



ULN top tips guide



ULN becomes mandatory

Since August 2010 the inclusion of a valid and separate **Unique Learner Number (ULN)** for each learner became **mandatory** within the individualised learner record (ILR). This means that a valid ULN will be a compulsory requirement in the ILR after the **LR01, ER01, ER02 and ER03 collections**. Please see below for further details.

Remember:

The new ILR requirements for the ULN 2010/11:

- For LR01, ER01, ER02 and ER03 collections, a validation warning will be generated for all funded learning aims for which the learner does not have a ULN and where the learning start date is more than 60 calendar days before the reference date for the return.
- For subsequent ILR returns (LR02 and ER04 onwards), all funded learning aims (with a planned or actual duration of 14 days or more) where the learning start date is more than 60 calendar days before the reference date for the return must have a valid ULN – otherwise, the learning aim will not be validated (will be rejected).*

A summary of **ALL** the changes to the 2010/11 ILR is available from [the information authority website](http://theinformationauthority.org.uk).

* For OLASS learners, there may be exceptional circumstances where the offender is in custody and cannot be registered for a ULN, in this case the provider can use 9999999999.

Generate your ULNs well in advance of collection close dates

The Data Service would like to remind providers of the time delay between the issue of a Unique Learner Number by the Learning Records Service and when it can be inputted into the Online Data Collections System. OLDC validates ULNs once a day, hence the **one working day** time delay.

We have had cases where providers are trying to use their ULN on the date of issue resulting in it not being accepted by OLDC. Providers will need to ensure that they are generating ULNs at least 2-3 days in advance of the date when they plan to submit their ILR returns.

Key points for providers to bear in mind are:

- To generate ULNs well in advance of a collection close date and not the day before a collection closes
- There is a one working day timelag between issue of a ULN and when it can be used in OLDC
- To submit ILR returns well in advance of the closing date, so that you have sufficient time to resolve any data or admin issues.

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

Lewisham College – Best Practice Case Study

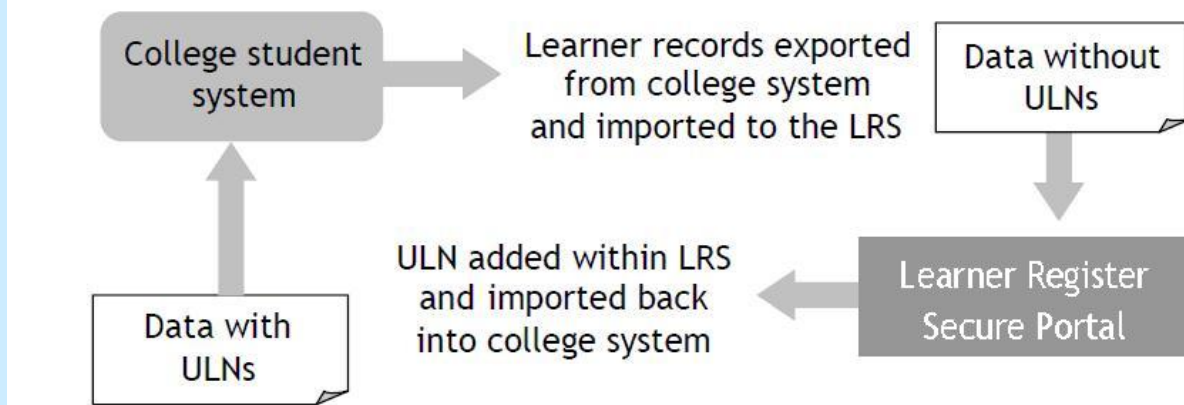
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Lewisham College was the first to issue a ULN to a learner and has identified some areas of good practice that other providers can follow to ensure as many learners as possible can benefit from having a valid ULN – with the minimum amount of admin burden to you.

The ULN allocation process



ULN Best Practice Checklists to help streamline ULN administration:

Verifying learner data:

- Use enrolment to explain ULNs to learners and talk through the Privacy Notice
- Enrolment form used to ask learners if they consent to sharing data
- Check and verify learner ID and details at enrolment
- All details are input onto our learner records system
- Only register current year learners for a ULN
- Submit batch registrations – found it easier and quicker to submit smaller batches of 500-600 learners.

Types of ID acceptable as evidence:

- Passport
- Driving Licence
- ID Card
- NI Card
- Benefits document
- Exam certificates
- Bank credit or debit card
- Last resort – other – e.g. a utility bill

Dealing with exceptions:

- Different address – check with learner – if necessary update address
- Different Date of Birth – check with learner – verify DOB – update record / create new record
- Different spelling of name – check with learner – check ID – update record / create new record
- Duplicates – Go to the *Use Learner Management* screen – report a problem or duplicate

Lewisham College - Results of good practice

As the Learner Register increased, the number of exceptions found for each learner increased and so did the number of potential matches for Lewisham.

Lesley Fooks, Head of Student Administration at Lewisham College explains the processes she introduced to ensure she could deal with exceptions quickly and easily.

1. Explaining the benefits of the ULN to learners

Lewisham found that learners were suspicious of the ULN, and it was not enough to display posters and include a statement on the enrolment form explaining the benefits.

The fee assessors were trained to explain the fair data process notice during enrolment, including the benefits of having a ULN. For example, learners are made aware that it will be to their advantage if future employers are able to verify the qualifications they have gained.

Benefits: There is a long term benefit to the learner, in terms of making best use of their Personal Learning Record. Also, the fact that they have permitted use of their data means that they can be contacted in future. This is particularly important for the purposes of surveys and customer feedback, such as via Framework for Excellence.

Results: Initially only 63% of learners permitted the sharing of their data. This rose to 97%, simply as a consequence of explaining the ULN benefits at enrolment.

2. Collecting and submitting valid learner details

Lewisham changed the application requirements, so that all potential learners now need to present a valid passport or birth certificate at enrolment. This was to ensure that enrolment data, such as the learner's name, would be exactly the same as that held on official documents.

Alongside data quality training for enrolment staff, an additional section was added to the enrolment form, so that fee assessors could identify any outstanding evidence.

Statements were added to the enrolment section of the website, making it clear that these would be required and a paragraph was also added to the pre-enrolment letter explaining the new evidence requirements.

Benefits: The obvious benefit has been that in 95% of cases ULNs can be allocated through electronic data interchange, without requiring any further investigation or manual entry onto the LRS. This has saved a significant amount of administration time and effort. It has also reduced the potential for future errors or inaccurate data.

A significant benefit has also been that when learners present official documents for exams, their personal details match the awarding body registration details. Previously where these differed a replacement certificate would be required, creating delays for the learner and considerable administration costs for both the college and awarding body. By collecting personal data from official documents at the point of enrolment last year the college **saved more than £10k in replacement certificate fees.**

Results: Within a relatively short space of time the number of records queried by the LRS after the first submission fell from 60% to 5%.

3. Volume and timing for assigning ULNs

Find your maximum number of uploads

It became clear that the ideal maximum number of learner records to upload to the LRS is 5000 records. Any more than this in a single upload and the system had a tendency to time out.

Don't delay your first upload for too long

Lewisham found that the timing of the first upload to the LRS after the main enrolment in September was also important. There is a tendency to want to wait, such as just before the ILR F01 submission in December 2009, to ensure the data is as accurate as possible. However, it quickly became clear that it would be advantageous if the ULN was included in awarding body candidate registrations, particularly for BTECs and 14-19 Diplomas, due on the 16th of October. Therefore, the college schedules the first upload to the LRS in the second week of October (approximately 12 uploads in one day of 500-600 records each) to ensure all ULNs for September enrolments are assigned within the ILR F01 and as part of awarding body registrations. After mid-October ULNs are assigned on a monthly basis during the year.

Benefits: In order to deal with exceptions, smaller batches will be easier to deal with rather than large ones. Also, it is important to ensure that all awarding bodies know the ULN at the time of candidate registration in order to keep track of learner records. This will also be of benefit as learners navigate their way between awarding bodies within the new Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF).

Results: The upload of 500-600 records at a time proved to be the optimum figure, and making the first upload in the second week in October has proved successful.

Quick ULN admin tips from the Learning Records Service

Have you tried...

Checking the learners certificates or results slip?

Some Awarding Organisations have started including the ULN on the certificates and results slips they issue.

Have you tried...

Emailing learners with their ULN and including it in all correspondence?

They will then have a copy of it for future reference.

Did you know?

If you would like your MIS Vendor to develop the web based service for you they will need to sign up to the developers documentation which can be accessed at: <http://www.miap.gov.uk/develop/>

Useful reading: online reference materials

- [Click here to read more case studies](#)
- [Quick link: Online Data Collection System](#)
- [Download the User Guide](#) – how to use the Learner Register Secure Portal
- [Download the ULN fact sheets](#) – learner and provider versions
- [Download the ULN Best Practice Manual](#)

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