

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

A breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics occurs where one or more provisions of the Code were not followed in situations where an exemption or exception had not been approved by the UK Statistics Authority's Head of Assessment, as required in paragraph (xii) of the Code's preamble. Rules on pre-release access to statistics are covered in the relevant Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Orders; the Code applies as if it includes these orders.

1 Background Information

Name of Statistical Output (including web link if relevant)

Student Loans for Higher Education in Northern Ireland: Financial Year 2008-09
(Provisional)

Name of Producer Organisation

Student Loans Company

Name and contact details of person submitting this report, and date of report

Dave Cartwright,
Senior Manager – Management Information,
Student Loans Company
22nd July 2009

2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2, Practice 8 – accidental and wrongful release

Date of occurrence

18th June 2009

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

The draft of Table 3(iii) from the SFR was inadvertently included in the draft being prepared at the same time for Wales. The draft SFR for Wales containing The Northern Ireland Table 3(iii) was sent at 16:41 on 18th June 2009 to the Welsh Assembly Government analysts who were helping the SLC analysts to prepare the publication. They in turn passed the draft to officials in the Welsh Assembly

Government who were on their pre-release access list for the Welsh publication.

Reasons for breach

3 Reactions and Impact

None – there is no evidence to suggest that the information was released in public as a result of the breach. All of the recipients were aware of pre-release access rules anyway for their own publication.

4 Corrective Actions Taken (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

The Wales draft was corrected and re-circulated on 19th June and all recipients were advised to destroy the previous draft. Both SFRs were published in the correct form on 25th June 2009.

The SLC procedures for preparation of official statistics have been reviewed and updated. In particular the section on separation of duties to ensure that drafts are adequately checked has been given extra prominence.

5 Any other relevant supporting material (including link to published statements about this breach)