

Official Statistics User Consultation Response

(5th November 2012 – 31st January 2013)

Published: October 2013

Introduction

The Student Loans Company (SLC) regularly evaluates the current provision of statistics on our website and seeks feedback via user consultation. The feedback helps us to identify potential improvements SLC could make to the present publications for example new developments, breakdowns, timeliness, accessibility, clarity, presentation, quality etc.

The consultation was sent to identified users and potential users of the statistics between 5th November 2012 – 31st January 2013, these users included a broad range of users e.g. researchers, Students, Journalists, Government officers, staff in non-Government agencies and SLC staff. The consultation covered the following publications SLC are presently delivering:

- ¹Student Support Awards (Loans and Grants)
- ²Student Loans Debt and Repayment
- ³Income Contingent Repayments by Repayment Cohort and Tax Year

¹Available at: England <http://www.slc.co.uk/statistics/national-statistics/newnationalstatistics1.aspx>

¹Available at: Wales and Northern Ireland <http://www.slc.co.uk/statistics/official-statistics-%28slc%29.aspx>

²Available at: Wales and Northern Ireland <http://www.slc.co.uk/statistics/official-statistics-%28slc%29/officialstatistics2.aspx>

²Available at: England and Scotland <http://www.slc.co.uk/statistics/national-statistics/newnationalstatistics2.aspx>

³Available at: <http://www.slc.co.uk/statistics/official-statistics-%28slc%29/officialstatistics1.aspx>

Summary of responses to questions

Question: What statistical information can you NOT find and would like to?

1. Higher Education Institutional level data –

Customers Comments

- ❖ 'Institutional-level data on the number of student loans issued in any given year and the amount of debt outstanding in relation to each (Hefce-funded) university and non-Hefce funded provider. '
- ❖ 'Further breakdowns of currently released information (such as loan awards) would improve the quality of our research on the higher education funding system'

SLC Response to request: The SLC statistical team is currently investigating the possibility of what HE Institutional breakdowns can be provided, this may include a further consultation period and a final decision will be announced in response to the consultation.

2. Clearer sign posting of the publications within the slc.co.uk webpage -

Customers Comments

- ❖ 'Firstly, it should be laid out more simply, with more basic language to make it more accessible. The amount of people paid after their term has begun should also be made clear.'

Response: The re-design of the SLC Statistical page is underway and SLC hope to launch this soon which will make it easier to navigate, this will be tested on a handful of users to ensure the changes made provides a better experience. Once complete we shall inform our users of the change by email notification.

3. Information on Part Time Support within the statistical publications

Customers Comments

- ❖ 'Information on part-time support and alternative provision'

SLC Response to request: This has been reviewed and SLC shall be providing a Part Time Support breakdown in the up and coming November 2013 Statistical First Release. SLC will

publish a breakdown by provider type so that the support given to students at alternative providers can be separately identified. The publication will either be in the existing Official Statistics or in supplementary tables.

4. UK Level Publications –

Customers Comments

- ❖ 'A table that compares all UK administrations on the key figures would be useful. I am aware that all of this information is already published across 4 different statistical publications, it would be useful if a table was published that had them all next to each other for comparison.'

SLC Response to request: This is under review to determine which tables could be published at UK level as not all administrations provide customers the same Student Finance Support arrangements. We aim to publish a UK level breakdown on the SLC statistics webpage and this will be announced to our users once available.

Question: What will you use the statistical information for?

5. The use of statistics is fully detailed in the 'Use made of SLC Statistics' document located on the slc.co.uk webpage (<http://www.slc.co.uk/statistics.aspx>). However as part of the survey completed the users that responded indicated the uses included were:
 - ❖ 'Policy analysis'
 - ❖ 'Estimating costs answering parliamentary questions and queries from mps and media.'
 - ❖ 'Articles on higher education policy and the student loan system.'
 - ❖ 'Journalism'
 - ❖ 'Policy analysis and student support modeling and forecasting'
 - ❖ 'Journalistic purposes (in stories to show the financial situation of students)'
 - ❖ 'We use the information to monitor costs and help with monitoring student numbers'
 - ❖ 'To assess impact of this policy on the repayment process and to look at what we can 'do if the stats suggest any improvements could be made'
 - ❖ 'We use it for policy analysis, media enquiries, public information on student funding'and for comparative purposes for systems within the UK.'
 - ❖ 'Research and learning resources'
 - ❖ 'Research, to support policy makers.'
 - ❖ 'Academic research into the effects of the student support system.'

- ❖ 'I would be using them in my dissertation report, which is based on the financial incentives given by the UK, to provide students with the funding to go into further education'

Question: How could the statistics be improved? For example new developments, breakdowns, timeliness, accessibility, clarity, presentation, quality etc

6. Timeliness of release of the statistical publications –

Customers Comments

- ❖ 'Timeliness continues to be the biggest issue.'
- ❖ 'I think the information is pretty good and the information office are helpful with ad-hoc reports. The big issue for me is the time lag in current data being available.'

SLC Response to request: SLC agree that the timing of publications is essential and SLC publish considering this. The timing of the current series is designed to publish data as soon as is practicable after the annual period being reported. This request seems to relate more to the need for periodic updates once the first release for a period has been published. We will look into what we can provide going forward.

7. Visualization/Graphical breakdown of statistical data –

Customers Comments

- ❖ 'some graphical representation would be useful'
- ❖ 'It could do with being more visual: more graphs, more longitudinal data to show trends and changes over time, that sort of thing.'

SLC Response to request: SLC have implemented some new graphical explanations of the data within the June 2012 SFR and will continue to review other statistical publications to aid the process of continuous improvement.

8. Clearer notes / Commentary within the publications –

Customers Comments

- ❖ 'Be available in a simpler format, which can easily be found on the website. As someone who has basic knowledge of the finance, I found the website quite confusing, especially the tables.'
- ❖ 'Footnotes can contain crucial information that should perhaps be highlighted better.'
- ❖ 'better presentation and commentary'

SLC Response to request: SLC are always looking to improve the notes and commentary available in the publications and SLC have taken this into account in the June 2012 SFR and will be demonstrated within the November SFR

9. Further Breakdowns of the Statistics Published –

Customers Comments

- ❖ 'Full breakdowns by institution, date, type etc together with some graphical representation would be useful.'

SLC Response to request: The SLC statistical team is still reviewing the possibility of what further breakdowns would be possible along with graphical elements added when suitable. Presently we are able to take forward a Part Time Support table which will be released in the November 2013 Statistical First Release.

Other breakdowns requested where there is no action required.

10. Tables of information on distribution of Earnings –

SLC Response to request: SLC cannot publish HMRC sourced data due to regulatory gateway restrictions.

11. Graduate Endowment Amount is provided within the publications can we have the numbers of individuals as well as the amounts -

SLC Response to request: It is not statistically meaningful because the debt taken on to fund the Graduate Endowment is added to the debt from the maintenance loans taken on while studying. Repayment is against the total debt rather than separately against each component of the debt.

12. Average Debt outstanding by different funding cohorts –

SLC Response to request: Average Debt breakdown is already available within the Income Contingent Repayments by Repayment Cohort' statistics.

Question: Do you have any additional comments?

13. Notifications and updates to users –

Customers Comments

- ❖ 'Keeping informed of what is going on.'
- ❖ 'Can you do rss feed or mail out? I have to keep remembering to check the site.'

SLC Response to request: The statistical webpage on the SLC website (<http://www.slc.co.uk/statistics.aspx>) will be kept update with planned publications, SLC will also be informing our users of the statistics of the release of publications by email.

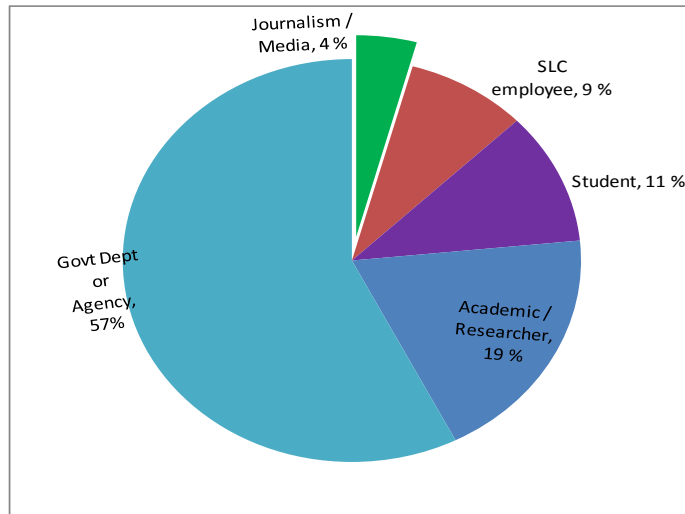
14. Create an API (Application Programming Interface)

- ❖ 'Link SLC data with an API to other data sources (e.g. Polar, NPD, HESA) to build up a dynamic and comprehensive picture of our education system.'

SLC Response to request: This would be helpful to have and would require Investigation, however resource constraints would make it a lower priority.

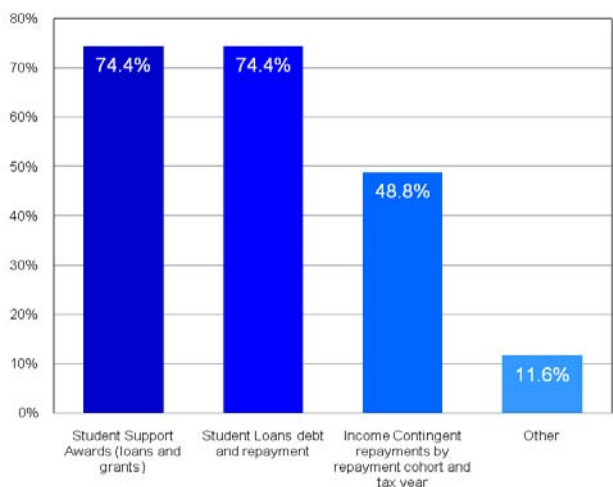
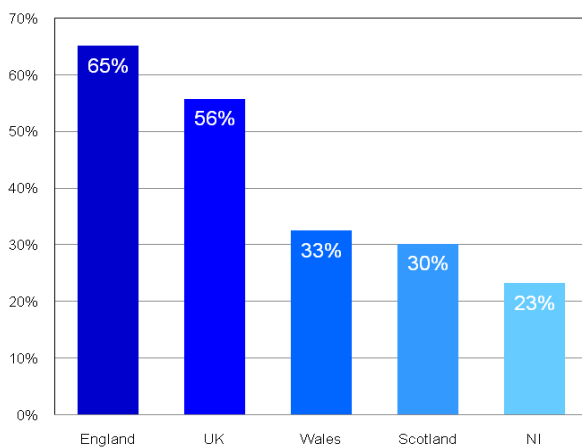
Who responded to the consultation?

The consultation received 43 responses from various backgrounds including Government Departments, Journalism/Media, SLC employees, Students and Academic/Researchers.



What did SLC get from the consultation results?

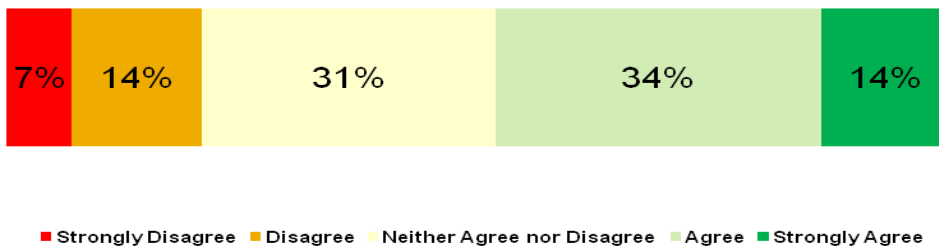
The respondents identified which publication they regularly used and which countries statistics they have an interest in. Respondents can show interest in several of the publications however the results indicated that 65% of the respondents are interested in the English Publications. There is also an interest in a UK level of the statistics which SLC presently do not publish.



The results of the consultation provided excellent feedback. Users said they would like to see improvements on notes and commentary, visualization, presentation and further breakdowns. SLC Statistical team have taken forward this feedback and implemented changes into the Income Contingent Repayments by repayment cohort released in June 2013 and future publications.

The overall satisfaction of the publications indicated that 48% of the users were satisfied with the Statistics that are published.

I am satisfied with the statistics provided by the SLC on their website



Student Loans Company would like to thank

- ✓ Everyone that took part in the consultation process
- ✓ Everyone that provided valuable feedback during the consultation

If you have any further feedback we would like to invite you to get in touch with us regarding the provision of statistics please contact us at Information_office@slc.co.uk