



Department
for Education

Post-16 courses database: operational guide

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Operational guide for providers of education and training for 16-19 year olds

Summary

This operational guide is issued by the Department for Education. It sets out how providers of education and training for 16-19 year olds should fulfil the expectation, set by the Secretary of State, that they make available data on the Government funded courses that they plan to offer by placing it on a national course database. This is to help young people make informed choices about their post-16 options.

Who is this operational guide for?

This operational guide is for those post-16 providers who offer 16-19 education and training funded by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and includes colleges, schools with sixth forms and training providers¹. This does not replace existing guidance for 16-19 apprenticeship providers, and apprenticeship vacancies will still be collected via the existing process, so apprenticeship providers will not need to provide their information twice.

Background

Young people need to make informed choices about their post-16 education and training options, and pupils in year 11 should be able to access reliable, comprehensive information online about all the post-16 options available to them. The [revised statutory guidance](#) on careers makes clear that schools should encourage pupils to search information that is available online via relevant information portals. The government will host 16-19 course information in a clear, standard format on a regularly updated national database. The information will be provided by post-16 providers. It will be made available as open data and any organisation will be able to access the course information and present it in user-friendly ways for young people, schools and parents to use.

Over time, we expect portals using this information to be a primary route by which young people find out about their options and make choices about providers and courses, so it is in the interest of all 16-19 institutions to provide information that is as detailed and accurate as possible.

¹ This includes for example academies with 16-19 provision as well as maintained schools, charitable sector and commercial training providers, and local authority provision.

One of our key principles is that post-16 providers should submit their information only once to government. Providers of post-19 education and training funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) are already required to provide their post-19 course data to the National Careers Service Course Directory. We have adopted and expanded this existing approach for post-16 providers, so there is a consistent approach.

Requirements on 16-19 providers

For the new database to be fully and accurately populated with up-to date course information, all post-16 providers funded by the EFA will be expected to submit their 16-19 course data to government within the specified timeframes set out below. This expectation will be set out in the [EFA funding guidance for young people 2015-16](#).

What data are 16-19 providers expected to provide?

There are already data specifications which set out what kinds of data SFA-funded providers need to provide on their post-19 courses. We have adopted and expanded these data specifications to cover courses for 16-19 year olds, so that there is one set of data specifications for all post-16 opportunities. It is our intention to use the same approach on data sharing and data presentation where possible, for learners pre and post age 19.

The draft, summary data specifications are set out at Annex A.

Uploading course information

We plan to enable institutions to access the system to upload their course information through existing mechanisms where possible. So, for example, we intend for schools to use their Secure Access log-on details to access the system. Other providers, such as FE colleges, who are used to providing data via the National Careers Service Course Directory Provider Portal, will continue to use that and keep their existing log-on arrangements. If any providers do not have access to either system, then they will be able to register to use the National Careers Service Course Directory Provider Portal.

It is our intention that where possible, information will be automatically generated, for example filling in basic course details from the existing qualifications databases. However, providers will be encouraged to provide additional detail on course content beyond the generic details, to help young people understand these courses and what they can expect to achieve by taking them.

It will be possible for a provider to nominate others to input the data on its behalf. For example, a Multi-Academy Trust could provide information on behalf of all its schools. Alternatively, a local authority or portal supplier which already holds data on courses a provider plans to offer could be nominated to submit these on the provider's behalf.

However, it is the EFA funded provider which will be expected to ensure that good quality data are submitted on time.

Where an area has a working portal system giving information to young people on their post-16 courses, we do not intend to change that or cut across it. However, we do want to ensure that the national database is comprehensive, which is why we are asking all providers to make sure data on their planned 16-19 offer are submitted, whether by themselves or by the local authority or portal supplier on their behalf. When the national database is in place any portal supplier, including existing systems, would be able to draw down information from the database to populate its portal.

Maintaining course information

The National Careers Service Course Directory Provider Portal undertakes validation checks of all data submitted. When data are input manually, if they are incorrect, the user will be notified, in real time, and guided about the correct data required.

If a user makes a bulk upload, the file goes through several validation stages to ensure the data have been entered correctly. Again, users will be notified if there are issues with the data uploaded.

Once the data are uploaded, it remains until the provider makes any changes.

Frequency and timing of updates

Post-16 providers will be expected to provide information on all the courses and opportunities they plan to offer to 16-19 year olds from academic year 2016/17 onwards. The first time providers will be expected to provide this information will be between mid-June and end September 2015 – the full cycle is set out below:

Date	Milestone
June 2015	National database ready to receive course data
Mid-June to end September	Providers upload course data
End September	National database complete
October	Update for schools about pupils using portals to help make their post-16 choices
November onwards	Pupils use portals as part of making their post-16 choices
September 2016	Young people start post-16 courses

16-19 providers will be expected to update their entries once a year, by the end of September for courses beginning the following September. If, in future years, course data are unchanged, providers will be expected to indicate on the system by the end of September that their data are up-to-date.

The post-16 courses database will allow providers access at any time during the year if they want to make changes to keep information on their offer up-to-date. It will also allow providers to log courses starting at other times of the year.

Action to take

The facility to upload post-16 course information will be available from June 2015. More information will be provided nearer the time including: the specific dates, instructions on the upload process, and the web and helpline support available.

Prior to June, providers can plan for how they will make the data available, including:

- Checking when course plans will be available and therefore when different parts of the information can be uploaded.
- Identifying who will submit their data – whether someone within the institution or another organisation that will be able to do this on their behalf.

Annex A

Data specification for the post-16 courses database

Providers can use this data specification to consider what data they would need to provide. Closer to June we shall be issuing more detail, including the format of the data to be provided, and how to use the National Careers Service Course Directory Provider Portal to enter or upload it.

The information on the database is divided into four parts:

- **Provider.** This is the organisation offering the education or training.
- **Course.** This is the education or training offered. There could be many or few courses offered by each provider. Where a course leads to a qualification, this is also recorded.
- **Opportunity.** This is an occasion when a course will be run: for example, starting on 20 April 2015 and running for 12 weeks.
- **Venue.** This is the location where the opportunity will take place.

Together these provide all the information that someone may need to find out what education and training is available at a time and place which are relevant to them.

PROVIDER INFORMATION FIELDS	
PROVIDER NAME	Provider details are needed for the database, but when providers first register these will be automatically completed through use of the UK Provider Reference Number.
PROVIDER ALIAS	
ADMIN ADDRESS	
PROVIDER EMAIL	
PROVIDER WEBSITE	

PROVIDER PHONE NUMBER	
PROVIDER FAX NUMBER	
Not relevant to 16-19 providers	
24+ LOANS PROVIDER	This field in the data specification is not relevant to 16-19 courses and can be ignored by purely 16-19 providers.

COURSE INFORMATION FIELDS	
Mandatory information	
PROVIDER COURSE TITLE	
COURSE SUMMARY	
COURSE URL	
COURSE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS	

COURSE AGE GROUP – TO BE CONFIRMED	In a change to the current data specification for the National Careers Service Course Directory, the data will capture which courses are suitable for the 16-19 age group so these can be differentiated from purely post-19 courses in the database. The exact mechanism for doing so is to be confirmed in the detailed instructions to follow.
QUALIFICATION TYPE	These fields are mandatory when the course leads to a qualification.
AWARDING/ACCREDITATION ORGANISATION	
SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION	
Optional information	
LEARNING AIM REFERENCE	This refers to the learning aim database. It will automatically complete the qualification title if used.
PROVIDER COURSE ID	This optional field is for providers to use their own references for courses.
COURSE BOOKING URL	These fields may help potential learners find out more about courses but are not required by the database.
ASSESSMENT METHOD	
EQUIPMENT REQUIRED	
QUALIFICATION TITLE	

QUALIFICATION LEVEL	
Not relevant to 16-19 providers	
TARIFF REQUIRED	This field in the data specification is not relevant to 16-19 courses – it refers to the UCAS tariff and is for HE courses. It can be ignored by purely 16-19 providers.

OPPORTUNITY INFORMATION FIELDS	
Mandatory information	
A10 FIELD (FUNDING CODE)	
STUDY MODE	
ATTENDANCE MODE	
ATTENDANCE PATTERN	
DURATION DESCRIPTION	Some combination of this information is mandatory so potential learners can understand when the course begins and how long it will last.
START DATE	
START MONTH	
END DATE	

START DATE DESCRIPTION	
PRICE	
PRICE DESCRIPTION	
Optional information	
PROVIDER OPPORTUNITY ID	
VENUE	This is optional as some opportunities are distance learning and do not have a venue.
REGION	
EXACT DURATION	
TIMETABLE	
FINANCIAL SUPPORT – TO BE CONFIRMED	We will ensure there is an opportunity for institutions to record the support available to young people e.g. their 16-19 bursary fund policy. This could contain a link to the provider's website. The exact mechanism for doing this is to be confirmed in the detailed instructions to follow.
LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION	
LANGUAGE OF ASSESSMENT	

PLACES AVAILABLE	
APPLY FROM DATE	
APPLY UNTIL DATE	
APPLY UNTIL DESCRIPTION	
APPLICATION ACCEPTED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR	
ENQUIRE TO	
APPLY TO	
OPPORTUNITY URL	
OFFERED BY	
DISPLAY NAME	
BOTH SEARCHABLE	

VENUE INFORMATION FIELDS	
Mandatory information	
VENUE NAME	

VENUE ADDRESS	
Optional information	
PROVIDER VENUE ID	
VENUE EMAIL ADDRESS	
VENUE WEBSITE	
VENUE TELEPHONE NUMBER	
VENUE FAX NUMBER	
VENUE FACILITIES	



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