

TEC Data Accuracy Reports

Many clients have been struggling with the Data Accuracy Reports sent out recently by TEC. Although accompanied by a Word document many of us were (and still are) confused by this exercise.

It must be said that the intent of the exercise is noble. TEC wants to give you a heads-up about how the performance measures they are about to publish for your organisation may be affected by bad data. The problem remains, though, that the reports they have supplied are only fully comprehensible to those who prepared them.

But what is really scary is that when one is able to catch a glimpse of meaning through the fog it is all too evident that TEC has really blown it this time. Consider the following observations:

- TEC is going to publish performance measures for 2009 based on specifications not published until 31 March 2010. Would you measure your students' performance against standards not published until after their assessment?
- The measures themselves are deeply flawed and clearly discriminate against some providers because of delivery structures and timetables that differ from the university-centric norm on which TEC bases its thinking.
- The old problem that TEC is working from an incomplete data set (namely SDR files) has not gone away. You can take it as a given that what TEC publishes will not be accurate. The good news on this topic is that we aim to provide you with a tool to prove this point – see overleaf.

To give some shape to these observations let's look at just one issue. A provider enrolls students in a programme that starts in one year, say 2009, and finishes in the next (2010). The reason for doing so is that this fits the requirements of students and the industry for which they are being trained.

Just as with many other programmes some students work more quickly and some more slowly towards completion. The most committed students are able to complete the qualification in 2009 and so the qualification completion is reported in the December 2009 SDR.

Now, here's the rub. TEC reports this as a data

inaccuracy and states that the qualification completion (because it is in a different year from the related course enrolments) will not be counted when determining the provider's qualification completion performance rate.

When challenged on this absurdity TEC has come up with two possible but bizarre solutions. Firstly they suggested changing the course enrolment end dates. This of course distorts EFTS counts since the course enrolments spanned a year end.

The second suggestion was even weirder. It was proposed that the provider could change the programme structure so it finished within a calendar year. No mention here of inconveniencing students and employers, just TEC covering its own back.

Mind you, we were talking with one client who is prepared to be flexible in this way. She runs an organisation that provides training in the agriculture/horticulture area. She has indicated her willingness to change to a February/November year in line with the universities and is about to start a programme to modify the breeding cycle of livestock. She is also looking at moving the growing seasons for commercially grown fruit and vegetables but thinks this may require divine intervention.



Watermelons grown according to TEC specifications

SDR Summary Reports

Some of you undoubtedly noticed that the April SDR Broad Summary Report that you signed off to confirm student numbers and EFTS counts was incorrect. Despite its title it didn't show actual EFTS, only forecast EFTS.

You might feel a bit uncomfortable about signing and submitting the report but, on the bright side, it gives you four months EFTS free so there is no way you will break the 3% cap this year!

Top Tips – Checking TEC’s New Performance Measures

An upcoming release of Take2 will provide you with a new report that produces the three key performance measures in accordance with the definitions published in March 2010. We understand that TEC is soon to publish figures which will purport to represent your 2009 performance. You may like to check whether TEC has got it right and the new Take2 report will assist you.

Getting Ready

The measures use data that you collect to report through the SDR so the most obvious thing to do is to make sure that you have recorded all 2009 course and qualification completion data. There are, though, a couple of items of data not reported though the SDR which are required when calculating the measures. *EFTS Value* and *Award Category* both relate to prescribed qualifications and so can be entered on the *Curriculum* form; and whilst you are here make sure that you have a value in the *Register Level* field.

Running the Report

When the new version of Take2 is released you will find a new button on the *Exports & Reports* menu in the Main Module. The button is labelled “Performance Indicators”. Click the button and a new form displays. Enter a year value, make sure the “01” funding source is selected (you can select other sources but TEC focuses on 01). Untick the *Include Only Active Students* only if you have made any students inactive who were enrolled in the selected year. You may want to tick the *Produce Audit Data* so that an Excel file will be created in order that you can check what data is being used by the report.

Click *Print*, save the Excel file if you ticked this option, and wait for the report to appear.

What’s on the Report?

The report has three sections. At the top is lots of writing which gives background information on the accuracy of the report. The second section shows the filter options you selected, and the third section shows the values.

Filter Options

The report was filtered in this way:

Year: 2009

Funding Source: Student component funding (01)

Include only active students: Yes

Indicator Values

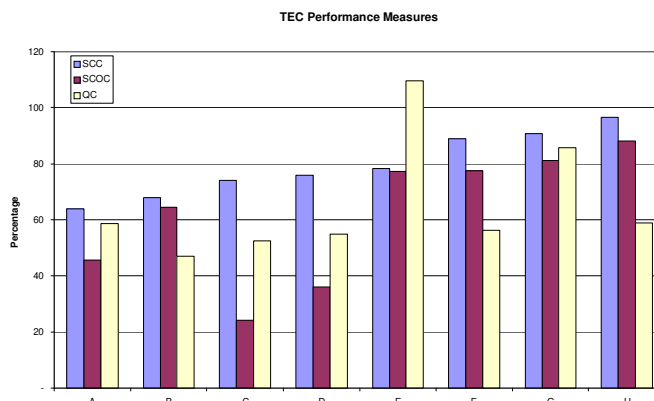
The report was filtered in this way:

- Successful Course Completion: 74.20%
- Student Retention: 42.19%
- Qualification Completion: 95.98%

Probably the first question you will ask is why are there just three values, why aren’t the measures broken down by qualification, gender, etc? The answer to that is simple: TEC is publishing only a single value for each indicator and, in any case, their definition for the indicators precludes any consistent cross tabulation. Which is not to say that you can’t do some cross tabulation of your own in the Excel audit workbook. Please be aware, though, that for the Qualification Completion measure the audit list contains only numerator data.

The second question will be, “Do these figures mean anything?”. The answer to this question is that the student retention (SCOC) measure has virtually no meaning, the qualification completion (QC) measure might have some meaning for large organisations but certainly not as a single figure across the whole organisation, and the successful course completion (SCC) measure has meaning but not unless you have disaggregated your qualifications correctly.

A third question is this “Can I compare my figures with those of other providers?”. The chart below shows results for 8 actual providers. It would be a brave person who started to compare their performance.



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