The University has a data policy to ensure the quality of data that it produces to meet internal and external needs. It needs to produce accurate external returns to ensure accurate funding allocations, demonstrate accountability to public and private funders and to ensure statutory obligations are met such as HMRC Real Time Information. It needs to produce accurate and comprehensive management information on which timely, informed decisions can be made to inform the future of the institution. The University’s current policy is available at:

http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/pras/aboutus/data_quality/data/

Additionally HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) requires University audit committees to give, as part of their annual opinion, an assurance about the management and quality assurance of data provided to HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency), HEFCE and other public bodies.

Personnel Services, working closely with Departments, Divisions, Payroll, Pensions and IT Services will ensure this data quality policy is applied to data held in or derived from HRIS.

The audit committee of a higher education institution needs to be assured that the institution’s management has assessed the risks posed by data accuracy and taken appropriate mitigating actions.

Potential risks are that:

- Data could give misleading internal and external impressions of institutional performance;
- Poor data could result in inappropriate decision-making by management across the institution;
- Inaccurate data could lead to a fine from HEFCE or HESA;
- Discrepancy with the REF return could lead to funding adjustments
- Poor data could lead to an inability to fulfil the University’s Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Inaccurate data appearing in external publications could cause reputational damage with public and private funders and other stakeholders, and the public. In turn, this could generate additional and burdensome attention placed on the institution.
- The University may fail to gain/maintain Athena status, Living Wage accreditation and other awards, with both reputational and funding risks.

In order to mitigate this risk, Personnel Services has put in place this Data Quality Policy for the University of Oxford’s recruit, employee, worker and non-employee data as held in HRIS. Personnel Services is dependent upon accurate data being supplied in the HR system by Departments, Divisions and various central teams such as HRIS Data Services and Payroll. This Data Quality Policy supports Personnel Services in certifying all HR data. The following points constitute the Policy.
Personnel Services has developed a framework for management and accountability for data quality with a commitment to securing a culture of data quality. This includes:

- Detailed administrative procedures for use of the Core system, details of which can be found at http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/usinghris/
- The development of a data quality checking programme operated between Personnel Services, Data Services and departmental users, including tailored online support and guidance regarding the HESA staff return.
- The development of data quality checking reports directly available to users, details of which can be found at http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/usinghris/reporting/
- Full documentation of the HESA staff return preparation process.
- Full documentation of key decisions made regarding the collection or non-collection of HESA data items, including the requirement for an annual review of decisions.
- Completion of a risk assessment for all statutory returns including HESA and Mandatory Gender Pay Gap Reporting.

The Head of HR Information with responsibility for the HESA staff return will review policies, systems and procedures to secure the quality of the data recorded and returned to HESA, in collaboration with the HRIS Support Centre, HR Systems Evaluation Group and the Head of HR Operations. Controls will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and in the light of every major reporting exercise to ensure they are working effectively, and the outcome of reviews should be reported to the Data Assurance Group, through updating of the data returns register.

Several of the formal external HR data returns made by the University include an electronic validation process to minimise errors. For example, HESA staff return cannot be made until all HESA-derived validation errors are resolved, additionally the RTI monthly return file will be rejected if errors are found via the HMRC validation routines. The HESA staff return is also subject to challenge by the Head of HR Operations and sign off by the Vice Chancellor.

All processes focus on securing data which is complete, valid, accurate, timely, and relevant to ensure accuracy of reports run by Core users for both internal and external reporting processes.

Due regard for the need to minimise the scope of human error or manipulation and prevent erroneous data entry, missing data or unauthorised data changes are encouraged through the authorisation process and the system’s security arrangements (including the various valid codes that users are allowed to select).

Training is in place to ensure that Core users entering data have the knowledge, competencies and capacity for their role in relation to data quality in HRIS.

Arrangements are in place to ensure that data supporting reported information is robust and can be evidenced.

Personnel Services is actively involved in a number of initiatives including Data Governance and Information Asset Management and this policy and related activities will be reviewed in the light of any outcomes from such projects.
Internal Audit
To help the Audit & Scrutiny Committee report to HEFCE, the internal auditors will review the University's procedures to ensure data quality in all returns of public information, and audit a sample of these returns.

Last review: March 2017; next review: February 2018