

Dear Principal

Want to avoid UCU's annual Freedom of Information request?

Credible and consistent staff data is essential if we are to respond to the current challenges our sector faces. As such, it is a key priority for all organisations in the sector to ensure that the highest quality and most uniform workforce data is available to help us understand the composition and structure of our workforce.

You will have recently received a joint letter from the Education and Training Foundation, the University and College Union and the Association of Colleges, which provided details of our new collaborative approach to staff data collection in the further education sector. The letter invited your college to participate by opting in through the SIR Data Insights website. I am writing to remind you about this new arrangement and to encourage you to participate.

Previously UCU has submitted an FOI request to every college annually. This new approach simplifies the collection of staff data by sharing the data collected through SIR Data Insights with UCU and the AoC, reducing UCU's need to submit FOI requests to colleges, and therefore reducing the overall administrative burden on colleges.

Colleges that opt in will have only one annual staff data return to complete, through SIR Data Insights, which is then shared across all three organisations. This will provide the sector with more robust, complete and transparent workforce data, and as mentioned above, will also significantly reduce the administrative burden for colleges in completing both the return through SIR Data Insights and UCU's annual Freedom of Information request. All data provided to UCU and AoC will strictly adhere to the limits of the Data Protection Act 1998 and no individual staff member will be identifiable.

All you need to do is select 'opt in' when you complete your workforce data return through SIR Data Insights for 2016/17. This will ensure that you do not receive a full FOI request from UCU on staff data this year. You will instead receive a short survey on contractual terms and condition at your college. Your anonymised data on staff numbers and pay will be shared by ETF with UCU and AoC following the closure of the SIR Data Insights collection window at the end of October.

If you don't complete your 2016/17 workforce data return through SIR Data Insights or don't agree to share your data, you will receive a full UCU FOI request as normal.

I urge you to opt in to this new collaborative approach to staff data collection. By participating you will be helping to strengthen staff data across the whole FE sector through the development of a robust single sector wide dataset, as well as reducing the volume of information UCU seeks from your college via FOI requests.

You can opt in to participating in the data sharing arrangement when you log in to SIR Data Insights at <https://www.sirdatainsights.org.uk/>.

If you have any queries about the planned data sharing arrangement please contact Charlynn Pullen at the ETF (Charlynn.pullen@etfoundation.co.uk), Jonathon Guy at UCU (jguy@ucu.org.uk) or Caroline Rowlands at AoC (caroline_rowlands@aoc.co.uk)

Yours Sincerely,



Andrew Harden
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University and College Union