

OFFA guidance for SCITTs

How to complete your access agreement monitoring return for 2008-09

October 2009/05

This document sets out the information we need from SCITTs (School Centred Initial Teacher Training Providers) to carry out our annual monitoring of access agreements.

All SCITTs with an approved access agreement for 2008-09 must submit a monitoring return to us by **Friday 18 December 2009**.

To	Heads of School Centred Initial Teacher Training Providers
Reference	2009/05
Publication date	October 2009
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Executive Summary

What this document is about

1. This document sets out what we need from School Centred Initial Teacher Training Providers (SCITTs) in order to carry out our annual monitoring of access agreements. It asks all SCITTs with an OFFA-approved access agreement for 2008-09 to send us a monitoring return.

The information we need

2. SCITTs must provide data on:

- additional fee income and number of trainees
- actual expenditure on bursaries and scholarships trainees from lower-income and other under-represented groups
- the number of trainees from lower-income and other under-represented groups in receipt of a bursary or scholarship.
- confirmation that the information in monitoring returns has been validated and approved as correct.

3. SCITTs may also wish to provide:

- actual expenditure on additional outreach activities covered in access agreements
- a commentary on milestones (where applicable)

Additional information we may ask for

4. We may also require the following additional information:

- a report on bursary awareness-raising activities if take-up appears to have been low
- an explanation where the actual expenditure on bursaries or outreach is less than expected

How we will use the information you give us

5. We will use the information you provide to consider the extent to which your institution has broadly met the commitments set out in its access agreement. We will aim to publish a short report in May 2010 regarding the outcomes of the annual monitoring process.

6. In addition, the information provided will inform our annual report to Parliament and provide evidence for the Independent Review on fees and student support which is due to start later this year. This will report on all aspects of the new fee and student support arrangements based on the first three years' operation of the policy. We may also share relevant information with the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Training

and Development Agency for Schools and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skill. Additionally, individual monitoring reports may be disclosed on request, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act.

What you need to do now

7. Like last year, we will give you information that will help you complete your monitoring return, such as Student Loans Company income distribution data for your institution and details of expenditure paid through HEBSS (where applicable). This will be sent to you via email. We will also email you a link so you can download a monitoring return template from our website. When you have received the SLC data and downloaded your monitoring return template, you should:

- complete your monitoring return template – checking it carefully against the guidance in this document. If in doubt, ask us for clarification
- submit your completed template to returns@offa.org.uk by 18 December 2009.

Definitions of terms used in this guidance

Additional fee income

8. Additional fee income is defined as any fee income above the standard fee (£1,255 in 2008-09). Where SCITTs have charged the maximum fee of £3,145 for full-time trainees in 2008-09, the 'additional fee income per trainee' is £1,890 (£3,145 - £1,255). The equivalent for part-time trainees is £945 (£1,570 - £625).

Under-represented groups and OFFA-countable groups

9. Where we talk about trainees being in under-represented groups or OFFA-countable groups, we mean groups that are currently under-represented in higher education and at the national level rather than at a particular institution or course, including:

- people from low income backgrounds
- people from lower socio-economic groups
- people from low participation neighbourhoods
- minority ethnic groups or sub-groups that are under-represented in HE
- care leavers
- disabled people.

Outreach

10. We define outreach as any activity that involves raising aspirations and attainment and encouraging trainees from under-represented groups to apply to higher education. This might mean funding specific new activities or enhancing and growing existing programmes. It can include relevant staffing and overhead costs.

11. For the purposes of access agreement monitoring, you should only report on outreach funds committed from additional fee income and other new and additional sources of support.

Background information

Why you need to complete a monitoring return

12. There is a statutory requirement for SCITTs to let us know about the extent to which they have met the obligations set out in their access agreements, and to report on the progress they have made with their objectives and milestones. We need sufficient information in order to:

- monitor that SCITTs are meeting their commitments to individual trainees
- provide an annual report to Parliament containing an overview of progress with access agreements
- collect evidence for the Independent Review on fees and student support, which is due to start later this year.

13. However, we realise that SCITTs are very small institutions and wish to minimise the administrative burden placed on you. We are therefore asking for a reduced level of information from you compared to that required from higher education institutions and further education colleges.

Changes to the 2008-09 monitoring process

14. The 2007-08 monitoring process generally worked well but there were some areas we would like to improve to ensure that the information you submit to us is robust and also to improve the information we are able to provide to the Independent Review. The main changes for 2008-09 monitoring are:

- we have changed the system for SCITTs subscribing to the Higher Education Bursary and Scholarship Scheme (HEBSS) full service, as the previous requirement to submit only partial information to OFFA was confusing. All SCITTs must now submit the same level of information, although if you subscribe to HEBSS we will continue to make available HEBSS data to help you complete your return
- we have changed the timetable for monitoring returns so that it is later in the academic year.

We will give you data from the Student Loans Company (SLC)

15. To help you complete your monitoring return, we will give you SLC income distribution data for your SCITT. This will give you a breakdown by income band of the numbers/proportions of trainees (UK-domiciled) at your SCITT in 2008-09.

16. In addition, if your SCITT subscribes to the Higher Education Bursary and Scholarship Scheme (HEBSS), we will ask the SLC to provide additional information to enable you to verify some of the information you are giving us on your monitoring return. This additional information will be as follows:

- 'consent to share' data showing the number of trainees, and their parents/sponsors, within each household income group described in paragraph 26 who consented or did not consent to share their financial information

- the number of bursary holders, by assessed household income bands as set out in paragraph 26
- details of the expenditure your institution has paid through HEBSS to Home and European Union trainees, by household income band (this information will only be available to SCITTs subscribing to the full HEBSS service)

17. The data we request from the SLC will:

- be a snapshot provided at 25 October 2009.
- include all payments made since 1 August 2008 in respect of the 2008-09 academic year.

18. Last year, we asked SCITTs subscribing to HEBSS to submit only information on payments made outside the HEBSS system. This year, we will require all SCITTs to submit a full monitoring return, regardless of HEBSS status. If your SCITT subscribes to HEBSS, you must therefore ensure that your data includes all expenditure, including that paid through HEBSS.

19. Similarly, previous monitoring rounds have highlighted that HEBSS and SLC income distribution data may not be directly comparable with SCITTs' own data on bursary payments or eligibility. For example, trainees may have been paid manually based on information supplied outside of HEBSS, had their income re-assessed since receiving a bursary, or payments may have been made after the date when the data was provided to us by the SLC. For this reason, we do not necessarily expect the figures you provide in your return to reconcile precisely with those provided by the SLC.

If you have an access agreement but only charged a standard fee

20. If you have an approved access agreement, but decided not to implement it - i.e. you charged no more than the standard fee – then you do not need to make a full return. There is a tick box on the monitoring return for you to indicate this. Please see paragraph 22.

Other information

21. A copy of the monitoring return template for 2008-09 is included at Annex A. This annex is for reference only. We will email you a link to download the template from our website.

Your monitoring return checklist

- ✓ **include** all fee income and trainee numbers for both full and part-time initial teacher training courses and for both Home and European Union trainees
- ✓ **include** all trainees who have paid a fee or received an OFFA-countable bursary in 2008-09, even if they have subsequently withdrawn from their course or did not complete the full year
- ✓ **include** only expenditure in the finance return that is countable by OFFA – for example, bursaries paid to trainees above the specified household income levels or payments made from the Access to Learning Fund are not OFFA-countable
- ✓ **if** you provide information on milestones, only report against milestones set out in your access agreement covering 2008-09
- ✓ **ensure** that you have completed the validation and assurance statement correctly.

How to complete your monitoring return – step by step

If you are unsure about any aspect of making your return, please contact us on 0117 931 7171 or enquiries@offa.org.uk

You must complete and submit institutional data on:

- additional fee income
- the number of trainees
- actual expenditure on bursaries and scholarships to trainees from lower-income and other under-represented groups, by income band
- the number of trainees from lower-income and other under-represented groups in receipt of a bursary or scholarship, by income band

Additional fee income and bursary expenditure

If you have an access agreement, but only charged a standard fee

Action

22. If you have an approved access agreement, but decided not to charge a fee above £1,255 in 2008-09 you should indicate this on the monitoring return in the tick-box provided. You do not need to provide any further information.

Tables 1 - Additional fee income, by fee amount and cohort

Action

23. Please indicate the fee you have charged, and how many trainees you have charged this fee.

Explanatory notes for Table 1

24. The 'additional fee income' rows in Table 1 are calculated automatically and are equal to the variable fee charged minus the standard fee multiplied by the number of trainees (see paragraph 8). Some SCITTs will offer part-time provision which is also covered under their access agreement so there are sections that allow you to record both full-time and part-time fees and trainees. Where SCITTs have charged the maximum fee of £3,145 for 2008-09, the additional fee income per trainee is £1,890 (£3,145 - £1,255). Therefore, a SCITT that charged 20 trainees the full fee would have an additional fee income of £37,800 i.e. 20 x (£3,145 - £1,225).

25. We recognise that actual additional fee income may differ from the equation above, for example where trainees have not completed their course of study and only paid a partial fee. There is a section that allows you to inform us where additional fee income is different to the automatically calculated totals.

Checklist for Table 1

- ✓ **include** fees charged and trainee numbers for Home/European Union and both full and part-time ITT
- ✓ **include** part-time ITT courses with a lower maximum fee
- ✓ **include** all trainees who have paid a fee or received an OFFA-countable bursary in 2008-09, even if they have subsequently withdrawn from their course

Table 2 – Expenditure on bursaries and scholarships and number of trainees in receipt of financial support

Action

26. You should report on actual expenditure on OFFA-countable bursaries and scholarships as set out in your access agreement and on the numbers of trainees in receipt of awards. This will help us make sure that you have met your commitments to individual trainees. Please split your figures by income thresholds as follows:

- trainees in receipt of full state support with household incomes up to £25,000¹
- trainees in receipt of partial state support, with household residual incomes between £25,001 and £39,305
- trainees with household residual incomes between £39,306 and £49,305
- trainees from other under-represented groups that are OFFA-countable

Explanatory notes for Table 2 (expenditure on bursaries and scholarships)

27. As with last year, we wish to identify the amount of money being directed to the lowest income group, defined as trainees in receipt of full state support. You should note that the threshold for trainees in receipt of full state support changed from £17,910 in 2007-08 to £25,000 in 2008-09.

28. The threshold for trainees in receipt of partial state support also changed in 2008-09, increasing to £60,005. However, we do not feel that reporting up to this £60,005 level would be sufficiently targeted, particularly in view of the fact that that upper threshold was reduced in 2009-10. We have therefore asked SCITTs to report on expenditure for trainees

1. ¹ As the majority of ITT courses are for one year we expect that your monitoring return will only cover trainees who started their course in 2008-09. If you do have any trainees continuing from previous years please contact us directly to discuss this first.

in receipt of partial state support with household residual incomes up to £39,305, the same level as 2007-08.

29. We do however recognise that some institutions see trainees in receipt of partial state support with household incomes above £39,305 as an important target group. To be consistent with earlier monitoring rounds, we would therefore also like you to report on expenditure to trainees with a residual household income of up to £49,305.

30. For the purposes of our assessment we will count all expenditure on bursaries and scholarships paid to students from the household income brackets set out in paragraph 26:

- where the household income of the trainee is known – whether it relates to a means-tested payment or a non-means tested payment – you should allocate expenditure to the relevant income bracket
- in some cases, the information on household income may be known, but within an income band which is inconsistent with the thresholds set out above. In these cases, you may still be able to calculate as an estimate approximately how many bursaries were paid to trainees from each household income group by using the SLC income distribution data (Note: where trainees are classified in SLC income distribution data as ‘unknown’, you should assume that their income is above OFFA-countable levels and they should not be counted.)
- similarly, if your SCITT provides bursaries or scholarships awarded on other measures of under-representation that are countable by OFFA or if you award bursaries regardless of a trainee’s income, you may still be able to calculate estimated expenditure. Again, use the SLC income distribution data to work out the proportion of trainees who are likely to fall into each income group. For example, if you award bursaries to trainees from low-participation neighbourhoods, you will not necessarily have information on household income, but you may still be able to estimate expenditure for each income group. (Note: You may need to apply a weighting if your experience indicates that trainees are unlikely to be evenly distributed across income groups.)
- expenditure should only be listed under “trainees from other under-represented groups” where you know that the students are in an OFFA-countable group but household income is unknown and you are not able to have reasonable confidence in any estimates.

31. Where figures are based on estimates, you should declare this in the monitoring return with a brief explanation of your calculations.

32. In some cases, residual household income may have been reassessed during the academic year, or a trainee may have withdrawn from their course or not completed a full year or programme of study. In these cases, a trainee may have received a particular bursary package even though their circumstances have subsequently changed. For the purposes of our assessment, we are happy for you to include these trainees in your return based on their household income at the time they were originally assessed for an award.

Explanatory notes for Table 2 (number of trainees in receipt of financial support)

33. Where possible, you should tell us how many bursary holders there are in each income band as specified in your monitoring return template. We are interested in the number of beneficiaries rather than the number of awards. Therefore, if you give a trainee more than one bursary, you should only count them once. Where a trainee receives a core bursary based on income and a non-income-related award, you should record them only once based on their income-related bursary.

34. For the purposes of our assessment we will count all trainees in receipt of bursaries and scholarships from the household income brackets set out in paragraph 26. As with expenditure on bursaries and scholarships, you should attempt to allocate trainees to household income brackets, using estimates where necessary in the same way as set out in paragraph 30. Where figures are based on estimates, you should declare this in the monitoring return with a brief explanation of your calculations.

Checklist for Table 2

✓ **Include** actual expenditure since 1 August 2008:

- in respect of the 2008-09 academic year only
- on bursaries and scholarships paid to trainees from the requested household income groups or from other under-represented groups, and
- on 'in-kind' awards such as discounts on accommodation and provision of laptops

✓ **Include** all trainees who have paid a fee or received an OFFA-countable bursary in 2008-09, even if they have subsequently withdrawn from their studies or did not complete the full year or programme of study

✓ **Do not include:**

- expenditure on bursaries and scholarships for trainees above a household income of £49,305 who are not from an under-represented group
- expenditure that is not paid directly to trainees as an award with a financial benefit, for example expenditure on the overall improvement of services for students and broader retention measures
- Access to Learning Fund payments; this funding is received by all institutions from the Government and does not form part of any access agreement
- expenditure on historic bursaries and scholarships that were well established before the introduction of variable fees and which are not funded through additional fee income

Table 3 - Expenditure on bursaries and scholarships as a proportion of additional fee income - and the proportion of students in receipt of bursaries and scholarships

Action

35. Table 3 shows your expenditure on bursaries and scholarships as a proportion of additional fee income and the proportion of trainees in receipt of bursaries and scholarships. This table calculates automatically, using the data you have provided in tables 1 and 2. All you need to do is check that the figures shown are in line with your expectations. We will use the data from these tables in our monitoring report.

Additional outreach expenditure (where applicable)

You may wish to provide details of actual expenditure on additional outreach activities covered in your access agreement. Completion of this section is optional.

Table 4 - Expenditure on additional outreach activities

Action

36. If you wish to complete Table 4, please tell us how much you have spent on additional outreach in 2008-09 and include a brief explanation of what this activity was. We will report on expenditure on additional outreach activities in our monitoring outcomes report.

Explanatory notes for Table 4

37. The expenditure you report on outreach should only relate to funds committed from additional fee income and other new and additional (post-2006) sources of funding. They should relate to additional outreach activities, or a continuation of existing activities where previous funding may have been reduced or discontinued.

38. If your SCITT did not commit itself in its access agreement to spending part of its additional fee income on additional outreach activity, but additional expenditure has been made, this can be reported on. To be countable it must be additional to activities or costs that existed before the introduction of variable fees and should meet the definition in paragraphs 10 to 11. This can include relevant staffing and overhead costs.

Milestones and objectives

You may wish to provide a report on milestones covered in your access agreement. Again, completion of this section is optional.

Action

39. We no longer think that reporting against statistical milestones is suitable for SCITTs as the small number of trainees involved makes the setting of targets problematic. However, if you wish to submit a report please provide us with an accompanying free-format text report.

Explanatory notes to milestones and objectives

40. When SCITTs first submitted access agreements the majority did not set milestones. This was due to an absence of baseline data. Following the experience of the first years of higher fees, OFFA no longer considers it essential for SCITTs to provide milestones due to the small numbers of trainees involved. We recognise that some SCITTs may have recorded milestone data which we are happy to look at if provided.

41. However, we do expect that SCITTs should commit to maintaining a record of the awards that they pay out. We consider the data provided in tables 1 and 2 to fulfil this requirement

42. If you do wish to submit a report against milestones and objectives we suggest that you should re-state each milestone as it exists in your 2008-09 access agreement (including any baseline and target figures), set out the current position and provide any commentary as necessary. In previous years, many institutions have given us an explanatory summary together with a table showing actual progress by year against milestones and target figures. This has proved a helpful way of setting out the information.

Validating your monitoring return

Action

43. Your monitoring return must be validated and signed off by an appropriate senior manager.

Explanatory notes for validating your monitoring return

44. The purpose of the sign-off is to provide assurance that the information you provide has been validated independently from the person responsible for compiling the return. It is up to each SCITT to determine its own process for checking the accuracy of the information it provides. This could be through internal audit or a governors group. All information is subject to audit and you should ensure that the way you validate your information meets your own internal audit requirements.

What happens once you have submitted your form

How we will assess your monitoring return

45. As soon as we receive your return, we will email you to confirm receipt. We will then start to assess your return. In doing this, we will look to see that you have broadly met your bursary commitments.

46. Within this context, we may still wish to ask you about your return if we feel that bursary commitments have not been met; or, for example, if some of the information or data:

- is unclear
- does not make sense from our knowledge of your access agreement and SCITT
- is inconsistent with centrally collected data.

47. We hope to have completed all assessments by March 2010 and to let you know the outcome of your assessment in April 2010.

We will collect and share some information centrally

48. In order to inform our monitoring, we will ask the SLC for information on the number of trainees from lower-income backgrounds at each institution. This is so we can monitor progress across the sector and identify any emerging patterns over time.

49. We may share relevant information from access agreement returns with the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Training and Development Agency for Schools, and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

We will publish the results of the monitoring process

50. We will publish a short report on the outcomes of our monitoring in May 2010. This report will focus on universities and colleges but will also include aggregate level data for SCITTs. This will include the proportions of fee income spent on bursaries and scholarships for lower-income students and trainees and the amount spent on additional outreach.

51. Individual level data for SCITTs will not be available in the report but will be available on request.

52. In addition, we will use the results of our monitoring to inform our annual report to Parliament and provide evidence for the Independent Review on the first three years of variable fee arrangements.

We may audit your monitoring return

53. We reserve the right to audit your monitoring return and the way you are implementing your access agreement. If, before taking this step, we identify significant

concerns with delivery, we will invite you to discuss any emerging issues with us and, where necessary, ask you to provide further information.

How the Freedom of Information Act affects monitoring returns

54. OFFA is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which gives the public a right of access to any information we hold. We have a responsibility to decide whether individual monitoring returns should be disclosed on request, or treated as confidential. We can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances. This means individual monitoring returns are unlikely to be treated as confidential except in very particular circumstances. Where you consider information in your return to be confidential, please extract the information and insert it into a separate annex, which we will treat as being potentially commercially sensitive. You should still refer to this information elsewhere in the monitoring return. Where we consider it to be appropriate and practicable, we may seek your views before disclosing information in this annex. Further information about the FOI Act is available at www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk.

How to submit your return

55. Please submit your completed monitoring return template and your milestones report by email to returns@offa.org.uk by **18 December 2009**.

Late returns

56. Please note, it is a statutory obligation to report on progress with your access agreement and it is important to submit your return by the deadline. If your return is late we cannot guarantee that we will be able to include your data in the monitoring outcomes report we publish.

57. If your monitoring return needs to be approved at a meeting of your governing body or other relevant committee after the deadline of 18 December 2009 you can submit a draft electronic copy of your monitoring return with a request for a limited extension to the deadline for your final version.

Annex A This annex is for reference only. The template for you to complete is available on the OFFA website at <http://www.offa.org.uk/universities-and-colleges/monitoring/>

Access agreement monitoring return academic year 2008-09 – SCITTs only

Additional fee income and expenditure

If you opted not to charge a fee above £1,255 in 2008-09 please tick this box

You need to complete cells highlighted in yellow. Other cells calculate automatically

Table 1

Full-time trainees	Amount (£)
Fee charged (eg £3,145)	
Total number of trainees paying a higher fee	
Additional fee income (<i>full-time trainees</i>)	This cell calculates automatically
Part-time trainees	Amount (£)
Fee charged (eg £1,570)	
Total number of trainees paying a higher fee	
Additional fee income (<i>part-time trainees</i>)	This cell calculates automatically
Total number of trainees paying a higher fee	This cell calculates automatically
Total additional fee income	This cell calculates automatically

If your additional fee income is different to the automatically calculated amount please provide details here

Table 2

	Expenditure on bursaries and scholarships (£)	Number of trainees in receipt of financial support
Trainees with assessed household incomes up to £25,000		
Trainees with assessed household incomes between £25,001 and £39,305		
Trainees with assessed household incomes between £39,306 and £49,305		
Trainees from other under-represented groups		
Total	This cell calculates automatically	This cell calculates automatically

If the data in table 2 is based on estimates, please provide details here

Table 3

	Proportion of additional fee income spent on bursaries and scholarships (%)	Proportion of trainees in receipt of financial support (%)
Trainees with assessed household incomes up to £25,000	This cell calculates automatically	This cell calculates automatically
Trainees with assessed household incomes between £25,001 and £39,305	This cell calculates automatically	This cell calculates automatically
Trainees with assessed household incomes between £25,001 and £39,305	This cell calculates automatically	This cell calculates automatically
Trainees from other under-represented groups	This cell calculates automatically	This cell calculates automatically
Total	This cell calculates automatically	This cell calculates automatically

Outreach (where applicable)**Table 4**

Outreach expenditure	Amount (£)
Total	

Please provide a brief statement on what outreach activities have been included in the amount above

Milestones and objectives (optional)

OFFA no longer considers it essential for SCITTs to provide milestones due to the small numbers of trainees involved. We recognise that some SCITTs may have recorded milestone data which we are happy to look at if provided. Please see paragraphs 39-42 of the guidance.

However, we do expect that SCITTs to maintain a record of the awards that they pay out. We consider the data provided in tables 1 and 2 to fulfil this requirement.

Validation of monitoring return

In submitting this monitoring return you are confirming that all the information you have provided (both in the return and in your report on milestones) has been compiled in accordance with our guidance, subject to an independent internal validation process, and signed off and approved as correct. See paragraphs 43-44 of the guidance.

Contact details for senior manager responsible for validating the monitoring return:	
Name	
Post	
Telephone	
E-mail	
Signed	