

APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

The student performance data used in this paper were derived from longitudinal records compiled for each first-time-entering student entering the higher education system in 2000. The longitudinal records included key biographic information extracted from the 2000 HEMIS student files for each institution, and information on the qualification for which they registered in that year, to which abbreviated academic records (year, programme code, programme type, entrance category and completion status) for the years 2001 to 2004 were appended. It should be noted that the 2001 to 2004 academic records were those relating to the institution at which the student first registered in 2000. Students who transferred to other institutions therefore appear as drop-outs in this analysis. Students taking an absence of a year or more from their initial institutions were however tracked into 2004 in these institutions. Pivot tables were used to summarise the data in the longitudinal databases, and the tables shown in the paper were drawn up from these summaries.

Student programmes were identified by the programme type as well as by the first order CESH (Classification of Educational Subject Matter) within the first of four possible CESH area of specialisation fields in the 2000 HEMIS returns. The first order CESH (the first two digits of the relevant field in HEMIS) indicates the broad area of specialisation, e.g. CESH 08 represents 'Engineering and Engineering Technology', CESH 06 includes all 'Computer Science and Data Processing'.

It should be noted that no order is specified in the HEMIS returns where a student has more than one area of specialisation, and it is therefore assumed that the first CESH area of specialisation field provides a reasonable indication of the student's subject area.

It should also be pointed out that the CESH classification system dates back to 1982 and that it is recognised that disciplinary shifts and developments since that time may make it difficult to accurately classify some contemporary subject matter according to the existing system.

