

# inform

Issue 48 – May 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](mailto:informnewsletter@theia.org.uk).

## ILR collection timetable for 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 now been agreed and ratified by the *information authority* board and published on our website at:

[http://www.theia.org.uk/ilr/ilrdocuments/201112\\_ilrdetail.htm](http://www.theia.org.uk/ilr/ilrdocuments/201112_ilrdetail.htm)

## 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](http://www.theia.org.uk) and/or [the Data Service](http://www.thedataservice.org.uk) websites please take a few minutes to complete the website satisfaction survey.

## Your views!

Thank you to all those who responded to our mini-survey about how useful you find the content in **inform**. We were pleased to hear that 97% of respondents find the content in **inform** “very useful” or “useful”.

### This month:

#### News from *the information authority*:

- ILR collection timetable for 2011/12
- Website survey
- Your views!
- Requesting changes to the 2012/13 ILR
- New documents for 2010/11 and 2011/12 ILR published
- June board meeting – what’s on the agenda?
- Advisory groups in June
- Out and about

#### News from the Data Service:

- Changes to data migration for Employer Responsive/ESF Short Records batch submissions
- Publication of 2011/12 learning aims funding data
- Changes to data collection systems – revised timetable
- The Data service releases draft structure templates for the Learning Aim Reference Application (LARA)
- Draft 2011/12 LIS Calculation Interface Specification published
- 2010/11 Period 9 Employer Responsive Qualification Success Rate reports published

## News from *the information authority*

### Requesting changes to the 2012/13 ILR

Following on from our [previous announcement](#), *the information authority* would like to remind the sector that the change process for the 2012/13 ILR is underway and that [change request forms](#) must be submitted to the authority by **Friday 24 June 2011**. The [Request for Change](#) section of the website has further details and now includes an [example](#) of a completed form to give change requestors an idea of the level of detail required.

Paul Kelman, Stakeholder Engagement Manager for *the information authority*, said: "The [assessment criteria](#) has changed slightly this year so we've tweaked the Request for Change form to reflect this, but other than that the change process we've used successfully for several years remains the same. Typically we get a number of change requests from the funding agencies and government departments, but I'd like to reiterate that anyone can submit an ILR change request. If you think that there is additional data that should be collected in the ILR or that some items in the ILR are no longer needed, then please do submit a request for change or contact us to discuss things further."

Shortly after the closing date, *the information authority* will publish all of change requests that it has received. Change requestors are reminded that sections 2, 3 and 4 of the Request for Change form will be published and used to consult the sector. Therefore, requestors should take particular care in ensuring that they make clear in those sections why the FE sector should support the change.

Over the summer, the sector will be consulted to gather views on any changes that have met the initial assessment criteria. More information on the consultation will be made available through the [Inform newsletter](#), [feconnect](#), and [the information authority website](#). In the meantime, if you have any queries on the change process or require any further information, please email [cst@theia.org.uk](mailto:cst@theia.org.uk).

### New documents for 2010/11 and 2011/12 ILR published

*The information authority* has published the following documents:

#### 2010/11

- ILR Learner Responsive Support Manual – version 3
- ILR Validation Rules - version 8 (validation rule A09\_A16\_A27\_LAD\_1 deleted). This will be implemented in LIS 18.04

#### 2011/12

- ILR Specification Monitoring Codes
- ILR Specification - Appendix F (Privacy Notice) - version 2
- Generic learner form - version 2

All of the documents are now available to download from <http://www.theia.org.uk/ilr/ilrdocuments/>

## June board meeting – what's on the agenda?

*The information authority* board is due to meet on the 15 June in London. On the agenda is a presentation from AoC about their MIDES benchmarking system and a paper from OLASS setting out their business case for collecting monthly data about OLASS provision from April 2012.

The board will also decide on a process for dealing with late ILR changes requests that are likely to come from government policy announcement such as the publication of a new Skills Investment Strategy. There will also be a review of the board's Terms of Reference and Protocol and further consideration of the secretariat's work plan.

## Advisory groups in June

*The information authority* will be facilitating the following advisory groups in June:

- Data Users Group – 2 June
- Adult Safeguarded Learning – 9 June
- Software Suppliers – 13 June
- Employer Responsive – 16 June

The agenda items at these meetings will include an update on the [single ILR](#) in XML, [replatforming of data collection systems](#) and the [2012/13 ILR change request](#) process. Also on the agenda is an update from the Skills Funding Agency and YPLA policy teams, as well as updates from the [Learning Records Service](#) and [Next Step](#).

Further information is available on the group pages on our website. If you are interested in joining any of the groups, please email [cst@theia.org.uk](mailto:cst@theia.org.uk).

## Out and about

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

- 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

### Changes to data migration for Employer Responsive/ESF Short Records batch submissions

As part of plans to simplify and streamline data collection processes, the Data Service will be carrying out the annual data migration process for 2011/12 only for providers who submit Employer Responsive (ER) or European Social Fund Short Records (ESF SR) data using the Provider Online system (POL) in 2010/11. This means it will not be migrating data for providers who send ER or ESF SR batch file returns in 2010/11.

Migration is the process by which Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data is converted from the 2010/11 ILR format into 2011/12 ILR format and by which the Data Service database for 2011/12 is populated at the start of the academic year. Providers who send data by batch return will overwrite this migrated data with their first return of 2011/12 and so migration is not required for these providers. It is therefore important that all batch providers do make the first return for 2011/12 as specified in the 2011/12 collection timetable, otherwise there will be no data stored for them in the 2011/12 database and their funding for the 2011/12 year may be affected.

Data migration will still take place for providers using the POL to return data to the Data Service, ensuring that they can update continuing learners in the new 11/12 format. Data will only be migrated for providers who have contracts with the Skills Funding Agency in 2011/12. Any providers who will become sub-contractors in 2011/12 as a result of new minimum contract levels will not have their data migrated. The provider that holds the contract with the Skills Funding Agency will need to re-key this data even if they are a POL user.

Rich Williams, Head of the Data Service said: "We've been looking at ways to streamline and prioritise the work that we do and the data migration of batch ER/ESF learners is a good example of where we could re-focus our resources. Currently, the Data Service spends a great deal of time migrating these learners, only for the migrated data to be overwritten by providers just a few weeks later. It clearly makes more sense to put the control back into the providers' hands rather than making an assumption that all providers need this service."

This movement towards increased provider control reflects government aims to give more freedoms and flexibilities to colleges, training organisations and employers for the 2010/11 academic year. An announcement to this effect in June 2010 by John Hayes, Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning (<http://www.bis.gov.uk/news/topstories/2010/Jun/freedoms-for-colleges>) signalled the start of a process to further simplify funding arrangements for the post-19 FE sector.

### 2011/12 move from Provider Online to Batch – reminder

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

Further details about how to return ILR data in 2011/12 can be found on Page 10 of the [single ILR Specification for 2011/12](#).

If you are a provider who currently uses both POL and batch ILR transmission methods and have any queries about this please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email [servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk](mailto:servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk).

## Publication of 2011/12 learning aims funding data

The Data Service will be publishing the **2011/12 learning aims funding data** in the Learning Aim Database in mid June.

As part of the [enhancements to the Data Service data collection systems](#), the Learning Aim Database (LAD) is to be replaced by the [Learning Aim Reference Application \(LARA\)](#).

LARA will be the repository for learning aims from 2011/12 onwards, and any data that is not relevant for the 2011/12 collection will not be carried forward to the LARA system. These learning aims will be published in the Learning Aim Database (LAD) for the short term, in order to give the sector an early view of these aims.

The 2011/12 learning aims will be replicated in LARA.

For data collections, providers should ensure that they are able to interface with LARA for the 2011/12 new academic year, as the LAD will not hold key data going forward.

### What will happen to the LAD?

- The LAD will continue to be available until July 2013 for reference
- The LAD and the LAD archive will continue to be available at the current location from [the Data Service website](#)
- No changes to the LAD are planned – Learning Aims for 2009/10 and 2010/11 will continue to be made available on the [LAD website](#)
- The [LAD search](#) will continue to be available for 2009/10 and 2010/11 learning aims
- For a short while, the LAD will continue to be updated to support 2011/12 learning aims

### LARA development – Timetable of activity

- LARA table and field definitions for 2011/12 document – draft published **on 01 March 2011**
- LARA mdb database with dummy data to be available on **23 May 2011** (example files in each of the three formats csv, access, pipe delineated)
- LARA table and field definitions for 2011/12 document – **Version 2** to be published **mid June**
- LARA table and field definitions for 2011/12 document – final version to be published in **July** (dependant on successful testing)
- LARA live system by **July 2011**

The Data Service has published a revised [timetable for delivery of its 2011/12 data collection systems](#) on its website.

For any queries please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001**, or email: [servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk](mailto:servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk)

## Changes to data collection systems – revised timetable

The Data Service has published a [revised timetable for delivery](#) of its data collection systems for 2011/12. *The information authority* has been working with the Data Service to move to a [single ILR](#) collection defined and collected using eXtensible Markup Language (XML), and the Data Service is changing its data collection systems to accommodate these changes.

Further details on developments to the Learner Information Suite, the Online Data Collections system and LARA can be found on the [enhancements to data collections systems](#) page of the Data Service website.

## The Data Service releases draft structure templates for the Learning Aim Reference Application (LARA)

As [announced previously](#), the Learning Aim Database (LAD) is to be replaced by the Learning Aims Reference Application (LARA). To assist providers and software suppliers with developing their MI systems, the Data Service has released the current version of the Access mdb template file for the LARA extract, this is an empty database to show its structure.

Also available on [the Data Service website](#) are example .mdb, csv and psv files populated with manufactured test data. These build upon the [LARA draft tables and field definition for 2011/12](#) published in March.

**Please note:** these structures are not the final version and have yet to be tested therefore changes may be made during the migration and testing stages. A version populated with live test data will be made available on 24 June.

If you have any queries please call the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email: [servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk](mailto:servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk).

## Draft 2011/12 LIS Calculation Interface Specification published

The Data Service has published a draft of the [2011/12 Learner Information Suite \(LIS\) Calculation Interface Specification](#) and the [XML Schema Document for the Funding Calculations Input File](#) for LIS 19.01. The [LIS](#) software is used by providers to import and validate their [ILR](#) data, calculate Demand Led Funding (DLF) and derived variables, run reports and then export valid ILR data which can then be submitted to the Data Service.

The specification and schema documents details the structure of the XML input file required to run the Funding Calculation modules within LIS 19.01. These documents are still work-in-progress and subsequent updates will be published in the coming weeks on [the Data Service website](#).

The Data Service has also published the current [estimated system requirements](#) of the host PC environment for LIS 19.01. These are guidelines only and may be subject to change.

For any queries please call the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email: [servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk](mailto:servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk).

## 2010/11 Period 9 Employer Responsive Qualification Success Rate reports published

The Data Service published the 2010/11 Period 9 Employer Responsive Qualification Success Rate reports on 26 May 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?

- A minor change to the report footer has been implemented, removing the name of a source ILR submission used in the production of the report. This information was incomplete and occasionally misleading in previous reporting periods. Accordingly, as it cannot be guaranteed that complete and correct submission information can always be shown, it has been removed from the footer.

Supporting information, including the new 2010/11 Employer Responsive QSR methodology, guidance documents for Period 9 QSR reports 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](mailto:servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk) with your query.

## 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.