

This Month

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News from *the information authority*

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

Have your say – community website goes live

The information authority has launched its online community site, [feconnect](#), which will host the discussions for changes to the Individualised Learner Record for 2009/10 as well as being a space for individuals involved in further education data to talk to one another.

The new site will also be used to consult with stakeholders on various pieces of future work being undertaken by *the information authority*.

“This online facility is another way in which we and people across the sector can communicate with each other and share information and views”, said Dave Briggs, *information authority* Change Manager. “Stakeholders can become involved in discussion groups, ask questions, join working groups and download materials.

“The site is in its pilot stage and is really simple to use. You will need to register to join the forums and post questions but you can read material without registering. We will be facilitating the site every working day to monitor questions and ensure they are answered.”

Wanted – stakeholder input to ILR changes

The information authority secretariat is starting to work on the development of the 2009/10 Individualised Learner Record (ILR) specification and wants stakeholders to identify any changes they need to make.

A new change request process is being piloted this year. To see the criteria and how the process will work, please visit *the information authority's* web portal at:
www.theia.communityserver.com

The first stage of the new process is for stakeholders to raise future data requirements or amendments to the ILR specification through *the information authority*. These will be assessed by the authority's secretariat against set criteria and recommendations will be made on which requests should proceed to a consultation phase, which will be open to all stakeholders.

Following the consultation period, any issues raised will be documented, added to the request and then reconsidered by the secretariat. All change requests will be reported to *the information authority* board. The secretariat will use the assessment criteria and the information received during the consultation phase to recommend which changes to the ILR specification are implemented.

The last date for receiving a change request for the 2009/10 ILR specification is 27 June 2008. This is to allow sufficient time for consultation with stakeholders. The specification of the 2009/10 ILR will be published on 28 November 2008.

The information authority board will approve or decline the change requests and will base its decisions on the assessment criteria, what it thinks is best for the FE system as a whole and the recommendations of the secretariat.

Dave Briggs or Paul Kelman at *the information authority* will be available to help you throughout the process. If you have any queries regarding the process please contact them.

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Working with the Information Standards Board

Graham Jones, Chairman of *the information authority*, recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Information Standards Board, setting out how the two organisations will work together to develop information standards.

The Information Standards Board (ISB) is a non-statutory body which will provide governance for standards making activities across the education, skills and children's services system. It covers both the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills policy areas and has the authority to adopt information and data standards on behalf of the system.

The board was launched on 29th January by David Bell and Ian Watmore (Permanent Secretaries of DCSF and DIUS respectively). Membership includes DCSF, DIUS and key delivery partners. Dorian Bradley (former Director of Early Years at Ofsted) was appointed as the first independent Chair of the ISB following an open competition. He took up post on

the 1st September 2007. Una Bennett, Head of *the information authority*, represents the FE system on the ISB.

Information and knowledge are essential business enablers. Capturing and sharing information effectively is crucial to supporting personalisation and service delivery, in meeting our efficiency objectives, in reducing front line burdens, in supporting analysis and policy development, and in ensuring effective accountability. Information standards ensure that information is stored in common, consistent formats. They enable information to be shared, understood and used between different users across the system.

The ISB has a remit for the whole of education, skills and children's services system, and will provide governance for all system standards making activities. For example, it covers standards for:

- learner, child and parent information, including care and achievement records
- operational and management information (e.g. workforce and financial information)
- e-learning content
- assessment and qualifications
- technical interoperability
- accessibility (for disabilities etc).

The ISB will realise a number of important benefits, including reducing the costs of delivering sector programmes and solutions by enabling data to be entered once and used many times across the system. It is estimated that this could achieve savings of around £25 million.

A Technical Support Service supporting the ISB will provide resources for suppliers, developers and programmes across the system. It will provide a portal featuring a standards library, a collaborative workspace, tools and a register.

For more information, please email the ISB Secretariat
itgovernance.secretariat@dcsf.qsi.gov.uk

News from the Data Service

The Data Service was launched in April 2008 to collect and disseminate information as the first single source of data for the further education system. 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 by the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills and supported by the LSC at its inception, the new separately managed organisation will evolve by 2011 into an independent service provider operating in the interests of the sector as a whole.

Data Service prepares for action

The Data Service began work this month in preparation for the launch of its new systems in August this year, when data providers will notice differences to current Learning and Skills Council operations for the first time.

Some LSC data staff have transferred across to the service this month and external recruitment is underway to fill posts in the new provisional structure, including the role of Head of the Data Service.

Other activities now underway include:

- Putting in place coherent support for providers and the LSC – including the establishment of a service desk
- Formulating service agreements with the LSC for the provision of IT infrastructure and systems
- Working through change management processes for data collection requests and specifications with *the information authority*
- Reviewing the new draft service catalogue with stakeholders

Further education and work based learning providers will notice no change to current LSC collection practices in the short-term. Data Service systems are scheduled to become operational from August and will include data collection under the Demand Led Funding regimes introduced by the LSC.

The Data Service will deliver a central catalogue of core services to the sector through operational level agreements with *the information authority* and will also provide a self-financing ad hoc service outside the central catalogue.

New website to launch in May

The Data Service website will launch in May at www.thedataservice.org.uk and will initially contain background and contact information along with details of the services it will provide. The site will develop into a more comprehensive reference point in the coming months.

News from MIAP

Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) is about streamlining how information on learning and achievement is collected, handled and shared across the education sector so that excellent services are made available to individuals, employers and communities.

MIAP will be capable of issuing every person in education and training with a Unique Learner Number and will enable the collation of a lifelong record of their participation and achievements that can be accessed through the internet. It will support this by delivering Common Data Definitions that can be used by everyone in the sector; and giving access to the UK Register of Learning Providers, containing details of individual training organisations and the services they provide.

ULN supports Diploma roll out

The Unique Learner Number (ULN) is the key to enabling data to be shared between learning centres, awarding bodies and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority led Diploma Aggregation Service.

To support the roll out of the Diploma, MIAP is developing a new system that will allow the Diploma Aggregation Service and awarding bodies to verify ULNs provided to them by learning centres. In doing so, it is important that the given name, family name, date of birth

and gender of all learners with a ULN are accurate on both the Learner Registration Service and on the systems of any other organisations handling ULNs.

“It is imperative that all organisations have the same data for a learner. This will help ease the transfer of data between parties and avoid undue problems,” said Dean Williams, MIAP Business Change Manager.

Linking with National Pupil Database

During mid-May, MIAP plans to add school pupils to the Learner Registration Service (LRS) using information from the National Pupil Database. This means that every school child aged 14 and over will automatically be given a ULN. It will also reduce the amount of new ULNs that learning providers will need to create because these learners will already exist on the registration service database.

If you are already registered with the LRS and are planning to upload new students for the next academic year who are currently at school, you may wish to consider delaying your submissions until after the MIAP service has populated the LRS with the new pupil data. However, should you wish to process your submissions before the pupil upload, there will be no impact upon the Learner Registration Service.

Joining the Learner Registration Service

Colleges, other further education learning providers and schools providing Diplomas for 14-19 years can now find out how to join the MIAP Learner Registration Service by accessing the Implementation Guide on the website:
www.miap.gov.uk/implementationguide .

The guide contains information, guidance and tools that learning providers need to become Learner Registration Bodies and to start creating Unique Learner Numbers for their students.



To find out more about the *information authority*, the Data Service and MIAP, visit:
www.theinformationauthority.org.uk
www.thedataservice.org.uk
www.miap.gov.uk