

# Learning Aim Database

## Frequently Asked Questions



## Overview of Learning Aim Database (LAD)

The Learning Aim Database (LAD) contains information about recognised learning aims offered by providers who return ILR data to the Data Service. It includes learning aim information required to complete ILR data returns, as well as funding and statistical data. The collection of information within the LAD is the responsibility of [the Data Service](#).

### **1. General**

#### **1.1 *How do I access the LAD?***

The Learning Aim Database is available directly online via the Provider Extranet LAD page <http://providers.lsc.gov.uk/LAD/>.

You can also access via a link on the 'Data Service' website: Navigate to the 'Data Service' website ([www.thedataservice.org.uk](http://www.thedataservice.org.uk)), Select the 'Software' link at the top of the browser. Select from the menu on the left 'LAD'.

You will see on this page a link 'provider extranet LAD page' which will open a new window to the Learning Aim Database site. Additionally, other information regarding the LAD can be found here.

#### **1.2 *Do I need any additional software for LAD?***

The LAD is an online application accessed using an Internet browser. We currently support Internet Explorer 6/7 and 8. You will also need Internet access and one of the browsers to view the web pages.

There is no need (and no facility) to install it on a local PC. However, the data in the LAD can be downloaded to a local PC.

The data download is available in three different file formats:

MDB format (Microsoft Access Database)

CSV format (Comma Separated Value)

PSV format (Pipe Separated Value Text File)

Additionally, you will need software to decompress files.

## **2. Documentation**

### **2.1 *What documentation is available for LAD users?***

The following documentation is available for use with the Learning Aim Database:

LAD Full User Guide 2010/11 (*Coming soon*)

LAD Website Information Link

### **2.2 *What other documentation is available?***

A document describing the schema and field definitions for the LAD MS Access extract (MDB file) is also available from the same page. A document describing the structure of the pipe delimited download file is available also. These will mainly be of use to technical users wanting to work with the data from the LAD.

### **2.3 *Is there any Online help?***

The LAD includes summary online help, accessible by clicking on the LAD Help link in the header menu.

## **3. Downloads**

### **3.1 *What is contained in the current downloads?***

The most current version of the LAD is available for download in Microsoft Access 97 (MDB), comma-separated values (CSV) and pipe-separated values text file (PSV) formats.

You can choose to download the LAD either for a specific teaching year, where each file or table only contains data relating to that teaching year, or for ALL teaching years, where each file or table contains data relating to all available academic years.

Each download is available as a ZIP file.

### **3.2 *What is contained in the Change Summary section in downloads?***

The LAD Downloads page also contains a Change Summary report which shows a summary of recent changes to the LAD. A separate window is displayed showing the number of changes to the LAD during the last 10 download updates.

Once selected, you can click on Change Detail to see details of the tables and fields affected by the updates.

### **3.3 *What is contained in the Archived downloads?***

If you require a LAD from a different date, this can be obtained from the download archive. To access the archive, click the Download Archive link at the bottom of the LAD Downloads page. You can enter the date of the file you wish to download (dd/mm/yyyy) and click on Show Files. The version of the LAD that was current on that date will be displayed.

You can alternatively, use the drop-down list to select the date for which you wish to download a file.

### **3.4 *What is contained in the Miscellaneous downloads?***

Other reports and associated LAD information are available from the 'Misc Downloads' page. These are:

- Hierarchy Freeze
- Framework Codes
- Imminent Deletions
- Deleted Aims
- Map Codes

## **4. Searching for Aims on LAD**

### **4.1 *What is the difference between Quick search and Advanced search?***

#### **Quick Search**

The Quick Search field is available at the top of every page of the LAD website. Type in keywords that describe the learning aims you want to find, and press 'Go'.

The search looks for records matching ALL the keywords you enter, so typing more keywords makes the search more precise and returns fewer records.

Quick Search searches the following LAD fields:

Aim Reference

Title

Awarding Body Name

Awarding Body Code

Awarding Body's Aim Reference

If the Quick Search only matches one record, details of that record are shown; otherwise the Search Results screen is shown.

### **Advanced Search**

Advanced Search allows for more complex data queries. It allows you to specify search criteria for individual fields.

Like Quick Search, the Advanced Search assumes wildcard characters are entered before and after the input string in text input fields (apart from Aim Reference and Awarding Body Aim Reference), so you no longer need to enter these as part of the search criteria if they are required. Wildcards can also be entered in the middle of search phrases for more complex searches.

The search for the aim reference and awarding body aim reference fields need explicit wildcards to be entered.

By default, the advanced search only shows aims that have been flagged as Current Provision. These are the most current codes for new starters (for use in ILR data), but other codes may still be valid for use in ILR data. To show other codes that are not current, change from the default to 'Any Aim'.

The advanced search defaults to the current teaching year, so you will need to change this option to search for aims that are in a past or future teaching year.

You can also restrict the search to aims that are valid in ILR returns for different funding models and collections. If the year is 2010/11 or later, you can search for aims which are valid for 16-18 or Adult Learner Responsive, Employer Responsive (Apprenticeships or Train to Gain), and Adult Safeguarded Learning.

Similarly, for 2009/10 or earlier, you can search for aims valid for 16-18 or Adult Learner Responsive, Employer Responsive or ACL provision.

For some fields linked to a table with many possible values (such as 'Learning Aim Type'), a Lookup option helps you to find the value before beginning the search.

On the LAD Aims Search screen, there are options to search for aims valid for a particular funding model or collection type.

Under the text 'Funding/Collection' is a series of radio buttons. The default is 'Any Aim' which applies no additional search criteria. However by selecting one of the other radio buttons, the search is restricted to those aims which are valid for new starts on the selected funding stream for the selected date range.

This search uses a table called Validity Details for searches in 2010/11 or later years. This table uses dates to specify when an aim is valid.

Because the date range of interest may not necessarily correspond to a teaching year, search fields for start date and end date are enabled if a funding stream is selected and the Teaching Year is 2010/11 or later. By default these dates are set to the teaching year start and end dates, but these can be changed by the user.

For 2009/10 and earlier years, the search only works at the level of complete teaching years. If a learning aim is valid for new starts (ie status value 1) for that year for the selected funding model, it is returned by the search.

In the 'Funding Status', 'Notional NVQ level', 'Notional NVQ Level v2', 'Level 2 Category' and 'Level 3 Category' fields you can search for more than one value at once. For example you can search for all aims that are either level 2 or level 3 in one search. To select multiple options, hold down the [Ctrl] key while clicking on the required options from the list. The radio button that selects which version of the Notional NVQ Level categories used in the advanced search defaults to the original level categories, so click the Notional NVQ Level v2 radio button to select from its level categories.

If the search fields for aim reference or awarding body aim reference are used to match a single aim, then that aim will be displayed irrespective of other criteria, such as current provision status, which would normally exclude that record from the results.

After pressing Search, if the search criteria only match one record, details of that record are shown; otherwise the Search Results screen is shown.

## 4.2 ***What are wildcards?***

When specifying your search criteria you can use wildcards to represent 'missing' characters:

- % or \* represent multiple characters
- ? or \_ represent single characters

For example, searching for medi% in the Title field would return learning aims with titles containing words such as medical, medicine, and media. Searching for medi? would only include words such as media. Searching for %medi% would also include words such as intermediate.

In general you do not need to enter wildcards into search fields because the search functionality assumes they are there. For example if you enter 'engine' into the title field, any qualifications with engine or engineering in their title will be returned.

However there are a few exceptions when you may want to enter wildcards:

- The aim reference and awarding body aim reference fields require you to enter wildcards explicitly.
- You may wish to enter wildcards in the middle of a phrase - for example 'bus%imp' would match qualifications in Business Improvement Techniques

Note: if you use wildcards, your search may return an excessively large number of results. You may need to refine the search criteria to return fewer results. However, if your search is not returning the learning aim you expected, you may have to use wildcards.

## 4.3 ***Can I download my search results?***

The results of a search can be downloaded as text files in comma-separated values (CSV) or pipe-separated values text file (PSV) format. To download these results click on the CSV or PSV hyperlinks at the top right of the search results screen, and either open or save the files.

Where a large number of aims are returned by the search, the download allows up to 5,000 records to be downloaded (only 500 are displayed on the search results screen).

#### 4.4 ***Can I save my search as a bookmark or favourite?***

Near the top of the Search Results screen is text labelled "Selection Criteria". The text shows the search criteria used for this particular search, but this text is also a link that can be saved as a Favourite or Bookmark within a browser. This allows the same search to be repeated on another occasion.

#### 4.5 ***Can I print my search?***

All the details for a learning aim (from every tab) can be printed by clicking on the 'Print All Aim Details' tab on the right hand side of the page. This will display a Print dialog box from which you can select the appropriate printer (or other options) and press Print.

### **5. Aims Search Results screen**

#### 5.1 ***What are the Status codes displayed on Aim Search Results screen***

On the right hand side of the Aim Search Results screen, various status code values represent whether that aim can be used for particular funding streams or ILR collections.

#### 5.2 ***What do the Status code values for searches in 2009/10 and earlier years mean?***

For searches in 2009/10 and earlier years, the last 5 columns of the screen ('Non LSC Funded Status, 16-18 LR, Adult LR, ER and ACL) each contain a numeric value. The Non LSC Funded Status refers to whether the code may be used for provision that is not funded. Aims that are valid for non-funded provision may also be valid for funded provision.

**1** valid for all learners

**2** invalid for learners who are 'new starts' but valid for continuing learners

**3** only valid for 'new starts' if the start is on a valid framework

**9** invalid for all learners

### **5.3 What do the Status code values for searches in 2010/11 and onward years mean?**

The last 6 columns of the screen represent whether the aim is valid. The first of these columns, 'Non Funded Status' is populated with a numeric value in the same way as for 2009/10 searches and earlier.

However, the user can select to search over a particular date range, and because the search period may not necessarily be single teaching year, a pair of code letters is used to represent the Validity Details for that aim.

The first code letter represents the status at the start of the search date range, and the second code letter represents the status at the end of the search date range.

**A** - available on that date,

**N** - not available for new starters on that date,

**X** - not available on that date,

**W** - will become available after that date.

For example, suppose an aim had the following dates for Adult Learner Responsive provision:

Validity Start Date=01/08/2010

Last Date for New Starts=31/03/2011

Validity End Date=31/08/2014

Searching for a date range of 01/08/2010 to 31/03/2011 would return code values of AA

Searching for a date range of 01/08/2010 to 31/07/2011 (the default for the 2010/11 teaching year) would return code values of AN

Searching for a date range of 31/07/2010 to 31/07/2011 would return code values of WN

Note that the same search period is used for all columns at once, so searching for 16-18 Learner Responsive provision with the three search date ranges above would give the same results in the Adult LR column (assuming the aim was also funded for 16-18 LR provision and therefore included in the search results).

**NOTE:** For Aims that are not displayed on the Learning Aim Database or do not have funding information – see document Qualifications Journey: Accreditation to Publication.

If you have any queries or questions on the LAD, please contact the Service Desk:

Email: [servicedesk@thedataservice.org.uk](mailto:servicedesk@thedataservice.org.uk)

Telephone: 0870 2670001

Service Desk opening hours:

8.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday

8.30am to 4pm Friday

8.30am to 7pm Last day of Employer Responsive  
data collection period.

Or write to us at:

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