

inform

Issue 50 – July 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.

Helping providers prepare for 2011/12 ILR

The information authority and the Data Service have published two new presentations to assist learning providers with preparations for the implementation of the 2011/12 ILR.

- The [Single ILR in XML for 2011/12](#) presentation includes details of new and removed fields, changes to validation rules, code changes within existing fields and apprenticeship data requirements
- The [LIS V19 for 2011/12 – conversion and amalgamation](#) presentation explains how to use the LIS to validate and check files prior to data submission, convert flat files to XML, amalgamate files and merge records.

LARA Release 1 goes live

Release 1 of the [Learning Aim Reference Application \(LARA\)](#) has now gone live and replaces the Learning Aim Database (LAD). LARA will be the repository for learning aims for 2011/12 and onwards. The LAD will continue to run alongside LARA for a defined period and learning aims for 2009/10 and 2010/11 will continue to be made available on the LAD.

The LARA and related documents can be found at:

<https://gateway.imservices.org.uk/sites/lara>

Key changes for **Release 1** of LARA includes a new look, new location, new platform and technology. LARA and has been designed to look and function as similarly to LAD as possible. A user guide has been produced to assist understanding of how to use LARA, this is available to download from [the Data Service website](#).

Release 2 is planned for later in the year and will bring with it improved accessibility and usability. It will also see the return of the Quick Search feature, currently not available in Release 1.

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

This month:

- **Helping providers prepare for the 2011/12 ILR**
- **LARA Release 1 goes live**

News from *the information authority*:

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News from *the information authority*

Take our survey and help shape our work

The information authority exists to set data standards and reduce burden within the FE and skills system – but we can only do this effectively in partnership with our stakeholders. We are now running our annual awareness and perception survey to gather your views on our work. 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.

2012/13 ILR change process

The information authority has received 34 requests to make changes to the 2012/13 [ILR](#), which have now been published on the [Request for Change](#) section of the website.

The information authority secretariat is now preparing to consult the sector on the changes that have met the initial [assessment criteria](#). The consultation with learning providers and software writers began with a meeting on Thursday 21 July, which gave attendees an opportunity to hear more about the changes, make suggestions on possible solutions and raise any issues or concerns. Further consultation will take place during August using online surveys and [feconnect](#).

In September *the information authority* board will review the secretariat's recommendations for these changes, making their decisions based on what is considered to be the most beneficial outcome for the FE system as a whole. A summary of the changes will then be published in October, with the 2012/13 ILR spec being published in November.

Dealing with late 2012/13 ILR changes

At *the information authority* board meeting on 15 June, it was proposed that a contingency plan was put in place in case late changes were required to the ILR for 2012/13 due to major changes to funding that won't be finalised by the YPLA and Skills Funding Agency until later in the year.

It was decided by the board that, whilst only minor late changes would be considered, it would be preferable to put a plan in place to deal with this eventuality. The proposed timetable was amended slightly to allow two extra days for change submissions, then agreed by the board. The board will review and decide on any late changes at a meeting on 21 December 2011.

If you have any queries regarding any part of the change process, please contact the Community and Stakeholder Team at cst@theia.org.uk.

Reduction in 2011/12 collection dates

The information authority is pleased to announce a removal of one of the collection dates for the 2011/12 ILR, and a new version of the [2011/12 timetable](#) has been published that incorporates this change.

The updated version of the timetable reflects the YPLA's agreement to use data collected at the R06 return on 06 February 2012 in its funding allocations for 2012/13 rather than to have a separate collection for this purpose later in February.

Rolling learners over to next academic year – importance of start dates

Providers are reminded that *the information authority's* [ILR specification](#) states that the start date for an aim must not change between academic years. This has been in place since at least the 2004/05 ILR Specification.

The information authority's [Data Management FAQs](#) reiterate this point and the success rate methodology is very clear that changed start dates will generate duplicate enrolments in the Qualification Success Rates (QSRs) data.

The Data Service is unable to re-calculate QSRs as the success rate methodology is based on the ILR data supplied by providers. Unless there is a specific fault with the success rate calculations and/or methodology we do not re-calculate providers' success rates. Data that includes the same learning aims with different start dates does not fail validation as a learner may undertake the same learning aim on more than one occasion.

When *the information authority* board made its decision on the 4 June 2008 that a provider would not be able to revise its data after the close date, it also agreed that; "In a case where a provider sends incomplete information by that date (the close date) then an agency or body, for example Ofsted or the LSC, would be at liberty to take this into account when making decisions, but no further data would be received or processed."

If you have any queries contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk

Guidance on learner transfers due to Minimum Contract Levels

The information authority has published guidance on the process to be followed for the transfer of learner records for providers holding contracts in 2010/11 with the Skills Funding Agency who will no longer hold contracts in 2011/12, specifically those becoming sub-contractors or those merging with other contract holding providers in 2011/12.

The process has been agreed by the Data Service and *the information authority* and is in two parts:

- the first for the 2010/11 contract holding provider; and
- the second for the provider becoming the new contract holder in 2011/12.

The guidance is available on our website at: http://www.theia.org.uk/ilr/ilrdocuments/201112_guidance.htm

News from the Data Service

Changes to annual data collection for AVAs

QAA is pleased to confirm that, with immediate effect, Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) in England will no longer collect annual data from Access to HE course providers who make returns to the Data Service. Instead, the Data Service will supply that data directly to AVAs through a suite of reports designed to fulfil QAA's annual monitoring requirements while removing the burden placed on providers previously. This change is the result of pilot work undertaken in 2011 by the Data Service, QAA and AVAs.

How will the changes work?

At specified times of the year, the Data Service will supply AVAs with summary reports produced from providers' Learner Responsive LR04 and LR05 data returns for 2010/11. The earlier reports (based on the LR02 return) will enable AVAs to liaise with course providers so that all Access to HE learners are allocated to the correct learning aims. AVAs will use the final report (based on the LR05 return) for the purpose of QAA's annual monitoring requirements. The final report will also contribute to two, well-established national publications: Access to HE *Key statistics* and the accompanying *Joint agency report* (for further details see <http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk/partners/statistics/default.asp>).

The Data Service and QAA will continue to work closely with AVAs during the introduction of these changes. The Access Data Development Group, chaired by QAA with representatives from AVAs, Data Service, HEFCE, HESA, UCAS and Welsh Government will monitor the implementation of the new arrangements.

2011/12 move from Provider Online to Batch – guidance published

As announced in a previous [news item](#), providers that currently use the Provider Online (POL) system for Employer Responsive or ESF Short Record collections and who also send data for another collection type by ILR batch file will need to send all learner data for 2011/12 by batch return only in a single ILR file.

The Data Service has published [guidance](#) for learning providers that describes what providers need to do in order to extract data from POL in order to move it into their batch systems ready for 2011/12 ILR returns. This data extract from POL should be taken **between 05 August 2011 and 10 August 2011**. In addition to this news item, this guidance will be sent separately to all affected providers by the Data Service.

If you have any further questions about moving from POL to batch for 2011/12 please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email servicedesk@thedataservice.org.uk.

Release of LIS 19.01 v1.05

As you may be aware from [previous announcements](#), the Data Service is in the process of updating its data collection systems, including the Learner Information Suite (LIS).

The [LIS 19.01 Beta v1.05](#) for learning providers and software suppliers/writers was released on 29 July along with the following:

- LIS 19.01 Beta v1.05 release guide
- process flow by functional area
- reported issues log
- defect logging guidance

These documents and the LIS beta can be found on the [Data Service website](#)

Please note that this will not be the fully-functioning release as previous announcements stated.

Users are asked to read the **LIS 19.01 Beta v1.05** release guide before using this beta – this document outlines the functionality available and known limitations, as well as highlighting the elements of this release that have been tested and any key known bugs /defects.

How to report issues with the LIS 19.01 Beta v1.05

To raise any issues /defects you may encounter with the LIS 19.01 Beta 1.05, users should first check to see whether the issue/defect has already been recorded in the '[Reported Issues Log](#)'. If it has not already been recorded then:

- read the published '[Defect Logging Guidance](#)' on how to submit any issues/defects/encryption of test files
- email any issues/defects with the LIS19.01 Beta V1.05 to lis19betaqueries@thedata-service.org.uk

There has been some useful feedback from software writers and providers on previous Beta releases that has been very helpful in the development process.

It is anticipated that a further Beta will be released on **05 August** and the final version on **11 August**.

Learner Responsive Qualification Success Rates Methodology changes for 2010/11

The Data Service recently published the [business rules for the 2010/11 Learner Responsive Qualification Success Rate methodology](#) which highlighted the main changes to the methodology, and has now published the [technical details of the changes](#) that will be made to [the 2010/11 Learner Responsive success rates methodology](#).

For any queries contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email 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.