

The UK Value for Money Steering Group

The Management of Student Administration

Self-assessment questions from HEFCE publication 01/27

Self-help guide to the management of student administration

This self-help guide has been produced for managers and staff in higher education institutions (HEIs) in response to the increasing demands placed on student administration staff and systems. The guide reproduces the self-assessment questions from section 11 of the Value for Money report on the Management of Student Administration, HEFCE01/27. The questions are shown in tabular format for the convenience of users.

We envisage this guide being of value in helping HEIs achieve the following:

- to review their own system for the management of student administration
- to improve the service they offer to students
- to maximise the benefits they achieve from using student administration systems effectively.

How to use the guide

The guide is designed to promote good practice. Institutions are not obliged to use it in any particular way, but we suggest using it in the following ways:

- for the manager or senior manager with responsibility for student administration to conduct a quick review by answering the Yes/No questions. 'No' answers, or answers where the answer is only partially 'yes', imply that more could be achieved. Not all of the questions need to be answered at the same time
- for the student administration team to 'walk through' the guide in a workshop, perhaps with a facilitator
- to invite a manager from another HEI to conduct a review of the management of student administration using the checklist
- to invite the institution's internal auditor or another independent person to complete the checklist.

Once the checklist has been completed, the student administration manager should prepare an action plan which details the action to be taken in response to the review. This should be presented to the senior manager (or overseeing committee if appropriate) for approval. The senior manager should then receive periodic reports on progress towards achievement of the action plan. The exercise could be repeated in short form annually and more thoroughly, say, every three years.

Student administration self-assessment checklist

Elements of student administration management	Is this element clearly in place?	Current process for dealing with this element	Ideas for improving current process	Timetable for action and name of person responsible
Objective 1: Students are recruited and admitted in accordance with appropriate policies, regulations and business objectives.				
Integration of functions				
i. To what extent are the recruitment and admissions functions integrated, and what are the pros and cons of that approach for the institution?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
ii. To what extent does admissions policy drive recruitment activity?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Policies and procedures				
iii. Are admissions policies established and documented?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
iv. Do these provide a clear statement of policy and objectives?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
v. How are the policies informed, monitored and communicated?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

Elements of student administration management	Is this element clearly in place?	Current process for dealing with this element	Ideas for improving current process	Timetable for action and name of person responsible
vi. Are the policies written and published in such a way as to inform the institution as a whole, not simply admissions staff?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
vii. Do these policies provide practical guidance for staff on dealing with difficult or sensitive situations?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
viii. How does the institution ensure that policies comply with relevant rules and legislation (for example, Data Protection Act, Equal Opportunities legislation, UCAS rules)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
ix. How does the institution monitor the effectiveness of policies against objectives (for example, in relation to admission of disadvantaged students, ethnic minorities, and students with particular entrance qualifications) and are such comparisons reported to senior management?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

Elements of student administration management	Is this element clearly in place?	Current process for dealing with this element	Ideas for improving current process	Timetable for action and name of person responsible
<i>Analysis of data</i>				
x. Is any analysis made of early leavers?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
xi. Are the results of these analyses used to inform the marketing and recruitment processes?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
xii. Have any analyses been carried out of the reasons for applicants applying/not applying to the institution, or the reasons for accepting/not accepting an offer, or for not taking up a place?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
<i>Handling of enquiries</i>				
xiii. Has the institution established policies and procedures for dealing with enquiries?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
xiv. Are enquiries logged?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
xv. How do you ensure that all offices that are likely to receive calls are aware of where to route different types of enquiry for the institution as a whole?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

Elements of student administration management	Is this element clearly in place?	Current process for dealing with this element	Ideas for improving current process	Timetable for action and name of person responsible
xvi. Has the institution analysed the route by which enquiries are received (post, e-mail, etc) and allocated resources accordingly?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
<i>Selection and recruitment of students</i>				
xvii. Is selection carried out by academic and/or by administrative staff?	Academic <input type="checkbox"/> Admin <input type="checkbox"/>			
xviii. Is selection organised on a centralised or devolved basis and what are the advantages or disadvantages?	Centralised <input type="checkbox"/> Devolved <input type="checkbox"/>			
xix. How have you assessed value for money, in terms of the characteristics of the students admitted (location, qualifications, etc) of the various types of recruitment material (prospectus, video, CD, Web, adverts, etc) and targeted resources accordingly?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

Training of admissions tutors				
xx. Is systematic training available for new academic selectors?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Objective 2: Data are collected and recorded accurately.				
Data input and accuracy				
i. Have policies and procedures been established and published for the collection of data and the notification of changes, with clearly defined responsibilities for students and staff?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
ii. Are reminders issued on a timely basis, and are academic staff reminded regularly of the need to report withdrawals and other changes promptly?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
iii. Are staff trained to input data correctly?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
iv. Are procedures documented for the guidance of staff inputting data?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

Centralisation of data				
v. Is responsibility for input of data centralised or devolved?	Centralised <input type="checkbox"/> Devolved <input type="checkbox"/>			
vi. Are separate departmental databases maintained? If so, how is the accuracy of the central database assured?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Managing workload peaks				
vii. Is annual enrolment conducted on-line? If so, to what extent (for example, data input by students, or staff)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
viii. What methods are employed to help cope with peak workloads (for example, use of temporary staff)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Handling changes				
ix. Are students given on-line update access to amend their own records and, if so, what security and data validation procedures are in place?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

<i>Prioritisation of information needs</i>				
x. Have the information needs of the institution been prioritised?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
xi. Are adequate validity checks and checks of accuracy built into the input processes?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
xii. How do you attempt to ensure that complete and accurate records are in place in sufficient time to meet these needs?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
<i>Use of technology</i>				
xiii. Are any innovative methods of data capture, handling and storage in use (for example, Data Image Processing, Optical/Intelligent Character Recognition (OCR/ICR), Workflow systems)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

Objective 3: Systems have been established to track students throughout their lifetime at the institution.				
Course structure				
i. Is the course structure, on the basis of which students make their course choices, coherent and readily comprehensible?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Data collection and validation				
ii. Are registrations for mandatory units automatically generated?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
iii. Are unit registrations validated as they are input?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
iv. Is responsibility for correct registration as between students and staff clearly specified?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
v. Do students verify the units they are registered for?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

vi. Are systems available to auto-validate students' unit choices against the requirements for their target awards?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Monitoring and tracking				
vii. Are progress decisions automated wherever practicable?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
viii. Are the regulations on 'unsatisfactory progress' clearly defined?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
ix. Is each student's progress reported regularly to their academic supervisor?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
x. Is there a process which ensures that all unsatisfactory students are followed up and receive appropriate guidance?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
xi. What processes are in place for verifying that a student has satisfied the regulations for the award of the degree?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

Objective 4: The conduct of examinations is in accordance with the needs of the institution.				
Control of papers				
i. Is guidance published to secure arrangements for the preparation and printing of examination questions?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
ii. What arrangements are in place to ensure that question papers are stored in secure conditions at all times?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
iii. What procedures are in place to ensure that blank answer books are stored in secure conditions at all times?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Management of exam halls				
iv. Who carries out invigilation duties?	N/A			
v. Have the costs of this method of provision been established (direct and indirect)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

vi. Do invigilators receive formal training, and are rules for the guidance of invigilators published and regularly reviewed?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Examination timetabling				
vii. Is the timetabling of exams computerised?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
viii. Is there a computerised room allocation system for exams?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
ix. If so, which computer package(s) are used?	N/A			
x. What principles underlie the construction of the examination timetable (for example, student to have only one exam per day)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
xi. Are clashes highlighted by the system?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Special needs				
xii. What procedures are in place for early identification and assessment of students with disabilities or special examination needs (for example, Dyslexia)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

<p>xiii. What policies are in place relating to the special arrangements to be applied to students with disabilities or special examination needs (for example, extra time allowed, PC facilities)?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>			
<p>Objective 5: Student assessment is in accordance with the institution's regulations and procedures.</p>				
<p>Assessments</p>				
<p>i. How is it ensured that examinations and assessments are conducted in accordance with the institution's published regulations and procedures?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>			
<p>ii. Is a scheme of anonymous marking in operation cross the institution?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>			
<p>iii. What are the key elements of the anonymous marking model that is used?</p>	<p>N/A</p>			

iv. What measures are in place to ensure the accuracy of the recording and transcription of examination marks by examiners (for example, are departments made aware of the potential dangers of errors in spreadsheets and is IT advice available on how to avoid these)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Examination Boards				
v. Are clear regulations in place as to the duties and responsibilities of Boards of Examiners, including External Examiners?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
vi. Are Boards serviced by administrative staff who are able to advise the Board?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Results				
vii. How are results communicated by academic departments to the central administration?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

viii. How are results lists authenticated by the examiners, particularly where results are communicated electronically?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
ix. Are results checked back to source data (possibly on a sample basis)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
x. Are results issued according to a published timetable?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
xi. How much time elapses between a student taking their last exam and receiving their results?	N/A			
xii. What factors affect the amount of time taken to issue results?	N/A			
xiii. Do students receive an automated individual notification of their exam results?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
xiv. What security measures are in place in respect of transcripts and degree certificates (for example, security in-built to the stationery, number of documents issued recorded and reconciled with paper stock)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

Transcripts and examination certificates				
xv. Are transcripts produced automatically for all students completing a programme of study?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Objective 6: Internal and external reports are produced in an accurate and timely manner.				
Format and management of reports				
i. Is there a clear policy as to who is authorised to produce published data in respect of the institution?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
ii. How are requirements and requests for the production of reports, both routine and ad hoc, managed?	N/A			
Centralisation				
iii. To what extent is the capability to produce reports devolved to staff throughout the institution?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

iv. Are the reporting applications/packages provided for use by staff adequate for the purpose?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
v. Does the institution provide statistical data, or data sets that can be interrogated, via its web-site?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
<i>IT support for reports</i>				
vi. Are adequate professional computing resources available to make necessary changes to system reports?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
vii. Is the production of all routine mandatory returns (for example, HESA, HESES/Early Statistics) computerised?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
<i>Accuracy of reports</i>				
viii. Are policies in place to ensure that report output is sample-checked and that reports are regularly reviewed in light of changes to the underlying database?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

Objective 7: The quality of service to students, staff and other customers is appropriate.				
Student Charter				
i. Has a Student Charter, or equivalent document, been published?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
ii. How is the Student Charter communicated to students?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
iii. How are students informed of their obligations in using student administrative services?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Establishment of service levels				
iv. Is there any monitoring of the handling of enquiries by students (for example, recording of telephone calls, measuring response times)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

v. Have targets been set for response to various types of enquiries (for example, Hardship Loan applications, provision of certificates of attendance, fee status enquiries)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Monitoring of services				
vi. Is there a formal complaints procedure for students?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
vii. Is the level of service provided by the student administrative services subject to external quality audit on behalf of its customers?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
viii. If not, how is the level and quality of customer service monitored?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
ix. Is voicemail/automatic call routing in use?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Communication with students and other customers				
x. Are students issued with a handbook describing relevant university procedures?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

xi. Does the institution have a web-site with administrative information for students?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
xii. Is the site controlled centrally or locally, and how are the data quality monitored and kept up-to-date?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
xiii. Is the standard of communications to students regularly evaluated (for example, web, e-mail, posters and publications)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
xiv. Are there policies for 'acceptable use' of e-mail for communications with the student population at large (both content and volume)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			