

Minutes

Date	14 July 2011
Subject	LR Provider Group meeting
Location	Cheylesmore House, Coventry
Time	11:00am-3:30pm
Publication intent	PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting

Item 3. Update on Access to HE data

- 3.1 As agreed at the previous LR provider group meeting, Matthew Cott from Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) returned to give the group an update on how the QAA, its Access Validation Agencies (AVA) and Data Service have been working together to remove the need for Access to HE data to be collected outside of the ILR. Matthew was pleased to announce that QAA and its AVAs will rely entirely on ILR data from now on. Therefore, colleges should not have to handle further data requests from AVAs.
- 3.2 The Data Service will provide the AVAs with relevant ILR extracts and will support AVAs to ensure that their information requirements are being met by ILR data. They will evaluate the process after its first operational year.
- 3.3 The one issue that has come up when comparing ILR data with data collected by AVAs is that, in some cases, data has been reported under the wrong AVA. Providers are asked to ensure that they allocate learners to the correct AVA.
- 3.4 If colleges do receive any Access to HE data requests, Matthew will be happy to take that up with the relevant AVA.

Item 4. The single ILR in XML

- 4.1 Pete Ashton gave the group a presentation on the single ILR in XML. Further details are available in the slides. Pete reminded the group of the drivers behind this project and talked through how it is being implemented.
- 4.2 Pete explained the data collection timetable and informed the group that the YPLA has decided there is no need for the R07 return in late February. The YPLA will instead use the data submitted at R06. There will be one hard

close for all types of learning provision in November 2012. This may have an impact on ASL providers, because it is significantly earlier than the ASL closing dates of previous years.

- 4.3 The development of the LIS was discussed. Pete said that he expects LIS to continue to merge ILR files in future years, but he confirmed that the XML converter tool in the LIS will not be available for 2012/13.
- 4.4 Several providers commented that they are concerned that their staff may have difficulty interpreting LIS error reports because they will not be used to the new terminology. Pete commented that he has seen the new error reports and is confident that learning providers will be comfortable with them. It should be possible to download the list of errors so that they can be sorted by funding stream. This will enable providers to focus on clearing errors on a particular subset of learner records.
- 4.5 The group would like clarification from *the information authority* or Data Service regarding data freezes. Providers want confirmation that data users such as the funding agencies and Ofsted will only be given data on the agreed dates, for the reasons described in Appendix A of the ILR specification.

Action: Paul to request formal confirmation that data users will only have access to data as set out in the collection timetable.

Item 5. Data Service system replatforming

- 5.1 Ian Tress from the Data Service gave a presentation on the system replatforming project. The slides have further details.
- 5.2 The group queried why validation rules have been hard coded. They pointed out that the decision to do so will surely hinder the Data Service in making use of the flexibility offered by Oracle Policy Automation.
- 5.3 Having been told that the recommendation will be to zip their XML files prior to submission, the group asked what compression tools will be compatible with the online data collection systems (OLDC). The vast majority of providers at the meeting use [7-zip](#) rather than Winzip. Ian will confirm which tools will be compatible in due course.
- 5.4 Learning providers would find it useful if OLDC confirmed the number of learners included in the batch upload and remind them how many were in the previous upload. This sense check would be reassuring for providers and help to avoid any major discrepancies.
- 5.5 There was a discussion about the stability and currency of ER apprenticeship information on the Learning Aims Database regarding. Some members of the group have found there to be frequent changes on eligibility for funding for some courses – in particular heating / plumbing courses.
- 5.6 Later this year, the LIS will have a 2012/13 'shadow' funding report for Skills Funding Agency provision. The intention is to help providers see what funding this year's provision would be worth if it was being delivered in 2012/13.

Action: Ian to take these issues back to the relevant project colleagues.

- 5.7 There was a discussion about identifying small and medium sized enterprises. Some colleges have had ESF / Train to Gain funding clawed back because auditors did not consider their procedures for identifying SMEs to be robust enough.

Item 6. Q&A session - LR success rates

- 6.1 David Craig, Head of Strategic Analysis and Research at the Young People's Learning Agency, spoke to the group about success rates for Learner Responsive provision. From 2011/12, schools, sixth form colleges and general FE colleges will be using the same success rate methodology.
- 6.2 The group asked whether functional skills would be included in success rates. David said that they were planning to include them for 2011/12. The group highlighted that this could mean that overall success rates will be dominated by functional skills. This would make it difficult to compare the success rates of schools and FE providers. David said that the YPLA is looking at ways to report success rates. Options could include reporting by type of qualification or by course length.
- 6.3 There was a discussion about success rates for Foundation Learning (FL). Providers currently have no clear indication of what the minimum levels of performance are for FL. This is concerning because they do not have success criteria or in-year benchmarking to measure themselves against.
- 6.4 David was asked whether the success rate methodology next year will be released any earlier than it has been this year. David said that, although they would like to get the methodology to the sector in good time, the likelihood is that they will not be able to publish it until they see how some policies take shape. David cited as examples the fact that government may review its policies in light of the Wolf Report and that there is a consultation planned later this year on proposed changes to the funding formula for 16-19 year olds.
- 6.5 David said that the YPLA were looking to change success rates reports this year. OfSTED has asked that changes be kept to a minimum this year (ie for 2010/11), so it looks like there will simply be a couple of additional 16-19 specific tables that look at success rates for each qualification type that will be included as a pilot. David said he would consult with the LR group on QSR report changes. He will do that for 2011/12 when he expect significant changes (DfE will include them in their performance tables for 16-19 and seem keen to report success rates for each type of qualification rather than length of course).
- 6.6 The group would appreciate being consulted and offered to be a sounding board should David want to gather any other views or comments from learning providers.

Item 7. Prior Attainment

- 7.1 Robin MacNeill and Ana Cavilla from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) attended to discuss the quality of prior attainment data. BIS has identified discrepancies between the levels of prior attainment recorded in the ILR and the levels reported for the same learners via the

[Prior Qualifications Survey](#) (PQS). Robin and Ana want to help providers improve the quality of prior attainment data in the ILR.

- 7.2 There was a discussion about how comparable ILR data is with the survey results because they are asking different things. The ILR records the prior attainment of the learner when they first enrolled with the provider. The survey asked what the learner's prior attainment was before starting a specific qualification.
- 7.3 There was a discussion about the challenges that learning providers face in collecting good quality prior attainment data. Providers pointed out that it is a real challenge to collect all of the information required for the ILR. Training providers want to have a customer friendly approach to enrolling learners and get on with actually delivering learning as soon as possible. Both the provider and the learner want to minimise the time spent form filling.
- 7.4 A lot of data collection takes place in classrooms, where teaching staff advise learners who have any difficulties completing the forms. Despite the best efforts of MI teams, it is very difficult to get all teaching staff up to speed with the intricacies of the ILR.
- 7.5 Many providers reproduce the list in [Appendix G of the ILR](#) and ask enrolment staff and/or learners to identify their prior attainment based on that. It can be difficult to assess the level of overseas qualifications.
- 7.6 It was pointed out that there may be circumstances where learners choose not to disclose a qualification at enrolment, particularly if they do not think is relevant.
- 7.7 The suggestion of making a questionnaire style approach to mandatory for prior attainment data collection would not be popular with learning providers. Alternative options for collecting this data, along with good practice examples would be welcomed, but the view of the group seemed to be that most providers already take reasonable steps to capture prior attainment levels.
- 7.8 The group's view was that previous initiatives to improve the quality of prior attainment data have had little impact.
- 7.9 It was suggested that BIS should put more pressure on the Department for Education to ensure that schools and awarding bodies are making full use of the Unique Learner Number and the Personal Learning Record (PLR). Getting those right will improve data quality in the long run, save the sector money and save BIS the costs of running additional surveys.
- 7.10 There were several offers from providers for BIS colleagues to visit them during busy enrolment periods to see first hand the challenges they face collecting data.

Item 8. 2012/13 ILR changes

- 8.1 Pete Ashton consulted the group on a number of changes that have been proposed for the 2012/13 ILR. These included:

Change #7 – Enable the monitoring of sub-contracting down through all levels

The consensus amongst providers seemed to be that the current set up of recording the UKPRN of both the lead provider and the provider actually

delivering the learning aim should meet most business needs. There is a perception that it would be possible to record the full chain of subcontracting at aim level, but this is likely to create a little more work.

Change #8 – Improve the availability and collection of data on the economic activity status of FE learners

Part of this request suggests introducing a survey approach to collecting this information. This idea is not popular with the group. It was agreed that this approach may work well in some instances, but it would be difficult to adopt this approach on enrolment forms. The group commented that there are frequently queries from learners about part-time work definitions and what is meant by economically inactive. Better guidance on these areas would be helpful.

Change #9 – Identify the learner's reason for learning

Some providers have tried to collect this information previously. For example some of the Common Application Process systems for 14-19 year olds asked why a learner chose a particular course. One of the most common reasons was that their friends were doing the same course. The group did not think that this would provide useful data, particularly if captured at enrolment. It was suggested that it may be better to try to capture this information as part of the learner satisfaction survey.

Change #18 - Record Access to Apprenticeships pathways

The group found it hard to comment on this request because they knew very little about Access to Apprenticeships and how they will work. However, it did look as though the key data items required already exist within the ILR.

Change #20 – Identify and monitor learners from care backgrounds

The group's perception is that it would be difficult to get good quality data for these learners. Unless they will be eligible for some form of bursary, learners may prefer not to reveal that sort of information. It was suggested that if there is a requirement to monitor these learners, then the relevant data users could seek a list of ULNs from local authorities or the DfE and then track them as and when they appear in the ILR.

Change#22 – Identify Apprenticeship pathways

Providers commented that it is common for apprentices to change pathways and that recording at pathway level in the ILR may cause a slight increase in work.

Change #27 – HE only – Identify highly qualified candidates

There are plans to remove caps on student numbers for highly qualified candidates. Therefore, HEFCE want to know whether learners have AAB or equivalent at A-level. As the AAB benchmark may change in future years, it will be necessary to collect the type of qualification along with the subject and grade achieved for all level 3 qualifications. There were two options discussed to do this. One was to use the Personal Learning Record as the sole source for this information, but the drawback is that mature students are unlikely to have a PLR. The other option discussed was for colleges to collect

the required information for HE learners. Based on previous experience, colleges think that this is quite difficult to do.

Change #30 – Collect data on cashed-in Learning Outcomes for all

The group commented that providers in the FE system have little option but to declare all results because if they do not record an outcome by the expected date, then the learner will be classed as a fail. Other than A/AS levels, the group were unaware of other qualifications that had the concept of cashing.

Item 9. Learning Records Service update

- 9.1 Mike Coulson from the Learning Records Service spoke to the group about recent LRS developments. These include new screens to help providers resolve possible ULN matches and the development of a data warehouse to help the LRS improve its matching algorithm.
- 9.2 The LRS is also involved in producing an online identification verification system, known as the Learner Passport. This will enable learners with internet access to identify themselves online and so this could replace the need for learners to have to show passports or driving licenses when they enrol. In due course, it should be possible for software suppliers to access plug in services to access this.
- 9.3 There was a discussion about getting timely achievement data into Personal Learning Records. This would save providers a lot of time at enrolment and address several of the prior attainment data issues discussed under item 7. Mike informed the group that the LRS is doing all it can to get the big awarding organisations to work with the LRS and populate PLRs. The Skills Funding Agency's Chief Executive is also lending his support to this.
- 9.4 The group asked whether the [A2C Data Exchange Project](#) would use the ULN. The expectation is that it will not, primarily because the A2C project will also be used by schools and they have, thus far, been reluctant to use the ULN. The group's view is that more pressure needs to be put on the Department for Education and schools to use the LRS's services.

Item 10. Any other business

- 10.1 There was a discussion about the recently revised Skills Funding Agency definition of classroom and workplace learning. The group talked about some of the implications this may have on the funding they receive and the fees charged to learners.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 24 November 2011.

Meeting Attendees on 14 July 2011

Name	Organisation
Ana Cavilla	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
Anthea Smith	Henley College
Chris Wilde	Peterborough College
Dan Starkey	South Birmingham College
Graham Mort	Strode's College
Hollie Warren	Community Training Services Ltd
Ian Tress	Data Service
Jon Cole	Mid Kent College of Further Education
Julie Hope	Walsall College
Karen Town	Wakefield College
Len Tildsley	Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology
Margaret Scott	Essex County Council Adult Community Learning
Mark Emerson	Chelmsford College
Matthew Cott	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Meté Kiamil	CONEL College
Mike Coulson	Learning Records Service
Pat Bee	Warwickshire College
Paul Kelman	<i>The information authority</i>
Pete Ashton	<i>The information authority</i>
Peter Buckley	Tameside College
Peter Mudd	South Downs College
Rachel Jones	Burton College
Richard Wyszeccki	NE Worcs College
Robin MacNeill	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
Stephen Hewitt	Morley College
Sunny Patel	Data Service
Tracy Tenant	Community Training Services Ltd
Valerie Woska	Harrow College