

Introduction of POLAR3

PITG 12/02

Issue

1. The underlying data used in the classification of Low Participation Neighbourhoods within the Performance Indicators is to be updated in summer 2012.

Outcomes

2. The Performance Indicators Technical Group to provide advice to the Performance Indicators Steering Group on:
 - a. Whether the LPN indicators for publication in 2013 should remain based on POLAR2, or be updated to POLAR3;
 - b. What additional analysis or information needs to be published alongside the 2013 Tranche1 publication if POLAR3 is used.

Discussion

Current Low Participation Neighbourhood classification

3. Since the 2006/07 publication, the method used to produce the low participation indicators in the Performance Indicators has used POLAR2 data.
4. The POLAR2 method is based on the HE participation rates of people who were aged 18 between 2000 and 2004 and entered a HE course in a UK higher education institution or GB further education college, aged 18 or 19, between academic years 2000/01 and 2005/06. It draws on data provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency, the Learning and Skills Council, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, the other UK funding bodies and HM Revenue & Customs.
5. The POLAR2 classification is formed by ranking 2001 Census Area Statistics wards by their young participation rates for the combined 2000 to 2004 cohorts. This gives five young participation quintile groups (qYPR) of areas ordered from '1' (those wards with the lowest participation) to '5' (those wards with the highest participation), each representing 20 per cent of UK young cohort. Students have been allocated to the neighbourhoods on the basis of their

postcode. Those students whose postcode falls within wards with the lowest participation (quintile 1) are denoted as being from a low participation neighbourhood.

6. The POLAR2 low participation measure is based on a UK wide classification of areas into participation bands. The relatively high (in UK terms) participation rate in Scotland coupled with the very high proportion of HE that occurs in FE colleges means that the figures for Scottish institutions could, when viewed in isolation, misrepresent their contribution to widening participation. Therefore, low participation data has not been produced for institutions in Scotland from 2007/08.

Update of POLAR2 to POLAR3

7. In summer 2012, HEFCE plans to make available a further update to the POLAR classification (POLAR3) which will draw upon the most recent higher education data, but will maintain the same methodology as POLAR2. This will incorporate higher education data up to the end of academic year 2010-11.

8. At this point POLAR2 will be superseded by POLAR3 for most analysis and usages, with POLAR2 used to assess historic trends and relationships.

9. Although a review of the WP indicators is planned for academic year 2012/13, there is a strong likelihood that the outcomes from that review will not be in place in time for the publication of Tranche 1 (which includes the WP indicators) in 2013. Therefore a decision on which POLAR classification will be needed.

Outcome

10. The Performance Indicators Technical Group to provide advice to the Performance Indicators Steering Group on:

- a. Whether the LPN indicators for publication in 2013 should remain based on POLAR2, or be updated to POLAR3;
- b. What additional analysis or information needs to be published alongside the 2013 Tranche1 publication if POLAR3 is used.

Further information

18. For further information contact Mark Gittoes (Phone: 0117 931 7052; e-mail: m.gittoes@hefce.ac.uk).