

Data Quality Policy

1. Statement

1.1 Kingston University is committed to maintaining high standards in its management of data, working in accordance with best practice to provide appropriate assurance regarding data quality. The University recognises its statutory responsibilities in relation to the quality and management of data under the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and associated legislation, together with the requirements of the HEFCE Financial Memorandum and Audit Code of Practice.

1.2 The Audit Commission paper *Improving Information to Support Decision Making: Standards for Better Quality Data*, published in November 2007, identifies six key characteristics of good quality data:

- **Accuracy** – Data should be sufficiently detailed for the purposes for which they are collected, represent the associated activity clearly, and be captured once only as close to the point of activity/interaction as possible;
- **Validity** – Data should be collected and used in compliance with internal and external requirements, to ensure consistency and that they appropriately reflect what they are intended to measure;
- **Reliability** – Data should be collected and processed consistently and in accordance with defined processes to ensure that any changes in data are genuinely reflective of the activities represented;
- **Timeliness** – Data should be collected as promptly as possible after the associated activity and be available for use within a reasonable timeframe;
- **Relevance** – Data collected should be relevant for the purposes for which they are obtained;
- **Completeness** – Data should be complete and as comprehensive as necessary to provide an accurate representation of the activity concerned and meet the information needs of the institution.

The University will seek to ensure that its processes for collecting, managing, and reporting on data are efficient and effective, providing data which exhibit the above characteristics.

1.3 Within the specific context of the University, good quality data are required so that the institution is able to:

- Provide effective, efficient and appropriate services to students, staff, collaborative partners and other stakeholders;
- Produce appropriate and accurate management information to inform institutional planning and decision-making;
- Accurately monitor and review its activities;
- Produce accurate external returns, whether statutory or otherwise, thereby securing appropriate and fully justified funding allocations and providing accurate representations of institutional performance;
- Meet its obligations to process personal data in accordance with the rights of data subjects under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998;
- Ensure that information requested pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is accurate, appropriate, and accessible;
- Meet its obligations under equalities and safety legislation.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy covers all data processed by the University for the purposes of managing its activities, whether on corporate information systems or in manual form. It does not cover data held by the University where the data owner is a third party, such as student coursework, nor does it cover research data for which the institution may nonetheless own the intellectual property rights. (The University's policies regarding good research practice and intellectual property rights are available at the following link:

[http://www.kingston.ac.uk/aboutkingstonuniversity/howtheuniversityworks/policiesandregulations/.](http://www.kingston.ac.uk/aboutkingstonuniversity/howtheuniversityworks/policiesandregulations/))

3. Objectives

The University aims to achieve the following data quality objectives by means of the approach outlined in each case.

3.1 Appropriate Awareness and Responsibility

3.1.1 By ensuring that all staff are able to recognise the internal and external requirements for University data to be of good quality, and to understand how they can contribute towards achieving this aim.

3.1.2 By ensuring that all staff are aware of data quality requirements in respect of their own areas of work, and understand how inaccuracies in such data might adversely impact on both the work of their section and that of the wider University.

3.1.3 By ensuring that where appropriate roles and responsibilities in relation to data quality are clearly defined within relevant procedures, and that such responsibilities are incorporated into job descriptions where they attach to specific roles.

3.1.4 By ensuring that all staff are aware of relevant local procedures for reporting any concerns regarding systemic data quality issues.

3.1.5 By ensuring that all staff are aware of their personal statutory responsibilities under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.

3.1.6 By ensuring that appropriate development and training is provided and periodically reviewed to equip staff with the necessary skills to meet the objectives of this policy.

3.2 Appropriate Procedures

3.2.1 By ensuring that the University's arrangements for the management and quality assurance of data are clearly defined at an institutional level in the Data Quality Statement, reviewed on an annual basis by the Data Quality Group.

3.2.2 By ensuring that documented local procedures are in place for key activities such as data collection exercises and external reporting, and that these incorporate data quality controls prescribed in general terms by the Data Quality Statement.

3.2.3 By ensuring that all such procedures are reviewed regularly, and at least annually, to take into account any changes made to the Data Quality Statement as well as any changes in need at both local and corporate levels.

3.2.4 By ensuring that all such procedures are fully adopted and subsequently complied with in the context of working practices.

3.3 Appropriate Systems and Processes

3.3.1 By ensuring that there are systems and processes in place for the collection, recording, analysis and reporting of data, which are focused on securing data which are accurate, valid, reliable, timely, relevant and complete.

3.3.2 By ensuring that the requirements set out in the Data Quality Statement are consistently adopted across the institution in respect of all processes supporting key data processing needs.

3.3.3 By ensuring that arrangements for collecting, recording, compiling and recording data are integrated into the business planning and management processes of the University, supporting the day-to-day work of staff.

3.3.4 By ensuring that information systems are appropriately integrated wherever possible, in order to minimise unnecessary duplication of data processing.

3.3.5 By ensuring that information systems have in-built controls that prevent erroneous data entry and which verify the consistency and completeness of data.

3.4 Appropriate Security

3.4.1 By ensuring that appropriate corporate security and recovery arrangements are in place.

3.4.2 By ensuring that the University's Information Security Policy and ICT Security Policy are complied with and regularly reviewed.

3.4.3 By ensuring that appropriate security arrangements are in place to prevent unauthorised access to data from outside the University.

3.4.4 By ensuring that arrangements are in place to ensure that levels of access to data by individual staff and students are appropriate for the requirements of their role or course of study.

3.4.5 By ensuring that appropriate business continuity and disaster recovery plans are in place and are regularly tested to protect data from loss or corruption.

4. Governance and Accountability

4.1 Audit Committee

4.1.1 The current Financial Memorandum between the University and HEFCE, which took effect on 1 August 2010, places the following responsibilities relating to data quality on the Audit Committee.

Para 34 – The audit committee annual report must include the committee's conclusions on the adequacy and effectiveness of the HEI's arrangements for [...] the management and quality assurance of data submitted to HESA and to HEFCE and other funding bodies. This latter assurance is to ensure adequate governance oversight of the systems used to generate funding data

by the HEI, since poor data may represent a significant financial risk for HEIs that audit committees need to consider.

Para 35 – The audit committee opinions should be based on the information presented to the committee. The data management assurance does not require audit committees to verify data: that is the responsibility of management. The audit committee’s interest should be in the management and quality assurance of data.

4.1.2 The University Information Committee (UIC), reporting to the Executive Board, is responsible for institutional oversight of data quality assurance. The Data Quality Group advises the UIC on issues of data quality and oversees annual review of the University’s Data Quality Statement.

Neil Latham

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Chair, Data Quality Group

Approved by the Executive Board in April 2011