



Department
for Education

Post-16 courses database:operational guide

(Revised) June 2015

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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. More detailed information on how to upload and update course information can be found in the [help guide](#).

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. It will be straightforward for users of the data to identify EFA funded courses for 16-19 year olds, using the field which records the type of funding available.

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 are expected to submit their 16-19 course data to government within the specified timeframes set out below. This expectation is set out in the [EFA funding guidance for young people 2015-16](#).

What data are 16-19 providers expected to provide?

There were 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, and set out how they should be used by 16-19 providers: for example, that information about financial support, such as support offered under the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund, should be entered in the price description field. We have used the same approach on data sharing and data presentation where possible, for learners pre and post age 19.

The summary data specifications are set out at Annex A. Full details of the data specifications and the recommended data quality standards can be accessed [here](#).

Uploading course information

We have enabled institutions to access the system to upload their course information through existing mechanisms where possible. So, for example, schools can use their [Secure Access](#) log-on details to access the system, if they do not already have a log on for the National Careers Service Course Directory Provider Portal. Other providers, such as FE colleges, who are used to providing data via the [National Careers Service Course Directory Provider Portal](#), can 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.

We have ensured, where possible, that information will be automatically generated, for example filling in basic course details from the existing qualifications databases. However, providers should 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 is 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 have not changed 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, will 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 are 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 are expected to provide this information will be between mid-June and end September 2015 – the full cycle is set out below:

Date	Milestone
Mid-June 2015	National database ready to receive course data
By end September	Providers upload 2016/17 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, and this will be reflected in the open data available to portals. The database will also allow providers to log courses starting at other times of the year.

Action to take

Providers can [upload](#) post-16 course information from mid-June 2015. More detailed information on how to upload and update course information can be found in the [help guide](#).

Annex A

Data specification for the post-16 courses database

The information on the database is divided into four parts:

- **Provider.** This is the organisation offering the education or training.
- **Venue.** This is the location where the opportunity will take place.
- **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.

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.

Fields marked with an asterisk (*) indicate mandatory fields.

PROVIDER FIELDS:

PROVIDER_NAME
PROVIDER_ALIAS
ADMIN_ADDRESS_1
ADMIN_ADDRESS_2
ADMIN_TOWN
ADMIN_COUNTY
ADMIN_POSTCODE
ADMIN_EMAIL
ADMIN_WEBSITE
ADMIN_PHONE
ADMIN_FAX

VENUE FIELDS:

VENUE_ID*
PROVIDER_VENUE_ID
VENUE_NAME*

ADDRESS_1*
ADDRESS_2
TOWN*
COUNTY
POSTCODE*
EMAIL
WEBSITE
PHONE
FAX
FACILITIES

COURSE FIELDS:

COURSE_ID*
LAD_ID
PROVIDER_COURSE_TITLE*
SUMMARY*
PROVIDER_COURSE_ID
URL*
BOOKING_URL
ENTRY_REQUIREMENTS*
ASSESSMENT_METHOD
EQUIPMENT_REQUIRED
QUALIFICATION_TYPE*
QUALIFICATION_TITLE
AWARDING_ORG_NAME
QUALIFICATION_LEVEL
LDCS1
LDCS2
LDCS3
LDCS4
LDCS5
UCAS_TARIFF

OPPORTUNITY FIELDS:

COURSE_ID*
VENUE_ID/REGION_NAME
PROVIDER_OPPORTUNITY_ID
STUDY_MODE*
ATTENDANCE_MODE*
ATTENDANCE_PATTERN*

DURATION*
DURATION_UNITS*
DURATION_DESCRIPTION*
START_DATE*
END_DATE*
START_DATE_DESCRIPTION*
TIMETABLE
PRICE*
PRICE_DESCRIPTION*
LANGUAGE_OF_INSTRUCTION
LANGUAGE_OF_ASSESSMENT
PLACES_AVAILABLE
APPLY_FROM
APPLY_UNTIL
APPLY_UNTIL_DESC
APPLY_THROUGHOUT_YEAR
ENQUIRE_TO
APPLY_TO
URL
A10*
OFFERED_BY
DISPLAY_NAME
BOTH_SEACHABLE



Department
for Education

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