

To: Clients and Colleagues  
From: Richard Hamilton-Williams, adaptIT Australasia  
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Topic: **Our View on the new Cohort-Based EPIs**

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## 1 *The Fundamentals*

It is our view that the concept of the cohort-based EPIs is fundamentally sound by which we mean that the measures will be generally more representative of the performance of TEOs than the existing measures. The existing measures – Qualification Completion and Student Retention (which itself relies on Qualification Completion) – are fundamentally flawed in that they do not measure like against like. There are two reasons for this discrepancy, namely: TEC’s doubts about the reliability of historic SDR data at the time that the measures were introduced, and the fundamental flaws on the SDR itself.

Those flaws in the SDR are multiple but the two that have most affected the EPIs are the fact that a discrete and reliable record of qualification enrolments is not reported through the SDR, and that the value of the “Year Requirements Met” field is simply a year value (e.g. 2016), and not a full date (e.g. 05/07/2016). Earlier, and until 2011, there was a third issue, namely the confusion of there being both a “Year Requirements Met” field and a “Year Graduated” field in the Qualification Completion file.

So whilst the cohort-based measures do at least measure like against like, they are still to some extent afflicted by the two SDR flaws described above.

## 2 *The Quality of TEC’s Calculations*

TEC has asked for feedback by 11 August on any data quality issues with the information they are proposing to publish later in the year. Along with the draft information made available to each provider in Workspace 2 there is a CSV file rather grandly titled something like this: “9999 – Happy Days Institute - 2015 Cohort-based completion and retention rates - transparency data as at 20160719”. This file is presumably supposed to allow providers to match the data in the CSV file against the data in their student management systems, or to match against historically submitted SDR files going back up to ten years<sup>1</sup>. There are a couple of problems with this concept.

- a) The methodology paper published in July by TEC contains a number of ambiguities and a distinct lack of clarity. One would imagine that a comprehensive understanding of the methodology used by TEC would be a prerequisite for matching to test quality issues. The methodology as it stands confuses rather than elucidates.

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<sup>1</sup> The ten year requirement admittedly only affects providers with level 7 degree qualifications.

- b) It would be a remarkable student management system database that contained all data required for matching and analysis going back up to ten years is in the same state as it was when finally submitted via the SDR.
- c) Likewise there would be few providers with access to all their finally submitted SDR files going back up to ten years, let alone having the resources to analyse that data given that SDR files have changed format and content over that time. A few universities may be blessed with this data and those resources.

The truth is that there will be almost no reliable feedback from the sector that could confirm or dispute the quality of what TEC is about to publish. The general consensus amongst the smaller organisations will be (as it has been in the past) that if TEC haven't got their sums right, at least all providers will be equally affected so that in the end it doesn't really matter.

### 3 *What Can We Do for You?*

Take2 currently provides two types of report that relate to the existing EPIs. There is the *Performance Indicators* report itself which can be used throughout the year to track progress, then again early in the New Year to match to TEC's data accuracy and draft EPI reports. This report follows the TEC's published methodology (version 8) for the calculation of EPIs.

There are also six *Performance Indicator Assistance* reports which provide tools to identify possible bad data and to assist in estimating your current performance.

We would like to be able to include the two new cohort-based measures in the *Performance Indicators* report but for the reasons outlined in section 2, above, that simply isn't possible.

What we do plan to do is to add new *Performance Indicator Assistance* reports which will be able to highlight things you can do to ensure that you improve your performance. A simple example of this would be to provide a report that in 2016 lists level 1 to 3 qualification enrolments starting in 2015 that do not yet have a qualification completion. That way, you will be in an ideal position to exhort your tutors and students to finish their qualifications.

### 4 *An Idle Thought*

As noted above the SDR qualification completion file does not contain a date that the qualification was completed (e.g. 05/07/2016), it contains only the year (e.g. 2016).

If you deliver level 1 to 3 qualifications the expectation is that the student will complete the qualification in two years. So if you have two students one of whom started in January 2015 and a second student who started in December 2015, the first student has up to 24 months to complete their qualification whilst the second student has only 13 months.

### 5 *And Your Thoughts?*

If you have made it this far through our opinion about the cohort-based EPIs it could be because you intend to respond to TEC's request for feedback by 11 August, or it may be that you are not going to respond. Either way, we would love to hear your thoughts on the new cohort-based measures.