



Issue 111 – September 2016

Inform is a monthly newsletter from the Funding and Programmes division of the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). **Inform** focuses on funding systems and data management in further education and skills.

Year-end indicative reconciliation statements and final funding claims 2015 to 2016

Colleges and other training organisations funded through a grant for their Adult Skills Budget (ASB), Discretionary Learner Support (DLS), 24+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursary (24+ ALLB) and Community Learning (CL) will be able to view their year-end indicative reconciliation statements on the Skills Funding Service (SFS) in the first week of October.

In order to view the statements you will need to have either the contract authoriser, contract manager or contract user role in SFS. We have published guidance on [feconnect](#) to help you.

You must submit your final funding claim on [the Hub](#) by 6pm on Monday, 24 October. The form will be pre-populated with your earnings following the R14 data collection return. The form will not be submitted unless you click on the submit button.

Funding claims are submitted through the data collections tab on [the Hub](#) and must be completed within a 2 day window. You will be able to save your claim information as a draft before submission.

We have published [a user guide](#) which contains instructions for submitting a funding claim.

You have 3 additional days to sign your claim after the 2 day submission period. The claim needs to be signed digitally on SFS by 6pm on Thursday 27 October by your principal or a delegated authority.

In order to sign your claim you will need to have either the contract authoriser role, which also allows you to sign contracts, or the data returns and claims authoriser role. We have published guidance on [feconnect](#) to help you.

Individualised learner record (ILR): R02 data return

The individualised learner record (ILR) R02 data collection for the 2016 to 2017 funding year is now open and will close at 6pm on Thursday, 6 October. As always we recommend that you submit your data as early as possible.

If you need to submit and Earnings Adjustment Statement (EAS) and you do not have access to this on the Data Returns tab in the Hub please email our Service Desk or call us on 0370 267 0001 to request this. If you have any queries, please contact the [Service Desk](#).

In this issue...

Inside – for action:

- Financial assurance: final ILR submission 2015 to 2016
- Check your final ILR return
- Validation reports
- Find apprenticeship training: have you uploaded your apprenticeship data?
- AGE LDM codes

Inside – for information:

- ILR provider support manual 2016 to 2017
- Closed aims and planned hours in 2016 to 2017
- Validation known issues 2016 to 2017
- Version 3 of the 2016 to 2017 ILR specification
- Software writers' meeting
- **Feconnect** facts and figures

[feconnect](#) is an online community for data professionals to discuss data issues and assist others to resolve data queries.

Follow [@sfadata](#) for all SFA data-related information on Twitter.

For web alerts, please go to <http://gov.uk/sfa> to sign up and stay in touch with the latest news.

To register for **Update**, the weekly newsletter from the SFA for colleges, training organisations and key stakeholders, email: Update@sfa.bis.gov.uk

For action

Financial assurance: final ILR data submission for 2015 to 2016

You must review your data for any potential funding errors that may affect your final funding claim. You can use the suite of Funding Rule Monitoring reports in [the Hub](#) and the [provider data self-assessment toolkit \(PDSAT\)](#) to ensure your final data submission is correct. The R14 collection will close on 20 October 2016.

The highest volume of potential errors are in the following areas:

- Repeated learning where the learner may have already achieved that learning aim especially where you are recorded as the provider who previously delivered the learning
- English and maths aims being delivered at the same level or lower level than has previously been achieved especially where the learner is undertaking an apprenticeship
- Duplicated provision - especially where your provision is duplicated by your subcontractor(s)
- Fully funded 19+ apprentices – although fully funded 19+ apprentices are allowed in the funding rules in particular circumstances, there are higher volumes being recorded than we would expect. We expect most 19+ apprentices to be recorded as co-funded
- Changes to the planned end date of learning aims between ILR collection years as this affects funding and could result in overpayments

You should correct any errors in your R14 ILR return. We may need to review ILR submissions for accuracy where we identify higher volumes of data queries. We will publish final reconciliation statements on the Skills Funding Service in early December 2016.

Check your final 2015 to 2016 ILR return

The deadline for the final ILR return for 2015 to 2016 is 6pm on Thursday, 20 October. This return is your final opportunity to make any amendments or corrections to the records for these learners. No further data submissions relating to this year will be accepted after this deadline.

We recommend that you submit your return early in the collection to allow enough time to fully cleanse your data.

Here are some of the key things to check for your final return:

- Ensure all learners have a ULN, where required
- Temporary numbers for ULN and Employer ID should not be used in the final ILR return. Refer to the ILR specification for full details.
- Destination and Progression:
 - If learners finished all of their aims in 2015 to 2016 and are required to return a destination record, then this must be returned by the close of R14. This includes destination records with an Outcome collection date up to 20 October 2016.

There are specific cases where you will need to migrate all records (including learner, learning delivery and destination records) from 2015 to 2016 into 2016 to 2017. You can find further information in the [provider support manual](#).

Check your validation reports

We recommend that you check if your 2015 to 2016 data is triggering any of the following validation rules: DateOfBirth_48, Outcome_08 and R94.

These warnings will become errors in 2016 to 2017. Data triggering these rules in 2015 to 2016 will fail validation in 2016 to 2017.

The R14 return will be your last opportunity to correct 2015 to 2016 data that is triggering the DateOfBirth_48 rule. This rule is in place to enforce the funding rule that learners cannot start an apprenticeship until after the last Friday in June in the academic year in which they turn 16. Refer to the [funding rules](#) for more details.

There may be some circumstances in which the DateOfBirth_48 warning is triggered in 2015 to 2016 but the learner meets the funding rule, see the list of known validation issues below. In these cases you do not need to amend your data; you only need to resolve DateOfBirth_48 warnings if the learner *does not* meet the criteria specified in the funding rule A18.2 in the SFA common funding rules. If you are unsure if your learner meets this funding rule, contact the [Service Desk](#).

Find apprenticeship training: have you uploaded your apprenticeship data?

We recently asked you to populate the [course directory provider portal](#) with your apprenticeship provision data. You need to complete this by today, Friday, 30 October 2016, as the digital apprenticeship service online search facility will go live for employers to find apprenticeships shortly.

There has been a good response so far but if you do not add your data to the course directory, employers will not be able to see your details in the search results when the service goes live. If you add your data after today, your information will be available for employers to see in future searches.

As part of the development of the Find apprenticeship training service, we have developed a separate apprenticeship data collection in the course directory provider portal where you can enter your apprenticeship information. You should make sure that your apprenticeship information is tailored to employers. Currently, apprenticeship information on provider websites or in marketing materials is often aimed at learners. You can find details of how to do this in the course directory provider portal: [content guidance](#).

We recommend that MI staff work with their marketing or business development colleagues on inputting this new data.

There is more information on how to submit your data on [GOV.UK](#).

If you have any queries, please email the [course directory provider portal](#).

AGE learning delivery monitoring (LDM) codes: academic year migration

You must include the appropriate LDM code in the ILR for all apprentices for whom you have claimed AGE in previous academic years and who are continuing learning into the 2016 to 2017 academic year.

LDM codes need to be migrated to the new academic year. Your management information system software may do this automatically. If not, you should ensure that it is done manually. Failure to add the code to the ILR will result in the recovery of any grant funds paid to you in respect of that learner/employer combination. Please be aware that several LDM codes can be recorded for one learner where they have changed employers and the new employer start date is in a different LDM coding period.

As the following table shows, LDM codes do not relate to academic years:

AGE LDM Codes	
349	All AGE starts 1 April 2016 onwards
333	Mainstream AGE for starts from 1 January 2015 to 31 March 2016
334	Strategic partners AGE for starts from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015
132	Mainstream AGE for starts up to 31 December 2014.

For information

ILR provider support manual for 2016 to 2017

We have published version 2 of the [ILR provider support manual for 2016 to 2017](#). This version contains a small number of changes; the main updates for this version are clarifications about:

- Learning difficulty assessments (LDAs) and Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans
- when you need to migrate closed aims from 2015 to 2016 into your 2016 to 2017 ILR returns
- apprenticeship data requirements for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

This version of the provider support manual does not include additional guidance about returning ILR data for apprenticeships from May 2017; this will be published later in the academic year.

Closed aims and planned hours in 2016 to 2017

Where data has been migrated into 2016 to 2017 but all of a learner's aims are closed, then the planned hours fields (*PlanLearnHours* and *PlanEEPHours*) must not be returned unless the learner is undertaking additional aims in 2016 to 2017 which meet the collection requirements for these fields.

For example, a learner completed their traineeship aims in 2015 to 2016 and then gains a job after R14 hard close of 2015 to 2016, but within six months of their learning actual end date. The data for this learner will need to be migrated into the 2016 to 2017 ILR in order to record their positive destination and achievement of their traineeship programme. However, the learner is not undertaking any provision in 2016 to 2017 that meets the collection requirements for the planned hours fields and so these fields must not be returned. The fields must not be returned with a value of zero.

Known issues: validation 2016 to 2017

We have listed below an update of the current known issues affecting validation for 2016 to 2017 ILR returns. These issues will be resolved as quickly as possible. In the meantime, the affected rules have temporarily been set to warnings rather than errors unless otherwise stated below; this will allow data to pass ILR validation but you will need to check data triggering these rules to ensure that it is correct. Once these issues have been resolved, these rules will be set back to errors and any data that continues to trigger these rules will then fail validation.

- DateOfBirth_48: there is a defect causing this rule to incorrectly trigger in some circumstances. This issue also affects the 2015 to 2016 version of the rule.
- PlanLearnHours_01, PlanLearnHours_03: these rules are triggering incorrectly when the planned hours have not been returned.
- EmpStat_16: there is a defect causing this rule to trigger if a learner on an apprenticeship programme has any Employment status record of ESMTType = EII and ESMCode = 2 even if the employment status record does not apply to the apprenticeship programme.
- ESMTType_15: there is a defect causing this rule to trigger incorrectly in some circumstances. You may see this rule in your rule violations reports, however we have disabled this rule so it will not cause data to fail validation.
- LearnAimRef_10, LearnAimRef_18, LearnAimRef_24: there may be a defect affecting the way these rules interact with the LARS_Validity table. This is under investigation but is not negatively affecting ILR data returns. *These rules remain as errors and will not be changed to warnings.*
- Outcome_08: there is an issue with the way this rule is checking destination records.
- R94: there is a defect causing this rule to not apply the 3 month grace period we allow for the collection and return of learner destination data.
- R97: a defect with this rule is causing it to trigger in circumstances where consecutive employment status records have the same Employment status monitoring types.

We intend to implement fixes for the R04 ILR collection.

ILR Specification for 2016 to 2017: version 3

We have published version 3 of the [ILR specification for 2016 to 2017](#). The majority of changes in this version are related to the changes to apprenticeship funding that come into effect from 1 May 2017.

The changes apply to all funded apprenticeship programmes that start on or after 1 May 2017, including both apprenticeship frameworks and apprenticeship standards.

Other changes include updates to the collection requirements for a small number of fields, and changes relating to data returns for non-funded apprenticeship standards.

Software writers: ILR changes and the digital apprenticeship service

The latest software writer group meeting focussed on ILR changes needed for the new apprenticeship funding methodology. The group were given a good indication of the likely changes, which will be confirmed in version 3 of the 2016 to 2017 ILR specification.

The group also had an update on the development of the digital apprenticeship service. There is already a requirement for providers [to upload information on apprenticeships](#) they offer. Software writers can access a development area to test and develop Course Directory formatted exports from their systems. That information is needed to populate an online search for employers to find providers who deliver the apprenticeship provision they need.

There was also a discussion about how the payment system may work for levy funded apprentices. Before their apprentices start, levy paying employers and / or their training providers will need to add some basic learner level apprenticeship data to the digital apprenticeship service. This will be matched with subsequent ILR data to make sure employers have approved learner level payments to providers. That payment process and its data requirements are a work in progress.

The group will meet again in January 2017. The agenda is likely to be dominated by discussions on 2017 to 2018 ILR changes and further digital apprenticeship service developments.

Feconnect facts and figures

Since the last issue of Inform there have been 39,985 page views. The average time on **feconnect** is 3 minutes and 9 seconds and this time is spent looking at 3.46 pages.

We registered 39 new members of **feconnect** in September.

If you have any new members of staff or existing staff that you think might find **feconnect** useful, please ask them to register. You can email any feedback on **feconnect** to feconnect@sfa.bis.gov.uk.

About us

The Skills Funding Agency

The Skills Funding Agency exists to fund and promote adult further education (FE) and skills training in England.

SFA staff are responsible for developing and publishing the annual specification for the Individualised Learner Record and for supporting the governance processes for the collection of data from the FE and Skills sector.

The SFA provides a single, central point of data collection and information for FE and Skills. It also provides services to the Education Funding Agency and the wider education sector.