

inform

Issue 51 – August 2011

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.

Data Collection systems - OLDC update

The Data Service recently announced that there would be a change to the go live date for the [Online Data Collection \(OLDC\)](#) system.

OLDC for 2011/12 will go live on **Monday 26 September 2011**. OLDC will be taken offline at 18:00pm on **Friday 16 September** and will return to service on **26 September 2011** in order for the Data Service to implement this release.

Providers are encouraged to continue to submit 2010/11 Employer Responsive Period 13 files up until this time and after OLDC returns to service to achieve the return date of **11 November 2011**.

Providers are asked to continue to plan to submit their 2011/12 R02 ILR return and use the latest LIS V19.01 Beta (available to download from [the Data Service website](#)) to prepare for this.

The LIS Final Release should be used to check and validate the 2011/12 data to ensure it is valid prior to submission to OLDC prior to the R02 return date of **06 October 2011**.

[FAQs](#) have been published to answer any queries you may have.

Alternatively please contact your **Agency Account Team** for queries on **profile payments**.

If you have any further queries regarding OLDC please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email: servicedesk@thedata.service.org.uk.

The Data Service will continue to publish further updates on the Online Data Collection systems, as well as LIS V19.01 on its [website](#).

This month:

- Data Collection systems - OLDC update

News from *the information authority*:

- 2012/13 Change Process - consultation continues
- ILR online learning tools launched
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- Webinars held on the single ILR and changes to data collection systems
- Proxy Aim Usage in 2010/11 ILR
- 2010/11 Period 12 Employer Responsive Qualification Success Rate reports published
- Post-19 Qualifications Support transitioned to the Data Service



The information authority is now running its [Annual Perception and Awareness Survey](#) - let us know what you think about our work.

News from *the information authority*

2012/13 Change Process - consultation continues

As part of the consultation phase of the 2012/13 ILR Change Process, we have opened a further three consultations, in addition to [the nine that were launched earlier this month](#).

The three new consultations can be found by clicking on the following links:

- [Change request 7: Enable the monitoring of sub-contracting down through all levels of provision](#)
- [Change request 8: Improve the availability and collection of data on the economic activity status of FE learners](#)
- [Change request 9: Identify the learner's reason for learning](#)

A full, detailed list of change requests is available via our [Request for Change pages](#), as well as a summary document that outlines each proposal and its status.

The consultation period will close on **Friday 02 September 2011**. If you have any queries, please email the Community and Stakeholder team at cst@theia.org.uk.

ILR online learning tools launched

The information authority has launched two online learning tools to assist understanding of the 2011/12 ILR changes and the single ILR:

- an [interactive online tool](#) demonstrating the changes to the 2011/12 Individualised Learner Record (ILR) - this tool covers all the changes to the 2011/12 ILR up to the latest specification that was published on 01 August 2011.
- an [interactive online tool](#) to inform providers about the [single ILR](#), which is being introduced from August 2011 - this tool gives full details of the single ILR in XML format as well as information on transmission methods; file structure; creating an XML file; collection timetable; and location of all support documentation.

In response to provider comments we have also created both these tools in the format of a PowerPoint show, which providers can download from the [ILR Specification, Business Rules and Appendices for 2011/12](#) page. It contains the same information in the same interactive format as the online tools and can be used for in-house training sessions.

Interactive field name / code conversion tool published

As providers will be aware, one of the changes to this year's [Individualised Learner Record \(ILR\)](#) is the introduction of XML element names in place of field numbers commencing A, L and H.

While members of the team have been out and about speaking to providers at events and meetings, it has become clear that providers would welcome some assistance in getting used to these new element names.

In response to this need, we have created and published an interactive conversion tool to make cross-referencing the new element names and the old field numbers easier and quicker. This is in addition to the field mapping document that was published earlier in the year.

The change from field numbers to element names was implemented to correspond with the new XML data model, which uses field names and element names that are both machine readable and human readable. The change should also make the process of data collection and transformation more accessible and meaningful to 'non-experts' - e.g. those new to the job, or other non-technical members of management teams in learning providers. It also complies with government e-GIF schema naming conventions.

The conversion tool can be downloaded from the [ILR Specification, Business Rules and Appendices for 2011/12](#) page.

September board meeting – what's on the agenda

The next meeting of *the information authority* board will be on 28 September 2011.

On the agenda are updates on the strategic replatforming of data collection systems from the Data Service and on the Skills Funding Agency's pilot project to pay large employers delivering apprenticeships on an outcome basis only. The YPLA will also be briefing the board on their proposal to collect data to support the new 16-19 Bursary, which is designed to help support vulnerable young people to meet the costs of full-time education or training.

The main item on the agenda will be a discussion about proposed changes to the Specification of the Individualised Learner Record for 2012/13. A number of change requests have been received, some of which have been taken forward for consultation with the sector. The board will be considering the secretariat's recommendations and sector views before making decisions about which changes are implemented. If you want your views to be considered in the decision-making process, then see our [ILR change request consultation pages](#) for more information about how you can have your say. This consultation will close on **02 September**.

A copy of the agenda for the September board will soon be available on our website. All public papers for the board will be published on our website shortly after the meeting.

Own Software Writers' Change Management group

The Own Software Writers Change Management group met on 10 August to discuss progress on preparation for the move to the single ILR for training providers who write their own software.

Attendees expressed their concern about the delays on the project, such as the availability of the LIS, which has led them to decide to initially return data in flat file format and convert to XML format later in the academic year.

They also received an update on funding calculations and were told about the [Interactive Conversion Tool](#), which has been created to assist training providers in moving between the flat file and Single ILR.

This group was set up as a task and finish group, to ensure own software writers are equipped for the move to a single ILR. *The information authority* has encouraged the group's members to support each other through the move to the single ILR in XML, enabling the sharing of technical expertise, knowledge and code to reduce the burden on each individual provider and to ensure consistency in development. They will meet for a final meeting on **18 October 2011**.

Perception survey - last chance to let us know what you think

As you may be aware we are running our annual awareness and perception survey to gather your views on our work. This survey will close on **09 September** and we would like to get a wide response from learning providers, data users and policy makers within FE and training to help us become more effective and focus on the issues that are important to you.

Please take the time to [complete our online survey](#) and to forward it on to other colleagues who may find it relevant.

News from the Data Service

LARA Release 2 - update

Following the release of the [Learning Aim Reference Application \(LARA\)](#) on 31 July, the Data Service is now working to publish Release 2 of LARA. Release 2 is planned to go live in **November 2011** and will bring with it:

- improved accessibility and usability
- smoother and quicker process for publishing learning aim funding decisions
- information on progress of learning aims through workflows
- improved search functionality including Quick Search

For any queries please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email: servicedesk@thedataservice.org.uk.

Webinars held on the single ILR and changes to data collection systems

The Data Service and *the information authority* recently held webinar training sessions, aimed at learning providers and funding agency staff to assist with their understanding of the move to a single ILR and changes to the data collection systems and what this will mean for them.

The webinar sessions covered:

- Moving to a single ILR, ILR Changes for 2011/12, data collection systems update
- LIS V19.01 - functionally to convert a 2011/12 flat file format ILR to a single ILR file in XML format as well as merge two or more files in either format into one single ILR file in XML format, validate both single ILR file in XML format and flat format ILR files, handling LIS error reports
- From LAD to LARA – Release 1 of LARA, Plans for Release 2

A number of questions were raised by delegates at the webinar sessions and we have endeavoured to respond to most of these, and we will continue to do so. These [questions and answers](#) and the [presentation slides](#) from the webinar are now available to download from [the Data Service website](#).

Proxy Aim Usage in 2010/11 ILR

Providers are reminded that where they have used a proxy learning aim code in field A09 of the ILR and have replaced the proxy aim reference with the actual aim reference, the national learning aim monitoring code (field A46) for that aim needs to be changed to remove the proxy aim indicator.

We recommend that providers ensure where they have updated their learning aim reference to the correct (non-proxy) code, they also make sure A46 is changed at the same time, to ensure consistency of the data returned.

Any learners with learning aims that are still recorded using the proxy aim indicator in field A46 in the final returns of the 2010/11 will be rejected by the validation rules.

2010/11 Period 12 Employer Responsive Qualification Success Rate reports published

The Data Service published the **2010/11 Period 12 Employer Responsive Qualification Success Rate** reports on 25 August 2011. These reports are now available to download from the [Provider Gateway](#).

These reports break down success rates into sections so that learning aims can be analysed in different ways. The data file can be used by providers to further interpret their results.

What's new in these reports?

- Period 12 is a no-change roll forward. The methodology, calculations, formats and layouts of the reports are unchanged from Period 9.

Supporting information, including the new 2010/11 Employer Responsive QSR methodology, guidance documents and FAQs are available from the [Qualification Success Rate](#) pages on the Data Service 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 servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk with your query.

Post-19 Qualifications Support transitioned to the Data Service

The Data Service has successfully transitioned the support previously provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Framework (QCF) team into its Service Desk.

The old email box 'qcfqueries@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk' has been closed.

All queries surrounding eligibility of post-19 qualifications and questions on the Framework should be emailed to the Service Desk: servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk.

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.