

inform

Issue 56 – January 2012

Inform is a monthly newsletter from *the information authority* and the Data Service, providing you with regular news and updates on our work. To subscribe to **inform** email: informnewsletter@theia.org.uk.

FE Data Management - Recording Nested Qualifications in the ILR

Providers are now beginning to plan for the next academic year, and we are aware that questions have been raised on the subject of using 'nested' qualifications within the curriculum and how these are viewed by Ofsted.

In August 2010 we published guidance for providers, in partnership with Ofsted, on designing a curriculum structure based on nested qualifications.

This guidance can be found here:

http://www.theia.org.uk/ilr/faqs/nested_qualifications.htm

In response to recent discussions on provider forums about this subject, we would like to reissue this guidance and clarify any points that may not already be clear. Most crucially, a curriculum should not be influenced by a provider's need to gain funding or artificially maximise success rates. Nor should it be driven by a provider's need to produce viable course groups at the expense of the learners' best interests.

Ofsted are reissuing guidance to their inspectors on the correct use of nested qualifications, which emphasises that a learner-centred approach should be taken in all cases.

Examples of incorrect use of nested qualifications are being added to the guidance.

This month:

- FE Data Management - Recording Nested Qualifications in the ILR

News from *the information authority*:

- 2012/13 ILR Spec Version 2 – coming soon!
- 2011/12 ILR Specification goes online
- Knighthood for *information authority* Chair
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News from the Data Service:

- R06 ILR return due on 06 February 2012
- LIS V19.02 update
- 2010/11 ER QSR and MLP reports published
- Credibility and Timeliness reports update
- Data Quality e-learning module - coming soon
- January SFR
- Data Collections Transformation project

News from the sector

- FE Choices Publication of Outputs



News from *the information authority*

2012/13 ILR Specification Version 2 - coming soon

Version 2 of the 2012/13 ILR Specification is due to be published at the end of February, along with the new Validation Rules for 2012/13.

Key changes to Version 2 of the ILR Specification include:

- addition of Validation Rules and some changes to the 'required for' status of some fields
- one new field in the Learning Delivery HE dataset to collect details of net tuition fees charged
- additional monitoring types and codes in the Learning Delivery Funding and Monitoring entity for HE monitoring and to identify re-starts of learning aims

2011/12 ILR Specification goes online

We have launched an [interactive version of the 2011/12 ILR specification](#), following release of the 2011/12 ILR specification (version 4) on 03 October 2011.

This online tool brings:

- more interactivity
- better navigation
- an expandable view of the ILR XML structure
- structure diagrams that have hyperlinks incorporated into the shown entities or fields so they can be used as quick links to navigate through to the entity information or individual field specification.

If you have any feedback on this online tool please [email the information authority](#), or if you require further assistance with your ILR return please [email the Service Desk](#) at the Data Service or call **0870 2670001**.

Knighthood for *information authority* Chair

The Chair of *the information authority*, Geoff Hall, was awarded a knighthood in the New Year's Honour's List. Geoff, formerly Principal and Chief Executive of New College Nottingham, received the honour of Knight Bachelor for services to further education.

John Perks, Head of *the information authority* secretariat said: "On behalf of the team, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to Geoff on receiving this well-deserved honour. We look forward to continuing to work with him over what is sure to be a challenging and rewarding year."

Follow the link to see the full [2012 New Year's Honours List](#).

Advisory groups update

We kicked off the 2012 round of advisory group meetings with a meeting of the Software Supplier group on 23 January. The key focus of this meeting was to update software suppliers on the current issues and plans for the 2013/14 ILR as well as the future development for FE data. The [presentation slides](#) from this meeting are available to download from our website.

With the move to a single ILR and the plans for a Single Adult Skills budget, we are making changes to the current Employer Responsive and Learner Responsive advisory groups. We plan to have groups based on provider type, with one group for Colleges and the other group catering for all other training organisations. We will cover all types of provision at both these meetings. Later in the year we plan to run occasional 'themed' meetings that will be open to all members of the advisory groups that may cover topics such as Foundation Learning and course information.

Advisory groups in February and March:

- [Data Users Group meeting](#) - 09 February
- [Own Software Writers/Own Software Writers Change Management Group](#) - 23 February
- [Adult Safeguarded Learning Group](#) - 08 March
- [College Group](#) - 15 March
- [Training Organisation Group](#) - 29 March

If you would like further information on any of the groups that we run, please [get in touch](#).

Out and about in Jan/Feb

The information authority and the Data Service have been out and about in January speaking to providers and will continue to engage with the FE sector throughout the year.

In January we went to a number of provider and software supplier meetings, including:

- Bradford College – Rich Williams visited to discuss concerns/issues on Data Collection systems
- Shrewsbury College – John Perks attended and presented at the AoC MIS Managers meeting on the 2012/13 ILR changes and implications for the 2013/14 ILR change process
- Pellcomp User group meeting – Data Specification Manager from *the information authority* attended this meeting and provided an update on the 2012/13 ILR changes and implications for the 2013/14 ILR change process.

In February we will be attending the following events/meetings:

- Cognisoft User groups
- [AoC Annual Examinations Officers Conference 2012](#)

If you would like *the information authority* and/or the Data Service to speak at one of your meetings/events please [get in touch](#).

Stay in touch online

Follow us:  www.twitter.com/theia,  www.twitter.com/thedataservice

Connect with us on LinkedIn:  <http://www.linkedin.com/company/information-authority>

News from the Data Service

R06 ILR return due on 06 February 2012

We would like to remind all providers (including colleges) that the **2011/12 R06 ILR return** is due in on **06 February 2012** and therefore to send data for ALL of their learners.

Providers are reminded:

- to ensure your ILR file has been validated and is free from all errors you may need to send your file a few days earlier than the return date, to give you time to clear any errors in your validation error report
- to check the returned Added Value Reports on the Online Data Collections (OLDC) system to ensure that you have not had XML errors that prevent all or some of the data being processed
- you can send an 'A' file early and, if necessary, follow this up with a 'B' file to correct any learners, this will help to speed up processing.

Full details on this collection are available in the 2011/12 ILR collections timetable (Appendix A) which can be downloaded from the [ILR Specification, Business Rules and Appendices for 2011/12 page](#). We have produced a '[How to' guide to sending ILR data for 2011/12](#). This guide has been produced in response to the issues raised by providers in understanding how to use the data collection systems and how to send data for 2011/12.

For any further queries, please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or [email the Service Desk](#).

LIS V19.02 update

We will be releasing the **Learner Information Suite (LIS) V19.02** at the end of January 2012.

Updates to this Maintenance Release will include:

- Fixes to the Skills Funding Agency and YPLA funding calculation modules
- Funding Claim Report Update – pages 3 and 5 have been re-introduced to the report as they were previously excluded in LIS 19.01.65 due to performance issues
- Other fixes for current known issues.

The new optional Unique Learner Number (ULN) validation facility (subject to successful testing) will be available in LIS V19.03, due for release towards the end of February.

If you have any queries please contact **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or [email the Service Desk](#).

2010/11 End of Year Employer Responsive Qualification Success Rate and Minimum Level of Performance reports published

We published the [2010/11 End of Year Employer Responsive Qualification Success Rate \(QSR\) and Minimum Levels of Performance \(MLP\) reports](#) on **11 January 2012**.

After publishing these we discovered an error with the Train to Gain MLP reports, which were rectified and the reports were republished the following day. These reports are available to download from [the Provider Gateway](#).

Supporting information, including the new 2010/11 Employer Responsive QSR methodology, guidance documents and FAQs, are available from the [Qualification Success Rate pages](#) on our website

Most queries can be resolved by referring to the information available in this section. Alternatively, please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or [email the Service Desk](#).

Credibility and Timeliness reports update

We published the R05 Provider Timeliness Reports on 20 January 2012. These are now available to download from [the Provider Gateway](#).

ULN Verification Reports are due to be included in the February release of the Learner Information Suite. We plan to release the Provider Credibility Reports for R06. The Data Quality Dashboards and Provider Gateway versions of the ULN Verification Reports are planned for release for R08.

For any further queries please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or [email the Service Desk](#).

Data Quality e-learning module – coming soon!

We are currently working on our next e-learning module, ILR Data Quality, aimed primarily at learning providers.

This module will focus on the importance of ILR Data Quality, the impact of poor quality data, the ILR Data Quality journey, dimensions to data quality i.e. completeness, accuracy and credibility as well as looking at data quality tools and reports.

We will be conducting an Alpha test of this module in February, followed by a beta review with selected providers, with a view to launching this module to the sector at the end of **March 2012**.

January Statistical First Release

We will be publishing the latest [Statistical First Release \(SFR\)](#) on our website on **31 January**. This will contain Includes final data for the 2010/11 academic year and provisional data for the first quarter of the 2011/12 academic year.



Data Collections Transformation project

We are continuing with our ongoing developments to our Data Collection systems over the next few academic years. This will see developments to the [Learner information Suite](#), [Learning Aim Reference Application \(LARA\)](#) and the [Online Data Collection](#) system. As part of this project we have renamed the Strategic Replatforming Project to the 'Data Collections Transformation project'.

2012/13 will be a rollover year where we will prepare the systems to support the final year of the existing funding methodology and will focus on stabilising 2011/12 changes and rolling over LARA V1.1.

For **2013/14** we will be making significant changes to the systems mentioned, and are currently scoping requirements with a view to implementing new systems in time for the 2013/2014 cycle. We will be launching LARA Release 2, with enhanced functionality ready for 2013/14.

[Presentation slides](#) on our plans for delivery over the next year are now available to download.

News from the sector

FE Choices Publication of Outputs

[FE Choices](#) (formerly Framework for Excellence) performance indicator scores for 2010/11 were published on **26 January 2012**. This publication updates the information available on Success Rates, Learner Satisfaction and Employer Satisfaction.

If you have any queries about the published information please contact the Service Desk at the Data Service on **0870 2670001** or email servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk.

Statement from Geoff Russell, Chief Executive Skills Funding Agency:

The publication of FE Choices is an important feature of the Government's approach to working in partnership with the sector to develop a new sector-led FE Public Information framework.

This information will allow learners and employers to make informed choices about which course or provider will best meet their learning needs. It will also provide valuable information to help providers assess their performance against others in the sector and to improve their quality and services.

This year the four performance indicators previously published under the Framework for Excellence, will be published as part of the FE Public Information framework.

About us

The information authority

The information authority was established in October 2006 to set data standards and govern data collection and use for further education and training provision in England.

The authority has a [decision-making board](#) headed by an independent chairman and made up of senior representatives from across the further 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 for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and supported by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) at its inception, the Data Service is a fully operational service provider, and acts as a single, central point of information for further education.