INTRODUCTION

For the fifth year running, Universities UK International (UUKi)'s Gone International research finds that more students than ever before are going abroad.¹ UK students take part in all types of international placements during their undergraduate, postgraduate and research programmes, and these global opportunities take many forms, from a year or semester abroad on study or work placement, a short-term experience overseas, such as a study-trip or summer school, through to participating in volunteering programmes.

Placements abroad support student development: students benefit from an international curriculum, become more interculturally aware, develop professional skillsets and experience personal growth. Research shows that students who go abroad get better degrees and better jobs.² Outward mobility is a priority too for UK government and features in the International Education Strategy.³ In the words of Chris Skidmore, the then Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation:

“Cultural exchange helps build important business, political and diplomatic bridges around the world, not to mention life-long friendships. Supporting students to study abroad helps us to create a new generation of globally mobile, culturally agile people who can succeed in an increasingly global marketplace.”⁴

Measuring the impact of mobility activities is crucial to ensuring the sustainability of the mobility offer and to encourage continued investment in study, work and volunteer abroad programmes. Having access to UK mobility data enables analysis on participation rates, patterns and trends. It helps to identify underrepresentation in mobility and where more support is needed. It allows progress to be tracked against institutional and national targets. Also, at a national level, it helps evidence the case for continued participation in the Erasmus+ programme.

The HESA Student record collects individualised data about students that are registered at a reporting provider and follow courses that lead to the award of a qualification or provider credit. A wide range of data items are collected, including: the student’s entry profile and personal characteristics, module and course level data, funding information and qualifications awarded. This data is then shared through a variety of reports to help identify trends and patterns in various activities across the UK.

HESA consider ‘mobility’ to include all overseas experiences organised or endorsed by a provider that takes place during a student’s higher education. This is a broad set of programmes and by reporting these activities universities enable organisations

Note

² Gone International cohort series, https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/gone-international-expanding-opportunities.aspx
like Universities UK International (UUKi) to undertake analysis on a national dataset which provides a picture of mobility participation across the UK, such as the Gone International series of cohort studies. This dataset makes it possible to map patterns and trends in mobility participation and, crucially, to show the wide range of positive impacts all mobility types have across different student demographics.

The HESA return asks universities to report if a student was mobile and if so the details of the mobility including where they went, how long they were mobile for, the type of experience and the scheme they participated in. Mapping, recording and reporting mobility activities at providers can be complicated, especially in cases where data is stored across different departments rather than being stored on a central student record system. It is essential that outward mobility teams work to support planning offices to ensure this data is as accurate as possible for the purpose of reporting.

The data is collected by HESA via an annual submission through an online web platform. Reporting of mobility is compulsory in all cases where the student is undertaking a mobility experience with a combined duration of four weeks or more. While mobility periods shorter than this are optional to report, both HESA and the UUKi Stand Out campaign encourage all providers to report all periods of mobility in order to allow accurate analysis of mobility, which includes trends, patterns and outcomes of these shorter mobility periods.

This report aims to provide universities with resources to improve their outward mobility mapping and reporting. We hope this work will result in both an increase in the overall number of mobilities that are reported to HESA but also the accuracy of the reporting. The better the reporting and the richer detail, the stronger the mapping mobility patterns and trends are.

**HESA’S DEFINITION OF MOBILITY**

HESA’s definition of mobility is very broad and encompasses all types of mobility experiences from volunteering, electives, field trips, joint degrees to longer term Erasmus+, study exchanges or industry placements. They state that:

‘A mobility experience as part of their course outside of the UK, refers to any overseas experience organised or endorsed by the provider that takes place during the student’s higher education. It does not need to be credit-bearing or linked to any learning outcomes.’

**Note**

5 The UK target for outward mobility counts all mobility programmes of two weeks or longer in duration. While one week mobilities are not included in the target, UUKi encourage universities to report these instances of mobility to help map trends across the UK.
GUIDANCE

THE CASE FOR REPORTING OF OUTWARD STUDENT MOBILITY DATA

In 2017, UUKi launched the Go International: Stand Out campaign in partnership with UK universities and other stakeholders. The campaign aims to help the sector deliver on its national outward student mobility goal, as set out in the UK Strategy for Outward Student Mobility:

‘to double the percentage of UK-domiciled, full-time, first degree, undergraduate students who study, work or volunteer abroad as part of their degree to 13% in 2020.’

Reliable data on outward student mobility is critical to the sector’s ability to realise this ambitious vision. It enables in-depth analysis on participation rates, patterns and trends. It allows research into the benefits and barriers to an international education. It helps identify underrepresentation in mobility and where more support is needed. It allows progress to be tracked against institutional and national targets. Also, at a national level, it helps evidence the case for continued participation in the Erasmus+ programme. Effectively, it informs all aspects of the work of institutions in this area and of their collective campaign, from building the evidence base, to bolstering institutional strategies, to lobbying on mobility policy.

The importance of good data is enshrined in the Go International: Stand Out campaign charter. Improving data collection and reporting is one of four guiding principles in the charter and at the heart of the Go International: Stand Out campaign. This principle sits alongside three others focused on increasing opportunities, enhancing accessibility and promoting the value of study, work and volunteering abroad. To join the campaign, Go International: Stand Out partner university leaders sign up to the charter and commit to each of these four principles. To date, 97 UK university leaders have made this commitment.

Through the Go International campaign charter and with this campaign resource, UUKi, in partnership with HESA, aims to provide providers with the case for improved data reporting and the tools with which to ensure that data on outward student mobility is captured and reported.

INTRODUCTION TO HESA

HESA are the experts in UK higher education data and analysis and the designated data body for England. HESA collects and publishes detailed information on every aspect of higher education, from students and their mobility to qualifications, widening participation, graduates, staff and providers across all four nations. Funded mainly through provider subscriptions, it aims to reduce the accountability burden for the sector and disseminates data through a number of methods. HESA works closely with
providers to support this data collection process and to analyse and quality check the data they submit.

HESA is a Go International: Stand Out partner. The agency joined the campaign as its first non-university partner, with a significant and well-received pledge: to provide the outward student mobility data to Universities UK International free-of-charge. This pledge has enabled much of UUKi’s campaign activity in its first year, from the production of the Gone International series of cohort studies to the analysis of the 2016-17 academic year mobility data and cohort analysis.

THE STUDENT RECORD

Data on outward student mobility is collected by HESA through their student data stream: the student record. The student record collects individualised data about students registered at the reporting provider who follow courses that lead to the award of a qualification or provider credit. This information is currently collected retrospectively. Over 200 data items are collected through the student record. In addition to data on outward student mobility, this includes the student’s entry profile and personal characteristics, module and course level data, funding information and qualifications awarded.

WHICH STUDENTS ARE INCLUDED IN THE STUDENT RECORD?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Included</th>
<th>Excluded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students who are (or were) actively following a course at some period during the HESA reporting period</td>
<td>Students studying wholly outside the UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students spending eight weeks or more in the UK</td>
<td>Distance learning students studying outside the UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance learning students studying outside the UK who are funded - e.g. Crown servants overseas and the Services.</td>
<td>Post doctorate students and Higher Doctorates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who start a course and leave within the first two weeks, but have been confirmed to the SLC</td>
<td>Doctorates awarded by publication (unless they are undertaking a significant amount of research at the reporting provider).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incoming/Outgoing visiting and exchange students at the reporting provider</td>
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HOW DOES OUTWARD STUDENT MOBILITY FIT IN?

The HESA student record is based on a logical data model comprised of ‘entities’ and their relationships. An ‘entity’ holds information relating to a certain subject or theme, for example the student, course or instance, as displayed in the data model below. This model shows that whereas there is only one provider, that provider has one or many relationships with a single student and that student has one or many relationships with an instance (or engagement) with the provider. Data on outward student mobility is collected in Instance, as a student may be enrolled in more than one course and may undertake more than one period of mobility.
HOW IS DATA COLLECTED BY HESA?

Each provider has a user account with HESA and submits their student record data in an XML file format via an online web platform.

Once data has been submitted, the process bar will indicate the outcome of the submission. Once the file has no validation errors, the data can be ‘committed’. Committing the data means that it is sent for data quality checking by HESA analysts.

After a file has been committed, a new file cannot be submitted until a ‘decommit’ has been actioned. A decommit can be requested from the Liaison team. It is expected providers will go through this process several times until they are content with the submission.

Several downloadable reports are available for providers to both assist in the quality assurance process and for analysis. The mobility section can be found in the Credibility Report – Mobility.
TIMELINE OF REPORTING TO HESA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 2018 to January 2019</td>
<td>Data capture and collation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2019</td>
<td>Validate data locally using validation kit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2019</td>
<td>C18051 Data Collection system opens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June/July 2019</td>
<td>C18051 preparation guide released</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 September 2019</td>
<td>Return date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 September 2019</td>
<td>Commit date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 September to 31 October 2019</td>
<td>Data quality checking period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 October 2019</td>
<td>Last submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 November 2019</td>
<td>Sign-off</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE HISTORY OF THE MOBILITY FIELDS

With the launch of the UK Strategy for Outward Student Mobility and the increased profile of outward student mobility activities, UUKi worked with HESA to improve data collection in this area.

Mobility was added as a new entity for the 2013/2014 academic year. Prior to this, the data collected was crude and some types and durations of mobility were not recorded, as information was derived from a combination of codes from already existing fields.

DEFINITIONS OF THE MOBILITY FIELDS

MOBDURA – Mobility Duration

This field records the expected length in weeks of the mobility experience. HESA collects data on mobilities from 1 to 52 weeks and from 52 to 60 weeks in some cases, as outlined below.

The minimum mobility that can be recorded is one week, as the HESA system does not allow decimals. HESA advises that the one week should be ‘working weeks, as defined by your provider’, and that it is at the provider’s discretion whether this includes weekends or not.

Where a mobility experience is less than one week, it cannot be combined with a separate experience of less than one week to create a combined week-long reportable mobility. (for example, if the student went to Spain for a conference for three days and then spent four days in Italy on a study tour).

52 to 60 weeks may only be returned if the durations are summed together when crossing HESA reporting years.
For example,

A first-year student went to study abroad in Spain on 1 July 2016 and returned on 4 September 2017.

- In year 1 (1 July-31 July) MOBDURA=4 should be reported
- In year 2 (1 August-4 September) MOBDURA=5 should be reported

The exception is, when splitting the mobility period, less than 4 weeks ends up as the total duration for one of the years. In that case the extra few weeks are to be returned in the year with the majority of the duration.

For example,

A first-year student went to study abroad in Spain on 15 July 2016 and returned on 4 September 2017.

- In year 1 no mobility should be reported.
- In year 2 the entirety of the mobility period should be reported, MOBDURA=59

**MOBLOCA - Mobility Location**

This field records the country location of the mobility experience. There are over 200 country or destination codes to choose from which can be returned for this field.

The destination codes below are of particular note:

- XY 'At Sea' is included for the purpose of recording a destination in international waters, which is not recognised as the territorial waters of a listed country.
- EU – European Union not otherwise specified
- XP-XX – Non-Specified areas/countries/regions
- ZZ – Not Known

The regional codes EU and XP-XX may be used if information is known only to this level of accuracy, in preference to using ZZ, which should be a last resort. This will trigger a quality rule warning if these codes are used frequently.

HESA encourages providers to check whether Mobility MOBLOCA can be coded more accurately.

**MOBSCHHEME – Mobility Scheme**
This field records the type of mobility scheme that the student is on. It contains four options:

- **01 Provider** – includes anything organised by the provider as part of their course, for example work placements, field work, summer schools, student exchange, volunteering.
- **02 Sandwich placement** which meets the criteria set out by funding councils, not including ERASMUS+ – The definition of sandwich should be consistent with funding council definitions.
- **03 ERASMUS+** – Includes all programmes delivered by Erasmus+ including Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus programmes.
- **04 Other scheme** – Includes all other formal programmes, for example Generation UK China, as well as any remainders.

**MOBTYPE – Mobility Type**

This field records the type of mobility experience. It can be returned up to three times when a student completes a mobility experience covering more than one type at the same time.

- **01 Study Abroad** – such as Erasmus+ study placements, fieldtrips, etc.
- **02 Work Abroad** – is used in situations where a student is doing paid work, such as internships.
- **03 Volunteering** – should be used where the student is undertaking voluntary or other unpaid work.

**WHAT IS COMPULSORY TO REPORT?**

It is compulsory for providers to report instances of mobility for active students whose location of study is abroad either for the whole year, or a proportion of the year, with a single, or combined duration of 4 weeks or more.

It is optional, but highly recommended, that providers report instances of mobility where the sum is less than 4 weeks in total.

For the technical coverage statement, please refer to the HESA coding manual.

**DATA FUTURES**

Data Futures is HESA’s transformation programme that will deliver the vision for a modernised and more efficient approach to collecting data, to deliver better output for a wider range of data users. Mobility under this new platform of collecting student data will be captured in ‘Off-venue activity’ as described below.

**OFF-VENUE ACTIVITY**

An off-venue activity is a structured activity that an individual student undertakes in connection with their course, but away from the provider’s venues. The purpose of this is to monitor placements, international mobility and related student activity.

HESA are expecting that Data Futures will provide a unique view of the transnational methodologies within the student record.
WHY PROVIDERS SHOULD REPORT SHORT-TERM MOBILITY

HESA encourages providers to return instances of mobility with a duration between 1 and 4 weeks, as it is useful from both a statutory and customer point of view. Only durations over 4 weeks were made compulsory when the new mobility fields were first introduced in 2013-14 in order to reduce the burden on providers at that early stage.

UUKi strongly encourages providers to report short-term mobility in their student record submission. Since the new mobility fields were introduced in 2013-14, more and more universities are implementing processes to gather short-term mobility data and reporting this to HESA. The reasons why this reporting is important for institutions are set out below:

1. It is important that the numbers in the HESA student record and a provider’s mobility report match, both for consistency and because it is another way of verifying that numbers are correct.

2. Short-term mobility is a growth area for the sector, and in order to track progress in this area and to ensure that this mobility is counted towards the national target, data must be recorded and reported. The last few years have seen a proliferation of new short-term programmes and it has become an important tool for universities to encourage more students to be mobile, to deliver on institutional strategies and to meet ambitious mobility targets.

3. University leaders from Go International: Stand Out partner institutions have committed to improving the collection and reporting of outward student mobility, including periods of mobility that are not currently counted, such as short-term mobility. In evaluating progress towards campaign goals, UUKi will analyse the mobility data return and look at which institutions have met this commitment.

4. Many of the universities pledging to the Go International: Stand Out campaign have made a campaign pledge to deliver new short-term programmes in order to reach more students and widen access to mobility. However, the progress providers make towards these pledges and the associated increase in their mobility numbers will not be recognised formally unless durations of 1-4 weeks are captured and reported.

5. Go International: Stand Out pledges have also included commitments to undertake mapping activities to catalogue the varied mobility activities taking place across the institution. Often mobility that is not organised through the mobility office is short-term and delivered within faculties, the Student Union or through student charities. A mapping exercise of this type, while a significant commitment in terms of time and resource, will yield a large amount of new, previously unknown data.

Note

7 Data on mobility of two or more weeks is counted towards the national target.
6. Reporting this new data in the student record return will recognise this work and increase the provider’s numbers and standing.

7. Short-term mobility has value in and of itself and we know anecdotally that it can often lead to longer-term mobility further down the line. More importantly, it is an option that is taken up at higher rates by students from widening participation backgrounds. Reporting data on short-term mobility supports providers’ efforts in this area by recognising its prominence in the mobility offer and enabling research into the evidence of impact.

8. Mobility data will continue to be used in all the ways already outlined in the case for reporting in the first chapter. However, it may also be used in new ways in the future. Should, for example, mobility rates start feeding into league tables it would be in a provider’s best interest to be in the practice of reporting all lengths of mobility.

END
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<tr>
<th><strong>ANNEX 1</strong></th>
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| **PROVIDER** | An umbrella term to describe the organisations that HESA collect data from. |
| **ENTITY** | A single entity name groups together a set of fields which have the same relationship. |
| **COMMITTED** | When providers have sent complete data that has passed validation, the data can progress to the next stage. Committed files are manually checked by a Data Quality Analyst at HESA. |
| **DECOMMITTED** | When data has been committed, the system will be locked so analysis can be undertaken; the data can be decommitted by sending a request to Liaison, which will reverse the commit and allow the data to be amended. |
| **LIAISON TEAM** | The team of expert analysts that support providers throughout the data collection process. |
| **CODES** | Used to return the value of the field. |
| **FIELD** | An attribute (data item) of an entity. |
| **INSTANCE** | A coherent engagement with the provider aiming towards the award of a qualification or credit. |
| **DATA FUTURES** | HESA’s transformation programme that will deliver the vision for a modernised and more efficient approach to collecting data, to deliver better output for a wider range of data users. |
| **OFF-VENUE** | The student’s placement activity or time spent abroad. |
| **HESA REPORTING PERIOD** | 01 August in year 1 to 31 July in Year 2 |