



The “13 month” rule

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Completion: why? (1)

- Protecting the interests of students: limiting incentives for institutions to recruit students who have little prospect of completing their studies
 - Institutions should be expected to support their students through to completion of all the activity for which they have paid a tuition fee for the year
 - There is some evidence that some student groups that enter higher education but drop out are disadvantaged compared with equivalent groups who could have entered but did not
- We have provided funding for improving retention

Completion: why? (2)

- Easily auditable definition, limiting the accountability burden
- Not dependent on academic success and so does not put pressure on academic standards
- Treats all institutions equitably, irrespective of how they structure their provision
- Does not affect the total funding available for the sector
 - HEFCE has a fixed budget. Counting students in a different way does not increase that budget

Completion: why not progression?

- Not equitable:
 - academic regulations governing progression vary by institution.
- Puts pressure on academic standards:
 - institutions' funding should not be dependent on whether they pass or fail a student
- Does not avoid the need to know what was completed in the year:
 - progression could only be an additional funding criterion, not a substitute

The definition of completion

- HESES 2010 Annex I
- In order to be counted as a completion, a student must complete all the modules they intended to complete in the year of instance **within 13 calendar months of the start of the year of instance**. In order to complete a module, the student must either:
 - Undergo the final assessment of the module, or
 - Pass the module, where this can be achieved without undergoing the final assessment as they already have enough marks in that module to be awarded credit for it.

Issues in identifying completion (1)

- The difference between academic regulations and the funding definition
 - Continuation or entitlement to progress are not evidence of completion
 - Mitigating circumstances are not part of the funding definition
 - Credit awarded for modules that are failed

Issues in identifying completion (2)

- The recording of a student as current at a particular date on the student records system is not evidence of completion
- Non-completion rates derived from the non-completion toolkit in the HESA-HESES/ILR-HEIFES derived statistics outputs are not necessarily reliable
 - They are only as good as the HESA/ILR data that institutions submit
 - There may be consistency between HESA and HESES data when both are wrong

Issues in identifying completion (3)

- There is a distinction between the **standard** and the **minimum** requirements for full-time study
 - Meeting the minimum requirements for full-time study (21 hours study a week for 24 weeks in the year) is not evidence of completion:
 - A full-time student who completes 90 credits in the year and is thus considered by the institution to be full-time is only a completion if 90 credits was the limit of their study intentions
 - Modules taken in addition to the **standard** requirements for full-time study can be disregarded in determining completion status

The change to the definition from 2010-11 (1)

- We have replaced a previous requirement:
 - that where module completion was dependent on attendance at a final exam, it should be determined by attendance at the first presentation of the exam unless it was agreed in advance that a student would sit a later presentation
- With a new requirement:
 - that where module completion is dependent on undergoing a final assessment, that assessment must take place within 13 months of the start of the year of instance

The change to the definition from 2010-11 (2)

The “13 month” rule:

- Allows for completion if students sit exams at the “resit” opportunity in, say, September, instead of the first opportunity in May/June, irrespective of whether this was agreed in advance
- Is not confined to exams, but also applies to other forms of assessment

The change to the definition from 2010-11 (3)

The “13 month” rule:

- Does not allow extensions beyond 13 months
- Is dependent on when a student’s year of instance starts:
 - For first years: when the student starts studying towards the qualification
 - For subsequent years: On or near the anniversary of this date
 - The start of the year of instance should not be reset just because a student changes their pattern of study

Years with no assessment

- In some cases, a year of instance which counts towards a qualification taken over several years may not contain any formal assessment. In this case, **where there is no such assessment opportunity within 13 calendar months of the start of the year of instance**, then continued attendance through the year of instance would constitute completion.

When modules count

HESES Annex H figure 1:

- In the year of instance unless it spans years of instance.
- If spanning then:
 - Count in second year unless
 - If more than one year long use attendance rule

Years of instance: examples (1)

- A student starts studying full-time towards a degree on 28 September 2009. They complete their first year, but decide to delay the start of their second year's study until 10 January 2011 (instead of September 2010). For their second year:
 - When is the start of their year of instance?
 - When is the latest submission date for their final assessment, if they are to count as a completion?

Years of instance: examples (2)

- A student starts studying full-time towards a one-year Masters programme on 4 October 2010. The programme is to conclude with the submission of a dissertation on 3 October 2011
 - What is the latest extension for submission of the dissertation that can be given if the student is to count as a completion?
 - If the student submits their dissertation after that date, are they are a completion or non-completion?

The change to the definition from 2010-11 (4)

Consequential change to Column 1 of Tables 1a to 5

- The completion status of some students may no longer be clear at 1 December – they may yet have a further opportunity to undergo their final assessment within the 13 month limit
- Therefore Column 1 should exclude students that have withdrawn by 1 December (not necessarily those that have non-completed)
- Forecasts in Column 3 will need to include students who have not formally withdrawn by 1 December but will non-complete their year of instance

Other clarifications to the completion definition (1)

- Students can substitute one module for another without this affecting their completion status
- To count as a substituted module:
 - The credit points of the original and substituted module(s) would need to be equal, and
 - Either the overall fee charged would need to remain the same (commonly the case for full-time students) or the fee for the original module(s) should be reimbursed **in full** and a new fee charged for the substitute module(s)

Other clarifications to the completion definition (2)

- Where students re-take a module within a year of instance, institutions should ensure it is counted only once in determining completion status and FTE.
- The final assessment is the one with the latest normal due date (disregarding extensions/resits)

Other completion issues

- Institutions should collect information on students' study intentions and monitor completion against them