

inform

Issue 47 – April 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.

Version 2 of single ILR specification published

The information authority has published Version 2 of the following documents for 2011/12:

- Single ILR Specification
- Business Rules
- XML Schema Definitions (XSD) - (Version 2.2)
- ILR Data Model
- ILR Field Mappings - (Version 2.2)
- Appendix Q – Outcome grades

The 2011/12 single ILR Specification has been updated with corrections, amendments to business rules and with additional information on error handling and transmission numbers. Version 3 of the flat file ILR Specification for 2011/12 has also been published. All the documents are now available to download on the [2011/12 ILR Documents](#) page.

Why move to a single ILR in XML?

The information authority's decision to move to a single ILR in XML will mean that data collections will become less burdensome as there will no longer be a separate collection for Employer Responsive, Learner Responsive, Adult Safeguarded Learning and ESF Short Records. Providers are now being asked to send records for all of their learners in a single file submission.

Using XML makes it easier to implement future changes to systems and at lower cost. Higher Education and schools data collections moved to XML some years ago.

These benefits will in turn enable the delivery of better quality management information.

Further details on these changes and benefits can be found on *the information authority* [website](#).



This month:

News from *the information authority*:

- Version 2 of single ILR specification published
- 2011/12 single ILR collections timetable
- Removing 'proxy aims' from the ILR
- Developing the 2012/13 learner record
- Out and about

News from the Data Service:

- LIS 2011/12 Calculation Interface Specification delayed
- ULN Verification reports updated
- 2009/10 Learner Responsive National Success Rate Tables to be published
- Framework for Excellence support moves to the Service Desk

Website survey

As part of our commitment to providing a quality service, both *the information authority* and the Data Service would welcome your feedback on your experience of using our websites.

The next time you visit [the information authority](#) and/or [the Data Service](#) websites please take a few minutes to complete the website satisfaction survey.



News from *the information authority*

ILR collection timetable 2011/12

A data collection timetable for the 2011/12 ILR was tabled at *the information authority* board on 2 March 2011. The board approved the proposed approach and agreed the secretariat should negotiate minor changes to dates with the YPLA and Skills Funding Agency to produce a coherent and integrated timetable that avoided return dates only a few days apart.

Following these negotiations a revised timetable has been drafted, which will be published as soon as it has been ratified by *information authority* board members. This approval is being sought virtually, in order to ensure a speedier process.

Removing 'proxy aims' from the ILR

The Skills Funding Agency, the National Apprenticeship Service and the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) are confident that the funding information on the Learning Aims Database (LAD) is now complete and being kept up to date.

Providers should therefore begin to remove 'proxy aims' from their individualised learner record (ILR) data. Where the correct aim is now fundable, or a suitable alternative is available, learning providers should recode the ILR using the correct Learning Aim Reference number. Where a learning aim is not funded for the relevant funding model on LAD, it is expected that the provider will code the ILR with the correct learning aim and record it as unfunded.

The use of the proxy aim code in field A46 of the ILR will not be valid at the end of the 10/11 academic year, and any learners with learning aims that are still recorded using code 118 in field A46 will be rejected by the validation rules.

If learning providers would like to gain further clarity about the funding status for particular learning aims, they should consult the relevant websites in the first instance for the respective agencies or email the learning aim reference number to one of the addresses below:

- For adult skills: gcfpolicy@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk
- For Apprenticeships: frameworks@apprenticeships.gov.uk
- For YPLA-funded provision: cvhfundingqueries@ypla.gov.uk

Developing the 2012/13 learner record

The information authority has started to gather requirements for the 2012/13 Individualised Learner Record (ILR). To request a change to what is being collected in 2011/12, you will need to complete a Request for Change form and submit this to the information authority secretariat by Friday 24 June 2011.

The information authority has published the following to assist with submitting your Request for Change:

- the [timetable](#) for developing and publishing the 2012/13 ILR specification, validation rules and support manuals
- an [overview](#) of the change process
- the [assessment criteria](#) used to consider change requests
- the [Request for Change form and guidance](#)

If you have any queries regarding the change process, or would like to arrange a meeting to discuss possible changes, please contact the Community and Stakeholder Team at cst@theia.org.uk.

Out and about

The information authority and the Data Service will be speaking at a number of events during May and June on the move to a [single ILR](#) and the [replatforming of data collection systems](#). These events include:

- The [Capita Further and Higher Education National Conference](#) on **11 May** at the Holiday Inn, Stratford upon Avon
- Corero User group on **12 May** at the Orange Studios, Birmingham
- North West CMIS on **10 June** at Hopwood Hall College, Rochdale
- [Summer College Data Conference](#) on **16 June** at Morley College, London
- [AoC Information, Data and Technology Conference](#) on **21 June** at Holywell Park, Loughborough.

Presentation slides used at these events will be made available on the [conferences and briefings](#) page of *the information authority* website after the events.

News from the Data Service

LIS 2011/12 Calculation Interface Specification delayed



The Data Service recently announced that it will be publishing the Calculation Interface Specification documentation for Version 19 of the LIS (for 2011/12) on 25 March 2011.

Unfortunately it has not been possible to produce this information within the planned timeframe. We can, however, issue guidance from the current stage of development of the calculation, as follows:

- In 2010/11 and previous year's versions of the LIS, the ER and LR funding calculations were contained in two Dynamic Link Library (dll) objects called ERCalculate.dll and LRCalculate.dll.
- The intention is that LIS version 19 will use one dll for all funding calculations. Users calling this dll would pass a text string which identifies the location of the input data files. The input data files which pass data to the calculation dll will be 'Learner', 'Aim' and 'Lookup', in a similar way to the 2010/11 LIS.

However there will only be one format for each file which will cover all the calculation models, unlike the current LIS which uses different formats for the Employer Responsive and Learner Responsive versions of the input files. This means that the data format will include all fields from ILR data and reference data sources (such as Learning Aim Database).

Anticipated publication dates

The Data Service would like to apologise this is not a fully detailed description, but hopes that it will provide some useful early information. We are hoping to release detailed Calculation Interface Specifications in iterative versions during the development of LIS and anticipate that the next version will be published late April 2011.

ULN Verification Reports updated

The Data Service published the [ULN \(Unique Learner Number\) Verification reports](#) for providers on 08 April 2011.

These verification reports have been updated to include information showing whether the ILR contains Forename (L09) and Surname (L10) data. This is to assist the identification of possible errors in the ILR data. The new reports replace the existing version of the reports. No other change has been made to the information in the reports.

These reports are now available to download from the Data Quality Reports folder on the [Provider Gateway](#).

2009/10 Learner Responsive National Success Rates Tables published

The Data Service will be publishing the [2009/10 Learner Responsive National Success Rates Tables](#) (previously known as benchmarking reports), [associated guidance document](#), [frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#), and links to the [archive of previous years' tables](#) on its website in **late April**.

National Success Rates Tables (NSRT) are produced annually in arrears of the Learner Responsive collections cycle, and are used by providers, and the sector as a whole. They consist of summary indicators of overall performance, on an average and a percentile ranking basis. The publication of these tables allows providers to assess performance, and assist in the planning of action programmes to improve the success, retention and achievement rates of learners. The tables also provide information used in performance reviews by various funding and standards organisations.

This release of the 2009/10 Learner Responsive National Success Rates Tables (previously known as Benchmarking reports) replaces the data for 2007/08 to 2009/10 published in July 2010.

Most NSRT queries can be resolved by referring to the [guidance documents](#) and [frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#). Alternatively, please contact the Service Desk on **0870 2670001** or email: servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk.

Framework for Excellence helpdesk moves to the Data Service

The Framework for Excellence (FfE) helpdesk is currently being transitioned into the Data Service. The Service Desk at the Data Service will be responsible for providing support for all Framework for Excellence (FfE) queries.

All existing FfE queries are being moved to the Service Desk, therefore any requests for assistance will not be lost during the transition.

For any FfE queries contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk. Calls and emails to the FfE helpdesk will be forwarded to the Service Desk for a short period to successfully complete the transition.

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.