

This Month

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News from *the information authority***Outcomes from *the information authority* board meeting**

The information authority Board met on 4 March 2009. The outputs of the meeting include:

- **Provider Data Burden:** The Learning and Skills Council reported on its actions to reduce the provider data burden. This included simplified documentation for Train to Gain, which will be launched shortly.
- **Success Rate Harmonisation:** Progress on aligning success rates was presented. The Board endorsed the approach which is currently focusing on Apprenticeships and Train to Gain, and supported further progress and more communications with the sector, e.g. on definitions.
- **Urgent ILR Changes for 2009/10:** The Board agreed changes to record employment outcome for some programmes and to capture information on those who become redundant during learning for Employer Responsive provision.

The Board agreed in principle to capture employer status for Learner Responsive provision, subject to consultation with the sector.

Other items discussed include the Institute for Learning, Framework for Excellence and reduction of paper learner records.

Chairman's visits

Graham Jones, Chairman of *the information authority*, is meeting with a number of Association of Colleges regional principals' groups to explain the role of the authority. The meetings will also give principals the opportunity to comment on our future priorities and current data issues.

Graham's first visit took place in the South West and future visits are scheduled for 2 April in the East Midlands, 21 May in the Eastern region and 12 June in the West Midlands.

Change request process for 2010/11 ILR now open

The process for requesting changes to the 2010/11 individualised learner record (ILR) is now underway and key documents are available to download from *the information authority's* website at: <http://www.theia.org.uk/ilr/RequestforChange/>.

All change requests need to be submitted by 26 June 2009.

Anyone considering requesting a change is encouraged to talk to us as early as possible. We're always keen to hear ways of reducing complexity, so let us know if there are any low value fields that you think could be removed altogether.

Later this year, learning providers and stakeholders will be encouraged to share their comments on the proposed changes. More information on this process and how you can get involved will follow.

The full timetable for developing and publishing the 2010/11 ILR specification can be found at <http://www.theia.org.uk/ilr/RequestforChange/201011timetable/>.

ILR 2009/10 data quality programme

The information authority's project aimed at improving and supporting data quality in the 2009/10 ILR collections is gathering pace, with a range of activities currently being developed for roll out between April and October 2009. These include areas such as an overhaul of provider guidance manuals, roll out of the Data Service's Service Desk and promotion of *the information authority's* community portal, [FEConnect](#), and investigating how the Data Self-Assessment Toolkit (DSAT) can support the management of data quality.

If you would like to find out more about how you can become involved, contact Nick Graham at nicholas.graham@theia.org.uk

The LSC will be hosting a short season of training days in the use of the Data Self-Assessment Toolkit (DSAT). You can find more information, and booking instructions at - [Data Quality Training Workshops, April-May 2009](#).

The information authority on Twitter

From now on, *the information authority* will be 'twittering' to keep our colleagues up to speed on our work. [Twitter](#) is an online service that passes on short messages, rather like text messages, to other twitter users. Other notable twitterers include the Minister for Higher Education, [David Lammy](#). Anne Fessi, the authority's Community and Stakeholder Manager said: "Twitter is a popular and effective social networking tool, which several colleges are already using, and it's a great way of getting quick updates out to let people know what we are doing and to get them involved."

If you are a Twitter user and would like to follow *the information authority*, you can do so at <http://twitter.com/theia>.

LARIA Conference, 30 March to 1 April 2009

The information authority will be sharing a stand with [the Data Service](#) at the [LARIA Conference](#) in Loughborough. The event is aimed at local research staff in the public sector, and will help us to make connections with local authority colleagues who work with data.

Association of Learning Providers (ALP) Conference , 13 and 14 May 2009

The information authority will be presenting two seminars at the [ALP Conference](#) in Nottingham. Lisa Macdougall will host a session on changes to the Individualised Learner Record and Anne Fessi will be talking about reducing data bureaucracy.

News from the Data Service

Statistical First Release published on Post 16 Education and Skills: Learner participation, outcomes and level of highest qualification held

On 26 March the Data Service published its latest Statistical First Release (SFR) on Post 16 Education and Skills. The SFR shows the latest performance against the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets on adult attainment and apprenticeships. It includes 2007/08 estimates of LSC funded participation, achievement and success rates for post-16 education in England. It also includes an early look at 2008/09 participation under the new demand led funding system.

It includes key statistics on the level of highest qualification held by adults in England from 2001 to 2008, taken from the Labour Force Survey and provides estimates of the number of vocational qualifications awarded in the UK in 2008.

To read the full commentary and access the Microsoft Excel tables please refer to the [Statistics section](#) of the Data Service website.

Reducing the data burden

The Data Service has met with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to resolve an issue for those learning providers who provide reports to Access Validating Agencies (AVA) regarding Access to Higher Education provision.

The issue was identified after several learning providers contacted *the information authority* to highlight the burden of responding to requests from their AVA.

The Data Service is now working with the QAA to create extracts from the individualised learner record data which can be used by AVAs and the QAA. In addition a new Learner Information Suite (LIS) report is being developed for providers should they wish to update AVAs themselves.

The Data Service is running a pilot with one AVA to ensure that the ILR data is suitable and if successful hopes to implement these improvements in the 2009/10 academic year.

If you are aware of any other requests for data that you think could be handled centrally please email *the information authority*. A process for capturing and investigating these requests will be published on *the information authority's* website shortly.

Delay to 2008/09 In-year success rates for employer responsive provision

The in-year Qualification Success Rates reports for 2008/09 Apprenticeships and Train to Gain will not be available until the end of May 2009. The reports were originally due to have been published in February with Period 6 data.

The 2008/09 methodology for calculating success rates has yet to be confirmed to the Data Service. This has been delayed due to unforeseen issues arising during the development and production with the 2007/08 reports. There have also been some issues with the actual individualised learner record data that has been returned in 2008/09 which needed to be resolved before the methodology can be finalised.

We would like to apologise for any inconvenience that this delay may have caused.

News from the further education sector

Exchanging prospectus information

The Information Standards Board has approved the Exchanging Course Related Information (XCRI) Course Advertising Profile (CAP) v1.1 as a system wide standard.

This will make it easier for course brokers and aggregators such as UCAS, the National Learning Directory and 14-19 prospectus websites, to collect prospectus information from learning providers.

Currently passing on line prospectus information typically involves re-keying data and information already published on the learning providers website into bespoke web based forms designed by the aggregators.

This approved standard will remove that requirement giving improved accuracy, easier comparability for those looking to apply for a course and estimated cost savings from the learning providers and aggregators of around £6.5m.

About us

The information authority

The information authority was established in October 2006 to set and regulate data standards for all organisations involved in further education and training in England.

The authority has a decision-making board headed by an independent chairman and made up of senior representatives from across the education and training system in England. This is supported by a small operational secretariat.

The Data Service

The Data Service was established in April 2008 to collect and disseminate information as the first single source of data for the further education system in England. It will work closely with *the information authority* to streamline and improve the way information is collected and shared. Key principles of the service are to eradicate duplication; improve collection and sharing; increase efficiency; assure quality and; provide new levels of customer service.

Funded primarily by the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and supported by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) at its inception, the new separately managed organisation will have developed by 2011 into a fully operational service provider working in the interests of the sector as a whole.



To find out more about *the information authority* and the Data Service, visit:

www.theinformationauthority.org.uk
www.thedataservice.org.uk