Higher Education Funding Council for England

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HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND

Reviewing the future information needs for taught postgraduates

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Provision of information

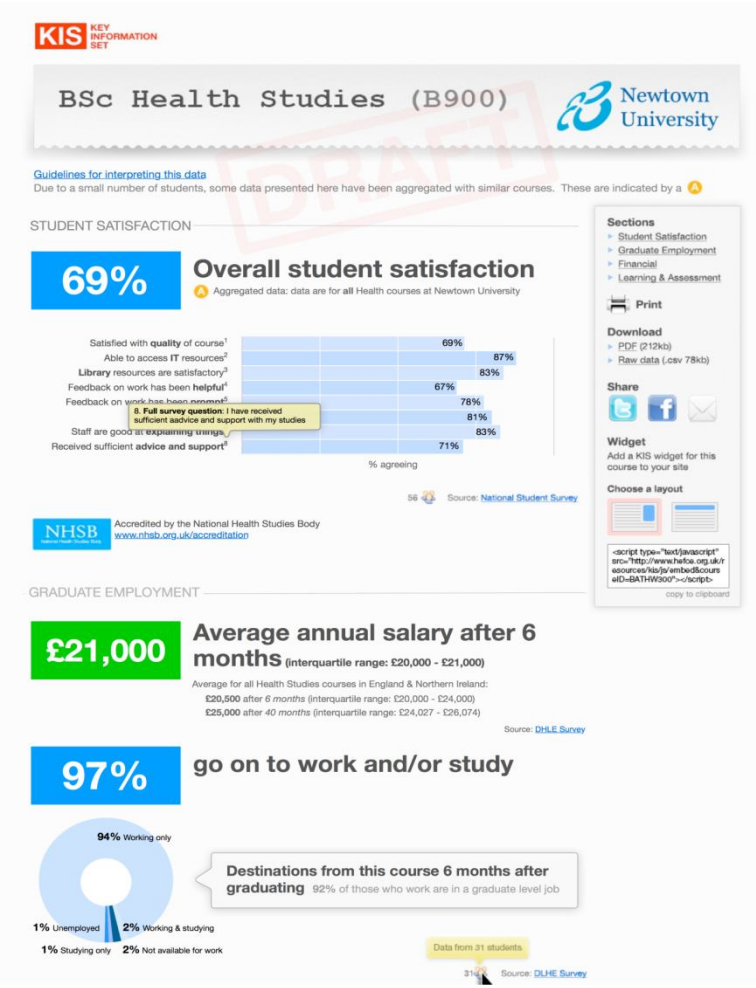
Our aim is to provide information about higher education that:

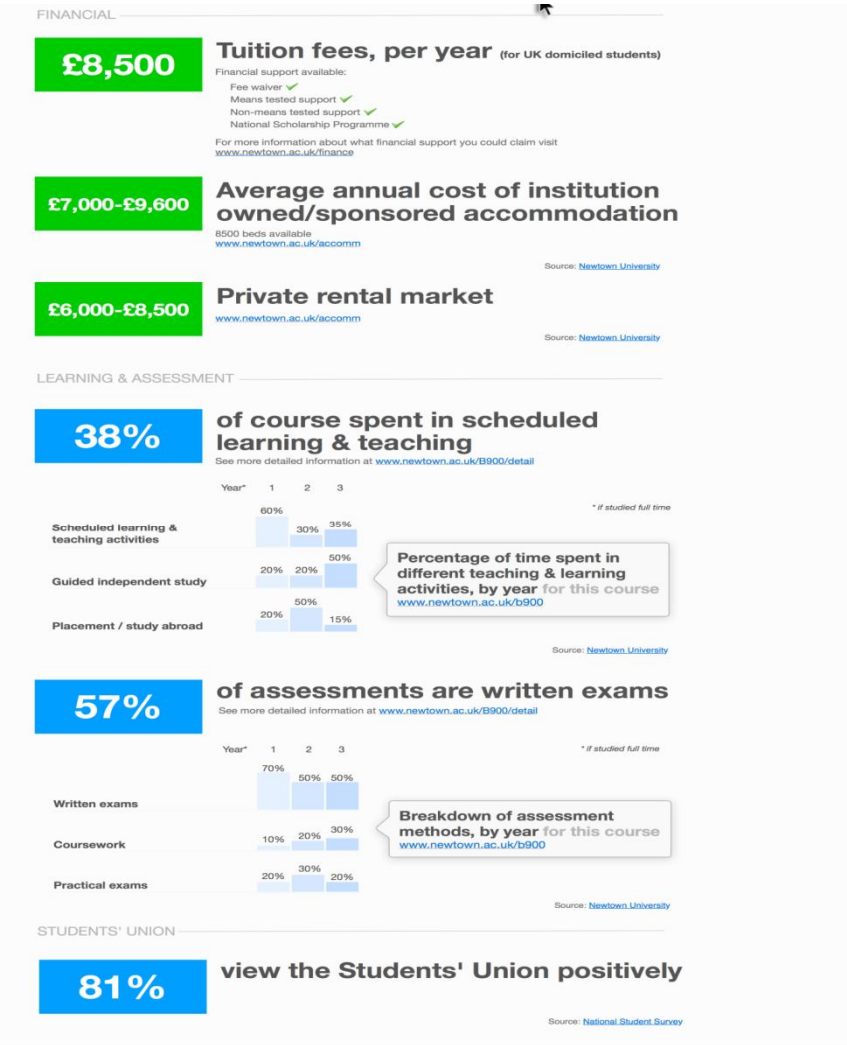
- Informs people about the quality of HE (e.g. to inform prospective student choice)
- Can be used as evidence for quality assurance processes in institutions
- Can be used by institutions to enhance the quality of their HE provision
- Is robust, comparable and appropriate across the student life-cycle
- Links with our approaches to widening participation and the QAA's approach to information.

HEFCE sources of information that help inform undergraduate student study choices:

- National Student Survey (NSS)
- The Unistats website
- The Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE)
- Key Information Set (KIS) data and new course comparison website (by September 2012)

The Key Information Set (KIS)





Government report recommends extending the provision of information for PGT students

- March 2010, Professor Sir Adrian Smith's "One step beyond, making the most of postgraduate education" called for a single source of comprehensive information about postgraduate study – including NSS-style satisfaction rates.

- June 2011, the White Paper on Higher Education accepted these recommendations and asked for consideration of an NSS-style survey for PGT students and maybe a KIS for each PGT course.

Understanding information needs – our research

- *Understanding the information needs of users of public information about higher education* (Oakleigh & Staffordshire, 2010)
  - Identified the key information useful to prospective students for the KIS
- *Enhancing and developing the National Student Survey* (IoE, 2010)
  - Confirmed the value of the NSS and recommended extending this to PGT students
- *User-Centred Design of Key Information Sets* (Pure Usability, 2010)
  - Research with user groups to understand how users wanted to receive KIS information

What next?

We need to ask the following questions:

- What are the information needs of PGT students – are they similar to those of undergraduate students?

- Would it be possible to develop an NSS-style survey for PGT students and would the information it supplies by useful to them?

Research planned for 2011-12 will investigate…

- Why students choose to undertake a PG qualification
- Who studies PGT courses and where
- What information PGT students use to decide on a course and how they would prefer this to be presented
- How students on PG courses support themselves
- Which PGT courses are commissioned by employers
- What PGT students go on to do after completing their courses
- If the information needs of international students differ from those of home/EU students

An NSS or KIS for PGT students?

Considerations:

- There is a high diversity of PGT courses, will PGT information needs be equally diverse?

- Courses with low numbers of students - how to represent survey results and other statistics meaningfully?

- What time of year should PGT students be surveyed?

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Thank you for listening

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