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Skills Funding
Agency

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

If you have any new members of staff or existing staff that you think might find Inform useful, please ask them to email us at informnewsletter@sfa.bis.gov.uk.

Apprenticeship Reforms: withdrawing apprenticeship frameworks

For action

We are asking for feedback on the fourth batch of frameworks for withdrawal which would not be available to new starts from 1 April 2018. The [proposal](#) will be available until 5pm on Wednesday, 5 April.

The full list of frameworks included in this proposal is available on GOV.UK.

We will review the feedback and publish the final list for withdrawal in May 2017. This will give 9 months' notice of the date of withdrawal.

In this proposal, we have included frameworks which have replacement apprenticeship standards covering the same occupations. The replacement standards are expected to be ready for delivery by 1 April 2018.

We will consider deferring the withdrawal date if you can provide clear and strong evidence that:

- relevant standards due to be in place by 1 April 2018, or soon after, will not cover some occupations covered by the framework's pathways for which there is still significant demand, or
- there are strong reasons why the replacement standard(s) cannot be ready for learners from 1 April 2018 or soon after

If we defer the withdrawal, we would include the framework in the next batch of proposed withdrawals, planned for summer 2017.

Funding monitoring reports published

For action

We have published the new suite of funding monitoring reports on the Hub to support the [funding rules monitoring plan for the funding year 2016 to 2017](#). The new suite gives providers access to more data sooner than in previous years.

Please review these reports to ensure your data is recorded accurately. The [funding monitoring reports user guide](#) explains how to access the reports and correct your data if required.

A [letter to the sector from Dawn Ward CBE](#), chair of our data and management information advisory group, outlines the process.

We will update the suite of reports later in the year to include data for apprenticeship frameworks and standards starting on or after 01 May 2017.

For further information, please contact your business operations provider manager.

The employer satisfaction survey 2016 to 2017

For action

The employer satisfaction survey for 2016 to 2017 runs from 27 March 2017 to 21 July 2017.

During the 'Provider-led' phase in the first month of the survey, colleges and training providers are encouraged to invite their employer customers to participate. This will maximise your organisation's opportunity of achieving a valid score. An 'SFA-led' phase follows this for those providers which are close to gaining a valid score.

To participate in the survey, providers need to take a number of actions now; details are included in the

letter being sent to your Business Operations contact over the next week. You can find further [guidance on how to take part](#) on GOV.UK.

The final data will be published on [GOV.UK](#) and the [National Careers Service webpages](#) and will be used in the [find apprenticeship training](#) service to give employers information about apprenticeship training providers.

For further information, please email the [service desk](#)

FE Choices learner satisfaction survey

For action

The 2016 to 2017 learner satisfaction survey opened on Monday 31 October and runs until Friday 7 April.

Colleges and training providers can now access their personalised interim report on the [Provider Extranet](#), which includes responses to 13 January. The reports include a breakdown of learner satisfaction by subcontractor, community learning and apprenticeships. A further interim report will be shared in May after the survey has closed.

Final results are scheduled to be published on GOV.UK and the National Careers Service website in the summer.

For further information or guidance please email the [Service Desk](#).

Individualised learner record (ILR): R07

For action

The ILR R07 data collection for the 2016 to 2017 funding year is now open and will close at 6pm on Monday, 6 March. As always we recommend that you submit your data as early as possible.

If you need to submit an 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.

Learning Records Service: release 14

For information

Release 14 is the latest version of Learning Records Service (LRS) to go live. The release moves the service into the cloud. It doesn't introduce any new functionality. To ensure the smooth transition of the live estate we are implementing the change over a long weekend.

The LRS organisation portal and web service operations will be unavailable from 6.00pm on Thursday, 9th March until 8.00am on Monday, 13th March 2017. Full service will resume immediately after the maintenance window.

You can find more information about the release can be found on GOV.UK.

Data collection: subcontracting in 2016 to 2017 – second collection

For information

In March, we will collect your subcontracting commitments for the second time in the academic year 2016 to 2017.

In a similar process to the first collection in November 2016, you will need to complete a subcontractor declaration. Once we have validated your data, this information will be used as part of the publication of the list of declared subcontractors.

It is important that if your subcontracting arrangements change during the year, you should inform the Skills Funding Agency at the earliest opportunity, as laid out in [the Skills Funding Agency: common and performance management funding rules for the funding year 2016 to 2017](#) (reference A70).

If your form passes validation, we will not contact you again regarding this submission. If your form fails validation, we will email you with a supporting failure report. You will need to address the errors highlighted, update the version number and resubmit the declaration. We will then revalidate the new data.

Once a deadline date for returns has been issued, we would strongly recommend that you complete the process as early as possible. Failure to return the form by the deadline will result in your payments being suspended.

We will send an email in March with further information and with instructions on how to complete the process.

ILR validation rules 2016 to 2017

For information

We have published version 5 of the [ILR specification 2016 to 2017 validation rules](#).

The majority of changes and new rules in this version relate to the new apprenticeship funding model (Funding model 36) that comes into effect in May 2017. These changes are not going live for the R07 return, but we have published the document to give you early sight of the new validation rules for Funding model 36 which are planned to go live by the R10 ILR return.

This version also contains a small number of other changes that are planned to go live for the R08 ILR return. These include:

- DateOfBirth_45: this rule contains an exclusion that has been updated to refer to the LARS field 'EnglPrscID' instead of 'LearningDeliveryGenre'
- DateOfBirth_48: the error condition for this rule has been rewritten to resolve a known issue. This rule and the new rule DateOfBirth_52 are used to ensure that apprentices meet the age requirements for starting an apprenticeship programme

- LearnFAMType_15 and LearnFAMType_16: if a learner is exempt from the English or maths GCSE condition of funding due to learning difficulties or disabilities, then they must be recorded with one of the following Funding and Monitoring indicators: Special Educational Needs, a Learning difficulty assessment, or an Education health care plan
- R106: this is a new validation rule which checks that a learner does not have more than one record of Learning support funding at the same time

The Hub

For information

In R06 we processed 4,093 files from 1,181 providers. Over 575 providers submitted their first R06 file in the last 3 days of the collection window.

Where can you find further information?

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

You can 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, please email: Update@sfa.bis.gov.uk

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