this change would allow future decisions about higher education policy to potentially be better supported by evidence.

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Reducing Duplication

The ATN supports reducing the size and complexity of data collection and removing unnecessary elements. These reductions need to ensure that new or additional processes that supersede existing functions are not created. The specifics of this will be covered by individual ATN University submissions.

Relevance

The ATN understands the concerns in relation to elements 573 (Highest educational attainment of parent/guardian) and 574 (Highest educational attainment of parent/guardian 2) and the reasoning for their removal from the collection. However, given the focus on equity and access in the higher education sector, analysis about first in family cohorts is of interest to policy advocates and government. Removal of these elements from collection would result in there being no consistent method of estimating first in family attendance and performance at university.

The ATN supports the inclusion of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) into the Higher Education Data Collection, however we do note the potential cost and amount of work that will be required to implement such an indicator into each institution's data collection systems. The ATN welcomes further discussion with the Department about possible collection of WIL data.

Low Quality Data

The ATN supports removing of ATAR collection data in the Applications and Offer file. The ATN wishes to note the need to be consistent with the work of the Higher Education Standards Panel "Improving the transparency of higher education admissions".

In addition to our comments above, ATN universities will make their own institutional submissions, covering the technical impacts of the proposed changes.

Please do not hesitate to contact the ATN Directorate on (02) 5105 6740 or via e-mail at renee.hindmarsh@atn.edu.au to discuss any elements of the submission further.

Yours sincerely,



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