

## Methods of Data Collection

Method	Description	Strengths	Weaknesses
Aggregate return	Typically a small number of data items are completed on a paper or electronic form. For example the individualised learner record (ILR) Franchised In return.	<p>More flexible than individualised collection - can be changed relatively quickly</p> <p>Good for obtaining estimates</p>	<p>Tends to answer only those questions it is designed to answer despite the data on which it is based being capable of answering many questions</p> <p>Can lead to estimation even where actuals are requested</p> <p>Where actual values are identified by summing individual values, if that summing is additional to normal processes, can be as expensive as individualised collection</p>
Supplement to individualised collection	Extra data is collected against each record or sub-set of records in an individualised collection. The additional data is matched using a reference number in the individualised collection.	<p>Builds on and benefits from rich and comprehensive individualised data</p> <p>Flexible - can be changed quickly</p> <p>Good for temporary arrangements, for example data collection for a pilot programme</p>	<p>Unsuitable as permanent solution to a continuing requirement</p>
Use existing data sources	Use data that is already collected to meet some or all of the requirements.	<p>Low cost</p> <p>Ideal where existing data meets the requirement</p>	<p>Where matching of data sources is required this can be unsuccessful to the point of producing data of limited value</p> <p>Can lead to compromises that meet requirements in only a limited way</p>
Survey	Typically a questionnaire completed by each data subject. Frequently includes textual as well as coded responses. For example the Framework for Excellence Learner Views survey	<p>Can be tailored to answer specific questions</p> <p>Good for collecting data on subjective dimensions</p> <p>Good for collecting on a one-off or infrequent basis</p> <p>Can be used on to collect on a regular basis</p> <p>Flexible - can be changed easily over time</p>	<p>Can be expensive to operate for those responding, for those following up and those collating results</p>
Individualised records	Systematically collect detailed data about each data subject, for example the further education individualised learner record (ILR)	<p>Comprehensive</p> <p>Good for objective data</p>	<p>Slow to implement and change, consequently unsuitable for data about pilot projects and programmes where flexibility is often required</p> <p>Unsuitable for subjective data, the sum of a series of subjective decisions may be misleading</p>

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Individualised learner record special monitoring fields	<p>Vehicle for quickly and flexibly recording on the ILR participation in programmes, projects and initiatives.</p> <p>Use following fields: National learner monitoring field, field L40; the National learning aim monitoring field, field A46; Special projects and pilots field, field A49.</p>	Quick and flexible	<p>Overall cost is high as the comprehensiveness of the data collected and the robustness of the processes and systems increases.</p> <p>Limited to identifying participation in programmes, projects and initiatives on a temporary basis. Needs to be limited to small number of occurrences otherwise there is a danger of learner/learning aim being identified against several code values which cannot be accommodated.</p> <p>Outside normal governance</p>
<b>Techniques</b>			
Sample	Collect data for a controlled proportion of the full population. Sampling is a technique which can be used in conjunction with any of the above methods.	Reduces cost	Confidence in information derived from the data reduces as the sample size decreases and as results are disaggregated to sub-populations.