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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.

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

For information

The Secretary of State has agreed that the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and Education Funding Agency

(EFA) will be brought together to create one funding agency from 1 April 2017. This agency will be named the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), and its first working day will be Monday, 3 April.

This has been announced in a [Written Ministerial Statement](#)

This announcement will have no impact on existing contracts and funding agreements with education and skills providers and other contractors.

Please contact your business operations provider manager if you have any further questions.

Apprenticeship reforms: withdrawing apprenticeship frameworks

For action

There is less than a week to go to have your say on the fourth batch of frameworks for withdrawal. These frameworks will 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.

Individualised learner record (ILR): R08

For action

The ILR R08 data collection for the 2016 to 2017 funding year is now open and will close at 6pm on Thursday, 6 April. 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.

Employer satisfaction survey 2016 to 2017

For action

The provider-led phase of the 2017 Employer Satisfaction Survey is now underway.

In-scope providers are encouraged to download, review and update their employer list, following the steps outlined in the [provider guidance](#). Please survey the employers on this list by sending them a link to the [online survey](#). (Please ensure that you give each employer their unique ID to allow them to access the survey – this can be found on your employer list).

You can also access the [questionnaire generator](#). This gives you the option to print copies of the paper questionnaires to send to your employers. Your organisation has until 28 April 2017 to survey employers and achieve sufficient responses to be awarded a score during this phase.

For further information, please contact us directly at employersatisfaction@ipsos.com or the [service desk](#).

Legal agreements for apprenticeship training providers

For action

Eligible apprenticeship training providers were invited to sign their legal agreement with us on 22 March 2017. This agreement sets out the terms of use of the apprenticeship service by training providers.

Training providers must sign their agreement and operate within the [apprenticeship funding rules](#) to be eligible for apprenticeship funding.

To date around 400 providers have signed their agreements.

Changes to the Hub for R08

For information

We have made a few changes to [the Hub](#) to provide easier access to the information you need:

- we have added a filter to the Archived tab to enable you to choose the specific collection that you want to access (e.g. 1415 ILR) holding information from 2013 to 2014
- on the Business Reports tab, we have added the return number so you can identify which period the reports relate to
- the 2015 to 2016 provisional QAR raw data has been removed from the Data Returns page, the final data is still available

We have also made some changes which relate only to the ESF collection.

The ESF Aim and Deliverable report and ESF Funding Summary report are now produced for all ESF supplementary data submissions and ILR submissions. When an ESF supplementary data return is submitted, a zip file will be published on the Business Reports tab which includes both ESF reports. For ILR submissions the reports will continue to be available in the standard zip file which contains the full set of reports. This ensures that all providers, including those who don't submit ILR data, can access their

funding reports.

The ESF Rule Violation reports are now produced for every ESF supplementary data submission, even where there are no errors or warnings for the submission. Previously these reports were only produced for submissions where there were errors or warnings to report. By producing these reports for all submissions, it means users can verify the number of successfully processed records in their submission.

If you have any feedback on these changes, or any suggestions for further improvements please contact the [Service Desk](#).

Apprenticeship funding rules: version 2

For information

We have published new versions of the [apprenticeship funding rules](#) following feedback from employers and providers on version 1 of the rules.

The stakeholder feedback highlighted areas of the rules which required further clarification; and scenarios where we have become aware of providers marketing delivery models which are outside the funding policy.

These models include proposals to refund or reimburse payments from an employer's digital account or employer co-investment, and other incentives. This is now prohibited in the funding rules and we have been clear that potential fraud and gaming of this sort is ineligible and we will be monitoring this as part of our compliance strategy.

The changes include:

- licenses to practice
- end point assessment costs
- 20% of the apprentice's working hours being spent on off the job training and where the employer subcontracts from the main provider

The new versions of the rules are accompanied by a summary of changes.

Technical guide: Apprenticeship funding system

For information

We published [version 2 of the technical guide to the apprenticeship funding system from 1 May 2017](#) in February.

This explains how funding will work for apprenticeship frameworks and standards starting on or after this date. It explains how we use funding in employer's digital accounts to pay for training where applicable, and how we will calculate provider payments for:

- monthly instalments
- the completion element

any additional payments

- the 16-18 framework uplift
- disadvantaged apprentices
- English and maths
- Learning support

It also explains the amount of co-investment required, how we will match data between the ILR and the apprenticeship service (where applicable) and how changes in circumstances affect the funding generated e.g. the apprentice changes employer or provider.

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

Financial assurance 2016 to 2017: monitoring the funding rules

For information

We recently published a new suite of funding monitoring reports in the Hub. These now include R07 individualised learner record (ILR) data.

You must review this data to determine whether you need to make any data corrections in your next ILR submission. Where the data is correct, you must ensure that you have the evidence to justify the funding claimed. This includes making sure that any subcontractors also meet this requirement.

For further information, please contact your Business Operations Provider Manager.

User group meetings

For information

The Technical User Group and Software Writers Group each met in the last month. Both groups received updates about the latest development work for the apprenticeship service, confirmation of ILR changes for 2016/17 and 2017/18, and development of the data collection systems.

Other topics covered at the meetings included updates about funding monitoring and funding monitoring reports, and consultation on future development of the ILR validation rules.

The user groups were updated on the latest information regarding the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers and given demonstrations of the apprenticeship service. The groups shared their feedback and suggestions with the delivery team and continue to be engaged with the development work.

Hub returns

For information

In R07 we processed 3,022 files from 913 providers. Over 450 providers submitted their first R07 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.

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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