



The information authority

Paper 09: Improving Timeliness of Achievement
Data

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1. Introduction

This paper is prepared for *the information authority* board ("the board") meeting on 4 June 2008 to update it with work being undertaken to improve the timeliness of achievement data.

The board is asked to confirm it is content with the proposals at paragraph 5.

2. Background

The timetable and arrangements for individualised learner record (ILR) data collections for 2008/09 were agreed by the board at its meeting on 5 December 2007. At this meeting Susan Pember raised Department for Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS) concerns about the timeliness of achievement data. This was described in the minutes as:

- i. There was a discussion about the desire to have more timely achievement data. Delays are caused by the need to verify results and the use of many awarding bodies with different result dates, some of which advise results only to the learner and not to the provider. Timing of collections may also be a factor.
- ii. **The board agreed to discuss this issue again at the next meeting in March 2008 alongside the proposed ILR timetable for 2009/10.**

The board received an update on this work at its meeting on 5 March 2008 where it confirmed that it was content that the requirement being addressed was more timely:

- return of achievement data from FE providers
- reporting of achievement data.

The benefits of earlier reporting are that it would give organisations using achievement data, such as DIUS, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), more timely information about the performance of the FE system and allow more timely reporting on public service agreement (PSA) targets.

The board also agreed that the proposed further work would:

- use the ILR challenge process (used to evaluate all other requests for change to the ILR) when considering changes to the timetable
- be informed by a simple analysis of ILR outcome data received at various times in the ILR data processing cycle. The secretariat would ask LSC to undertake this analysis on its behalf
- be reported to the board at the next meeting in June. This would include results, options and recommendations.

Comments from the board on 5 March were:

- revising the timetable is certainly the right way forward with the aim of shortening the time between achievement and its reporting

- however, the urgency of need for results would need to outweigh the costs of change.

In parallel to the work initiated by the board in December 2007 the LSC has identified a need for more timely achievement data and an earlier close of the final FE , from 2008/09 learner responsive, return containing achievement data to allow it to calculate and use a single success rate for all its business processes. The requirement is described in more detail in the paper attached at appendix A to this paper. This approach has been approved by the LSC Implementation Group, chaired by David Hughes the regional director for London.

An *information authority* led project looking at harmonising the success rates published by the LSC and Ofsted has identified in an interim report that one of the reasons for differences in the rates is the LSC practice of allowing providers to send end-year ILR data returns after the final date for receipt of these returns at the end of March. It recommends that returns are not accepted or processed after the published last date for their receipt. Colleagues from the LSC and Ofsted present at a meeting to discuss the interim findings supported this recommendation.

3. Analysis of Outcome Data

An analysis of ILR returns for 2006/07, the last year for which complete end-year ILR returns are available, was undertaken using four full sets of FE ILR returns. The sets were:

- ILR F04 data received by the return date for F04 in early September
- ILR F05 data received by the return date for the first full set of F05 data in late November
- ILR F05 data received by the return date in early February. The LSC uses these data to:
 - reset the FE funding achievement factor for the current year
 - make judgements about provider performance with respect to the minimum levels of performance
- ILR F05 data received by the final date, 31 March 2008, for transmitting returns. These data are:
 - used in national statistics
 - in final published success rate tables
 - sent to Ofsted and other partners.

The analysis identified that:

- only about 80% of providers in receipt of FE funding had made the appropriate return by the dates in September and November while 100% had done so by the February and March return dates
- by the September return date 3.56 million outcomes had been returned. This increased to 4.92 million in early December and 6.27

million in early February. The final total was 6.31 million at the end of March which corresponds to 98.7% of the total of 6.39 million learning aims which were completed or withdrawn from in 2006/07 according to the data held at 1 April 2008

- the number of FE funded providers with 100% known outcomes increased from 103 in early September to 257 in late November, 377 in early February and 404 by the end of March. This is out of a total of 524 such providers.

A set of tables from this analysis is included at appendix B.

4. Provider Consultation

Conversations with some providers with a track record of making timely, consistent and accurate returns has identified that most consider that any well run provider will be able to return all but a handful of outcomes by the return date in early February. Most confirm that they considerably improve the quality of outcome data between the November and February return dates as part of a schedule. They also indicate that any need to transfer such work into the extremely busy September to November period would result in increased costs and/or a reduction in data quality either in the F05 return for the previous year or the first F01 return for the current year.

Further consultation with provider groups is taking place and will be reported at the board meeting.

5. Proposals

Given the need for improved timeliness of achievement data, the need for a final return date after which no returns are received and processed and that there is little time for providers to prepare for a change to the ILR timetable for final returns for 2007/08 **the board is asked to approve the following proposals:**

- the return date for final F05 returns for 2007/08, from FE funded providers, is changed to Friday 6 February 2009 from the previously published date of 30 March 2009
- the data service web portal is amended so that providers are unable to transmit a F05 return after 6 February 2009. In a case where a provider sends incomplete information by that 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. All published information would be based on the data sent by 6 February

- by 30 June 2008 the secretariat writes to all providers affected to inform them of the changes and the reasons for them
- the LSC, DIUS, Ofsted and the data service work together to produce and publish by 31 July 2008 a reporting timetable based on the above data collection timetable change
- during the process for developing the ILR specification for 2009/10 further consultation is undertaken to inform whether it is possible to bring the date forward from early February for years from 2008/09 onwards. An earlier date would further meet LSC's aspirations. This consultation would investigate whether providers would be able to meet Ofsted's need for complete final data at qualification level with an earlier close date.

6. Contact Details

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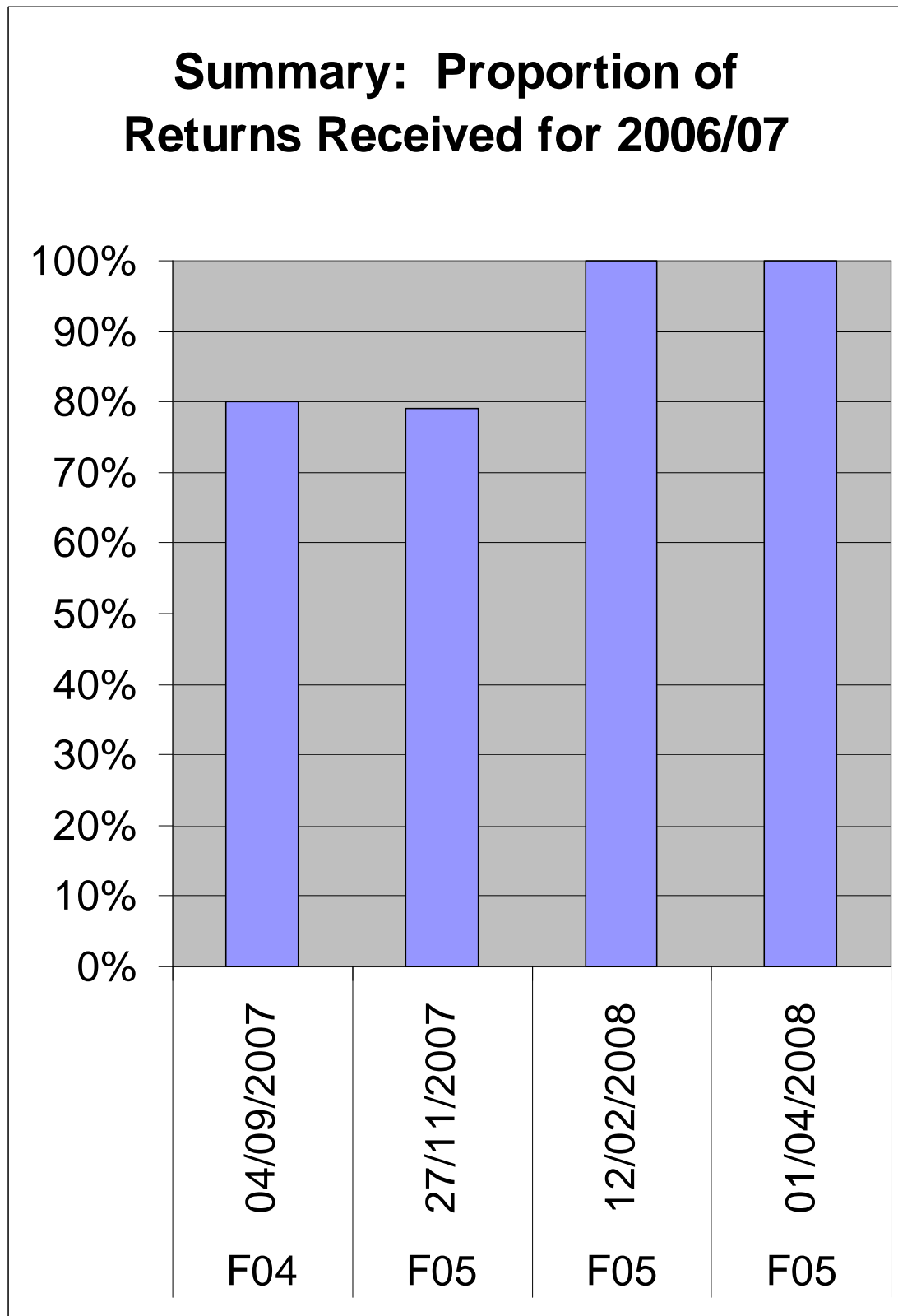
Appendix A

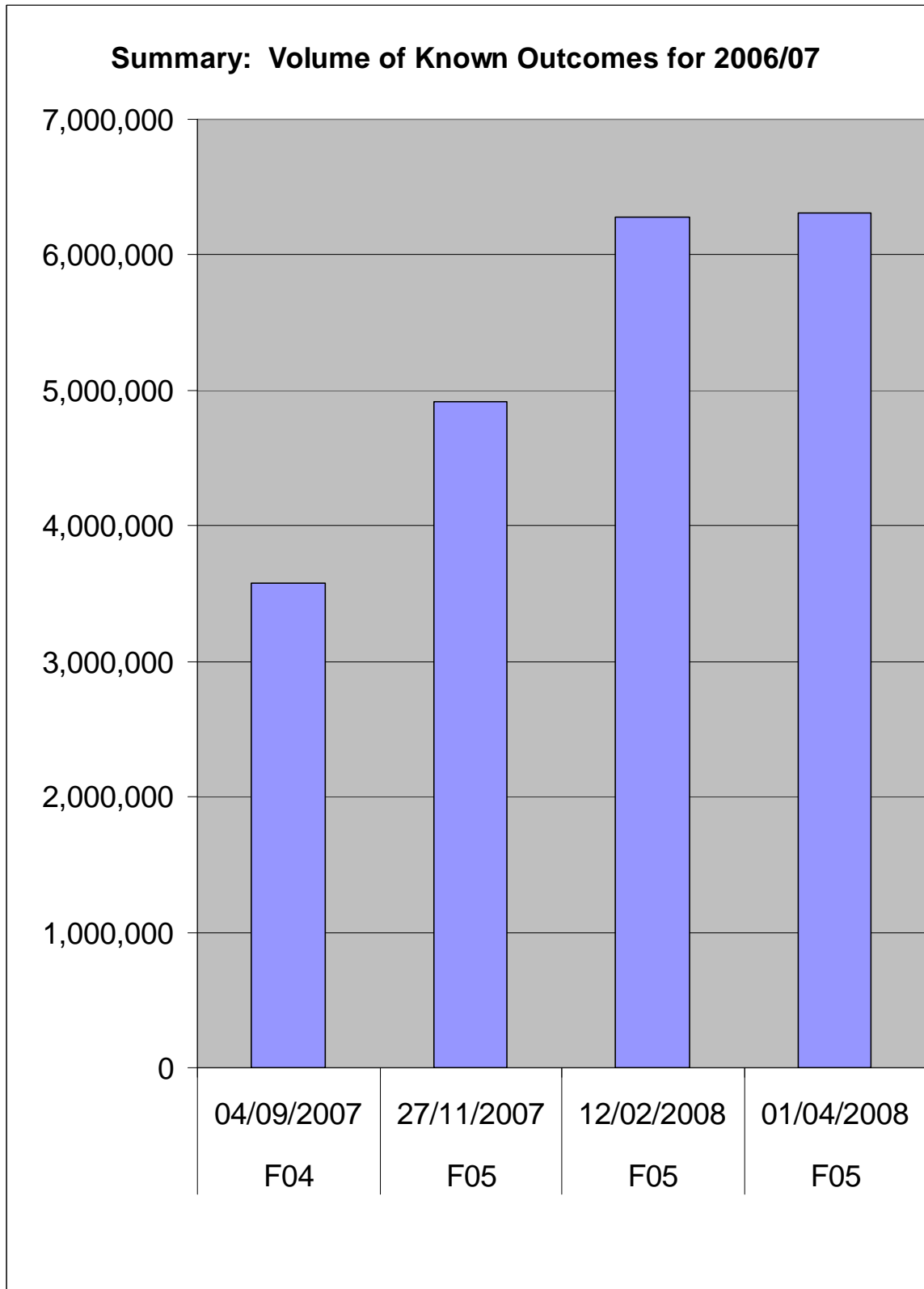
LSC Paper on Changing the Close Date for Final ILR Returns

[This paper is sent as a separate attachment]

Appendix B

Analysis of Outcome Data for 2006/07





**Summary: Proportion of Known Outcomes in 2006/07
ILR Data for Learning Aims Completed or Withdrawn
from in 2006/07**

