

inform

Issue 52 – September 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.



Single ILR – it's here!

It's almost time for providers to prepare and submit ILR data for 2011/12. The **R02** is the second ILR return for 2011/12, but the first return for which providers are required to submit ILR data. The September payment for August activity was paid on profile by the Skills Funding Agency, as providers were unable to submit an R01 return.

The Data Service and *the information authority* would like to remind providers that they will need to submit their ILR data for **R02** by 6pm on **06 October 2011**.

As there have been recent changes to the data collection systems, providers are encouraged to start using the new systems to check, validate and submit their R02 return to ensure they do not encounter any problems when preparing to submit their ILR data for the R03 return (04 November 2011).

Please note: when submitting the R02 return to the Online Data Collections (OLDC) portal, providers will have one of the following options depending on whether it is a Batch or POL submission:

- 1112_BatchILR
- 1112_POLILR

ILR Return dates for 2011

ILR return	Return date
R03	04 November 2011
R04	06 December 2011

The 2011/12 ILR collection timetables are available to download from [the information authority website](http://theinformationauthority.org.uk).

This month:

News from *the information authority*:

- Single ILR – it's here
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News from *the information authority*



Deadlines for 2010/11 ER13 and LR05 ILR returns



The deadline for the **final 2010/11 Employer Responsive ILR return (ER13)** is **11 November 2011**. This date is a 'hard close', so no further returns will be accepted after **6.00pm on 11 November 2011**, when the data collection portal will close for this return.

The deadline for the **final Learner Responsive ILR return (LR05)** is **21 November 2011**. This date is also a 'hard close', so no further returns will be accepted after **6.00pm on 21 November 2011**.

2010/11 Employer Contributions collection - All providers who receive funding for Employer Responsive (ER) provision during 2010/11 are required to send an annual aggregate return detailing the amounts and types of employer contributions received during 2010/11. The return date for this collection is **Friday 11 November 2011** when the final Employer Responsive ILR return for 2010/11 will close. Further details on this collection can be found on [the information authority website](#).

Use of proxy aims - The use of the proxy aim code in field A46 of the ILR will **not** be valid at the end of the 2010/11 academic year, and any learners with learning aims that are still recorded using code 118 in field A46 will be rejected by the validation rules.

If you have any queries on your ILR data return please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001**, or e-mail servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk.

Supporting learning providers moving to a single ILR for 2011/12

To continue to support providers with the move to a [single ILR](#) in XML format for the 2011/12 academic year, *the information authority* has set up a new webpage that holds a range of [training materials](#).

This includes:

- Online training tools on the 2011/12 ILR changes and the single ILR
- Interactive field name/code conversion tool to make cross-referencing the new element names in the 2011/12 single ILR and the old field numbers easier and quicker
- Presentations and fact sheets

We have also updated the [single ILR FAQs](#) with new questions raised by learning providers at the [recent webinars](#) held on the single ILR. The layout of this page has been redesigned by topic to make it easier for users to find specific questions.

2011 perception and awareness survey results

Our fourth annual perception survey has delivered some encouraging results, with just under 200 respondents from across the FE sector.

90% of those responding were aware of *the information authority*, with 97% of respondents having some understanding of the role of *the information authority*. 80% of respondents were aware that the information authority has been responsible for consulting on and agreeing the changes to the ILR for the last five years.

Staying informed

In terms of keeping the sector informed of its work, 84% of respondents were satisfied that they were kept updated by *the information authority*. 79% of respondents said they would attend a data conference run by *the information authority*.

John Perks, Head of *the information authority* said: "The results of this year's perception survey are very encouraging, and year on year we continue to make steady progress across the FE sector both in setting data standards, and improving data quality. It is very encouraging to see that 75% of respondents felt that we have made a beneficial impact on their organisation."

Advisory group meetings in October

We are currently preparing for the autumn cycle of advisory group meetings. The meetings for October include the [Own Software Writers Advisory Group](#) on **13 October** and the [Adult Safeguarded Learning Advisory Group](#) on **27 October**. Among other items, the groups will receive an update on the ILR change requests agreed by the board for 2012/13 and the latest developments for the 2011/12 single ILR, including the full release of [LIS V19.01](#).

The final meeting of the [Own Software Writers Change Management Group](#) will take place on **18 October**. The group will review the achievement of its objectives at this meeting.

Other advisory group meetings scheduled for autumn include:

- [Software Suppliers Group](#) - 03 November
- [Data Users Group](#) - 15 November
- [Learner Responsive Group](#) - 24 November
- [Employer Responsive Group](#) - 08 December.

If you are interested in joining any of these groups, please write to cst@theia.org.uk.

September board meeting outcomes

The September meeting of the board took place at St Mary's Guild Hall in Coventry.

On the agenda was an update on the strategic replatforming of the data collection systems from Rich Williams, Head of the Data Service. It was noted that despite delays in what was a very large and ambitious project, a working version of the LIS (the provider desktop application) had been delivered and the 2011/12 Online Data Collections portal was now live and providers had started to submit ILR data. Plans for the second phase of the project include the development of a new B2B portal, which aims to give providers access to a 'one-stop shop' portal for information and data submission, regardless of which funding organisation they are dealing with.

Keith Smith from the Skills Funding Agency gave an update on the large employer outcome payment pilot project and the wider simplification agenda. The pilot was welcomed by the board as a testing ground for radical reduction in data burden. It was agreed that it had stimulated thinking about strategies to simplify systems longer term.

Caroline Kempner gave the board notification of the YPLA's intention to collect streamlined aggregate data to support the administration of the new 16-19 Bursary for learners who need additional financial assistance.

The board was also asked to agree the changes to the 2012/13 ILR Specification. The majority of the secretariat's recommendations were agreed and further details of these will be published shortly.

Rob Pike from Ofsted gave an overview of the new Common Inspection Framework for FE, in particular the development and use of pre-inspection data, and agreed to bring a more detailed presentation to a future board meeting.

There was also a discussion about the collection of additional data for HE courses to support the Key Information Set (KIS) from Mario Ferelli of HEFCE. The KIS will integrate national student survey data, link to the ILR and provide course-level information.

The next board meeting is in December and will primarily be focussed on the consideration late changes to the ILR specification that are essential to support funding changes.

Separate ILR collection timetables published

At its meeting on 15 June 2011, *the information authority* board agreed that it would be helpful for providers if the Collection Timetable, Appendix A to the [ILR Specification 2011/12](#), could be made more provider-oriented. The secretariat has therefore produced two further documents to accompany Appendix A:

- 2011/12 Single ILR Timetable – Colleges
- 2011/12 Single ILR Timetable – Training Providers

The timetables are available to download from the [ILR Specification for 2011/12 page](#).

News from the Data Service

Learner Information Suite V19.01 goes live

The Data Service published the first full release of the Learner Information Suite (LIS) V19.01 on 15 September 2011. This is available to download from [the Data Service website](#).

The LIS V19.01 will **convert** flat files to XML format, and **amalgamate** any combination of ILR files.

Users are asked to read the [LIS V19.01 release guide](#) and the [known issues document](#) before using the LIS, which outlines the functionality available, known limitations as well as highlighting the elements of this release that have been tested and any key known bugs/defects.

Providers are asked to use LIS V19.01 to check, validate and submit their 2011/12 ILR data for the R02 return. The return date for the R02 is **06 October 2011**.

To raise any issues you may encounter with the LIS V19.01 please contact the **Service Desk** on **0870 267 0001** or email: servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk

2011/12 Online Data Collections system goes live

The [Online Data Collections system](#) (OLDC) for **2011/12** is now live. This means that learning providers can now start to submit ILR data for 2011/12

Key enhancements to OLDC for 2011/12 include:

- replacing batch load system to cater for single ILR in XML only
- increased processing capability to reflect changes to ILR submissions due to use of XML
- accepting XML ILR files
- the ability to handle larger file sizes due to XML - Providers are asked to compress ILR files for submission to OLDC
- revised reports screen

PLEASE NOTE: The **transmission status** when submitting batch files through OLDC will not display a **processed status**. To check if your file has been processed/validated please refer to your rule violation reports. The Data Service currently working to resolve this issue prior to the R03 return date.

REMINDER: The Data Service would like to remind providers that they will need to submit their ILR data for the **R02 return**. The **return date** for R02 is **06 October 2011**. With changes to the data collection systems, providers are encouraged to start using the new systems to check, validate and submit their R02 return to ensure they do not encounter any problems when preparing to submit their ILR data for the R03 return.

The **2011/12 OLDC user guide** will shortly be available to [download](#) from the Data Service website, this guide will aim to assist provider understanding of the new system.

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

Reporting changes to Learner Reference Numbers for 2011/12

The Data Service has launched the [2011/12 Learner Reference Number \(previously L03\) change process](#) for providers that need to report any changes to Learner Reference Numbers.

For 2011/12, those learning providers who have had learners transfer to them from a sub contractor due to changes in the Minimum Contract Level will need to use the 2011/12 Learner Reference Number change process.

As the prime contractor, you will need to inform the Data Service of the Learner Reference Numbers for such learners that have been transferred to you, regardless of whether the Learner Reference Number for these learners has changed. The deadline for informing the Data Service is **12 October 2011**.

The 2011/12 mapping form and guidance on how to complete the form can be downloaded from [the Data Service website](#).

For any queries please call the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk.

Coming soon - Data Quality Reports for 2011/12

The Data Service will be releasing new **Credibility Reports** on **28 November 2011** based on data from the R03 ILR return.

These reports will provide key summaries of the provider's ILR data, together with derived variable information calculated on the data by the Data Service. The reports have been enhanced to include trend reporting on credibility statistics and warning flags for high incidence of business rules violations.

The reports will be available from the Provider Data Quality Reports folder on the Provider Gateway. (**Please note:** Credibility Reports will no longer be available from the Online Data Collections portal).

Timeliness Reports and **Data Quality Dashboards** will also be available from the Provider Data Quality Reports folder from 04 January 2012 (for the R04 return). **ULN verification Reports** will be available on 30 January 2012 (for the R05 return).

For any queries please call the **Service Desk** on **0870 2670001** or email servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk.

Next Statistical First Release due to be published

The Data Service will be publishing the next Statistical First Release (SFR) on its [website](#) on Thursday 27 October. This latest release will have final data for 2009/10 across all funding streams, and provisional full year data for 2010/11.

The templates for the main tables and the list of supplementary tables for this release will be available on [the Data Service website](#). Apprenticeship and Workplace Learning supplementary tables are due to be refreshed with this release and will be available on the day of release.

News from the sector

Providers advised not to use proxy learning aims for 2011/12

The Skills Funding Agency and the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) are advising providers not to use proxy aims when they are enrolling new learners this academic year.

In April this year, providers were asked to start removing proxy aims from their 2010/11 Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data, as the funding organisations were confident that the learning aims database (LAD) was well-populated and being kept up-to-date.

The same message still applies for 2011/12 – there is sufficient data within the learning aim reference application (LARA) for QCF and 16-19 provision and it is sufficiently up to date for providers not to need to use proxy learning aims.

The Skills Funding Agency in particular is keen that providers understand that a comprehensive range of QCF provision has now been confirmed for funding for a period of 12 months and that providers do not use proxy learning aims as a substitute for other learning aims that are either not funded or ineligible for funding.

Proxy learning aims were implemented as a short-term, temporary measure for providers when there were delays with actual learning aims becoming available on the LAD, and the circumstances under which they should be used are very limited.

The use of the proxy aim code in field A46 of the ILR will not be valid at the end of the 2010/11 academic year, and any learners with learning aims that are still recorded using code 118 in field A46 will be rejected by the validation rules.

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.