EXTERNAL DATA RETURNS - SIGN-OFF PROCEDURE AND FORM

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The University's Vice-Chancellor, as the Accountable Officer, and the Audit & Risk Committee are required by the Office for Students, the University's Regulator, to offer assurance of the adequacy of arrangements for the management and the quality of institutional data returns.

The University is committed to the highest standards of data quality and to ensuring the accuracy and completeness of all data as far as is reasonably practicable. It is important that the University can provide its Audit & Risk Committee, and its Vice-Chancellor, with evidence of sources of assurance on the underlying quality of data. The Data Returns Register, which outlines the assurance mechanisms for each data return, is presented to the Audit & Risk Committee and the University Executive Committee, annually, along with an Annual Report of the Management and Quality Assurance of Data.

1.2 Purpose

Each data return to be submitted to an external agency/regulator should be presented to the Vice-Chancellor along with a completed External Data Returns Sign-off Form (see Annex A for a template of this Form). This Procedure is designed to outline the purpose of the External Data Returns Sign-off Form and to support the Responsible Officer (Executive Dean or Director (or equivalent)) in completion of the Form.

1.3 Scope

This Procedure must be followed by all staff who are responsible for the submission of a data return to an external body, as named on the Data Returns Register (*for access to the Data Returns Register MS Excel Sheet in OneDrive, please contact the Governance team*). By following this Procedure and completing this Form to accompany the sign-off process for data returns, the Vice- Chancellor, the Governing Body (Council, via the Audit & Risk Committee) and the University's Regulator (Office for Students) receive assurance that there are robust arrangements for the quality assurance and management of data disclosed as part of data returns.

2. PROCEDURE

Annex A contains the External Data Returns Sign-off Form, which should be completed by Responsible Officers, which are those named within the University's Data Returns Register. This Form should be completed for each data return, normally an annual process, and submitted to the Vice-Chancellor. A copy of the Form should also be sent to the Governance team, (as the Secretary to the Audit & Risk Committee, the Governance team will maintain a repository of the Forms which can be made available to the Committee or to the Office for Students upon request).

There are two main parts to the Form: 1) a summary of the quality assurance and approval process for that data return; and 2) recommendations for further work to improve the data assurance standards in future data returns. The expectation is that the recommendations identified to improve the data are completed promptly and, in any case, before the next submission of the data return. All sections of the

Form must be completed before submission to the Vice-Chancellor. Where the final sign-off of a data return is not the Vice-Chancellor and/or where there are frequent submissions, then the Form should be completed and sent to the Vice-Chancellor (with a copy to the Governance team) on an annual basis.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This Form should be completed by the Responsible Officer (Executive Dean or Director (or equivalent)) and emailed to the Vice- Chancellor (copied to the Secretary to the Audit & Risk Committee) to offer assurance that the final version of the data return can be submitted to the external authority.

By signing the Form, the Responsible Officer (Executive Dean or Director (or equivalent)) is confirming that the data for the Return has been checked prior to submission and that all queries and internal validation checks have been investigated to the best ability of the section responsible. By signing the Form, the Responsible Officer is also confirming that the data has been prepared in accordance with the HESA Supply-side Code of Practice: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/data-landscape/Codes-of-practice/Supply-side. The key principles of the Code relate to honesty, impartiality and rigour.

4. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Data returns should be prepared, shared and released to the external agency/regulator in accordance with the prescribed methods required by the external agency/regulator, but also should follow the University's IT Policies and Procedures. This Sign-off Form and Procedure is compliant with the University's Schedule of Delegation.

5. REVIEW, APPROVAL & PUBLICATION

The University Executive Committee (UEC) will review the Data Returns Register at least annually, along with an informal review to ensure that this Procedure and Sign-off Form remains fit for purpose. Any changes to the Procedure or any significant changes to the Form will require approval by UEC. However, any minor amendments to the template Form will merely result in the revised Form being re-circulated to the Responsible Officers (named on the Data Returns Register) and the (Executive Dean or Director (or equivalent)). A full review of the Procedure and Sign-off Form will take place at least every three years.

The Secretary to Council is the owner of the Procedure and the Sign-off Form. The Audit & Risk Committee will have oversight to satisfy itself over the adequacy of arrangements to assure the quality of institutional data returns, in line with its terms of reference.

6. ANNEXES

Annex A provides the External Data Returns Sign-off Form.

7. DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

Document Name	External Data Returns – Sign-off Procedure
Owner	Secretary to Council
Version Number & Key Amends	1.2
Equality Analysis Decision and Date	n/a
Approval Date	01/08/2022
Approved By	University Executive Committee
Date of Commencement	01/08/2022
Date of Last Review	03 March 2026
Date for Next Review	03 March 2029
Related University Policy Documents	IT Policies & Procedures; Schedule of Delegation
For Office Use – Keywords	

ANNEX A:

Keele UNIVERSITY

External Data Returns – Sign-off Form

This form should be completed by the Responsible Officer (Dean/Director) prior to the Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) signing-off the final submission of the data return to the external authority.

To: The Vice-Chancellor
cc: The Secretary to the Audit & Risk Committee (Governance team)

From:_____*(Responsible Officer named on the Data Returns Register)*

Data Return:_____*(as detailed on the Data Returns Register)*

Please summarise the quality assurance and approval process that has been followed prior to making this submission:
[Expandable with text]

The following recommendations are for further work to improve the data assurance standards in future data returns:	**Target date for completion:**
	[Tab for more rows]

Please note that these forms will be relied on as a source of data assurance for the Audit & Risk Committee

As Director (or equivalent)/Executive Dean of_____**(Service/Faculty), I confirm that the data for the abovementioned Return has been checked prior to submission and that all queries and internal validation checks have been investigated to the best ability of the section. I can confirm that the data has been prepared in accordance with the HESA Supply-side Code of Practice:** https://www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/data-landscape/Codes-of-practice/Supply-side. **Therefore, I confirm that this submission is complete and correct.**

Print Name:_____(Responsible Officer)

Signed:_____**Date:**_____

Completed forms should be sent by email (along with the data return):

To the Vice-Chancellor: k.shakesheff@keele.ac.uk
Copied to the Governance team: governance@keele.ac.uk

For queries about this form or the procedure, please email the Governance Team.