

# MIAP

## news



## Personal Learning Record Pilot

The trials phase of the Personal Learning Record pilot is now complete, and very useful feedback has been received from the learners and Learner Registration Body (LRB) users involved.

In its current format, a Personal Learning Record displays information provided by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in partnership with other educational organisations that the learner has agreed can collect and share information on their behalf. Only school and further education learning and achievement records starting from 2007/08 academic year are stored. For example, GCSEs, A/S levels, NVQs, Apprenticeships and other further education course information is available. Higher education information like degrees is not.

Currently there is a time lag before the data appears of up to 4 months. This is clearly a disadvantage to those institutions that recruit in September and therefore need more timely information, limiting the usefulness of the system. Reducing this delay will be a priority of the project as it moves forward.

The pilot group were given access to their records and asked to provide feedback. One very typical learner comment sums up the

potential benefit to learners: "I think that the learner record is a very good idea because it allows you to look over all your life time achievements through an educational basis. I also think that this is very useful for all people over 16 to have as it will be a simple but effective way of remembering all the grades and qualifications you have achieved ready for employment or enrolment. I am very happy to have my grades available to me at the touch of a button."

The benefits to providers have also been recognised, for example one user said "[It] will give one central point of access for learner data - especially helpful in evidencing GCSE results for use as key skills concessions (if MIAP is confirmed as an approved source by LSC)" and another commented, "Excellent idea; it will save me hours of wasted time chasing up school certificates".

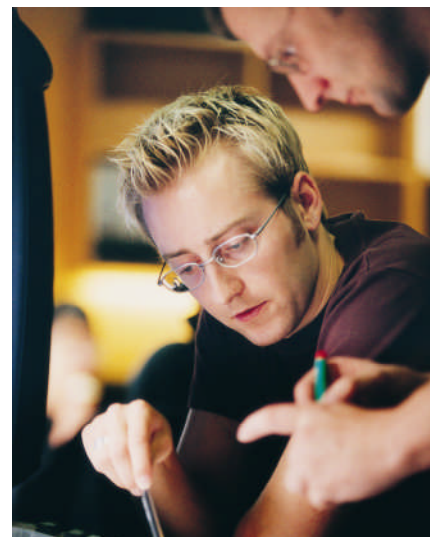
The majority of learners and LRB users found the Personal Learning Record straightforward to use. Some useful suggestions for improving functionality were also made and these will now be considered by the MIAP Change Control Board.

A key aim of the Personal Learning Record is to improve the flow of information about learners from

schools to other education providers and ultimately employers, leading to more effective data sharing and better decision making. Members of the pilot recommended that a larger national pilot be carried out before a full roll out should be undertaken.

The Personal Learning Record will be presented within Skills Accounts and will be trialed with learners over the coming academic year. It has been confirmed that MIAP and QCF Learner Records will be integrated by September 2010.

A full report on the results of the pilot will be available on the website shortly and all comments will be welcome.



# Support of Batch and Web Service Interfaces

## Plan your move to the latest versions of the batch and web service interfaces now

Since the launch of the Learner Registration Service in 2007 there have been several updates and changes made to the batch and web service interfaces. Refresh your memory here!

### MIAP LRS Batch Interface Specification:

1A – introduced September 2007  
1B – introduced January 2008  
2A – introduced May 2008

Version 2A was re versioned to version 3 – from January 09 and is the current specification.

MIAP moved away from linking interface specifications to system releases as this was causing confusion.

### MIAP LRS Web Services Specification:

1A – introduced September 2007  
1B – introduced January 2008  
2A – introduced May 2008

Version 2a was re versioned to version 3 – from January 09 and is the current specification.

MIAP moved away from linking interface specifications to system releases as this was causing confusion.

### MIAP LRS Verify Learner Details Interface Specification (Awarding Bodies only):

2B – introduced September 2008  
Version 2 – from January 09 – current.

In consultation with awarding bodies MIAP is planning to release version 3.0 of this interface specification before the end of July 2009.

### Future Support for older interface specifications

Support for 1A and 1B of both the MIAP Batch Interface and web services Specification will be withdrawn in September 2010.

All developers are now being encouraged to move to the current versions (2 and 3 see above), which will be updated in the autumn. The autumn updates will not require development changes to the interface specification, but may in some circumstances impact upon your MIS system work flow.

If you have any questions relating to the withdrawal of support or current versions, please email [lrssupport@miap.gov.uk](mailto:lrssupport@miap.gov.uk) or call on **0845 602 2589**.

Developers can sign up to have access to a site dedicated to their needs, visit the website at <http://www.miap.gov.uk/develop/>

### Latest Figures

Unique  
Learner  
Numbers  
issued:

6,658,394

Learner  
Registration  
Bodies  
registered:

4,382

Personal  
Learning  
Records  
created:

2,136,910

## Head of MIAP Service – Career Opportunity

MIAP is now looking for a leader in education to transform this programme into a pivotal service in education. The challenge is to build on the success of the programme and to expand its' services to provide an information infrastructure to the UK education sector: from schools through higher education to lifelong learning, together with a personal service for each and every individual to be able to access and view information on their learning achievements.

MIAP's leader will be the face of the service to the sector and to government, so as well as credibility with the sector they will require the highest level of communication, presentation and stakeholder management skills. They will need the skills and insight to provide vision and leadership on the national policy and strategy for the sharing of information across the education sector.

The Head of MIAP will have the gravitas needed to work in partnership with national and regional agencies and educational institutions in order to implement the strategy and build the capabilities required by the new service and to secure the funding that will be necessary to develop and deploy these capabilities.

They will also be able to demonstrate substantial experience in leading and managing public facing service organisations. A key challenge will be to exploit synergies across the shared services operated by the SFA, and thus will give opportunities to develop the role. The Head of MIAP will have the expertise to manage outsourced shared services, including at least a working knowledge of best practice in service management such as ITIL.

Remuneration for this role reflects its challenges, with a basic salary of £85,000 pa and a substantial benefits package. The position will be based in Coventry. Visit <https://www.lsc.gov.uk/vacancies> to find out more and apply.

## Prohibited Text

The LRS prohibits specified text strings which could lead to sensitive information being stored about a learner. The current set of prohibited text strings can be viewed on the MIAP website at <http://www.miap.gov.uk/datamanagement/>.

A process is in place to enable the help desk to handle exceptions i.e. legitimate use of these words. If you need to enter any of these words against one of your learners, please contact the help desk for assistance.

MIAP actively monitors the LRS and where information is identified that is not consistent with MIAP data policies, rectification is carried out. If you have previously entered any of the prohibited strings against some of your learners, MIAP may delete or amend this data to ensure that sensitive information is not unnecessarily stored in the LRS against that learner.

***Please be aware that you may receive an error if you attempt to update learner details and records in the LRS with prohibited text. MIAP recommends that you review the information that is held in your MIS system, against the list provided to ensure that data is not sent to MIAP that may be subsequently rejected.***

If you have any questions about prohibited text or the data cleansing approach, please contact the help desk. Contact details are at the end of this newsletter.

## Using the Unique Learner Number

Embedding the ULN within internal systems has supported the effective administration of services to learners and assisted general administration tasks at Coombe Dean School.

Coombe Dean has a growing number of students taking Diplomas. The ULN is required for every Diploma student in order that they can be registered with awarding bodies.



In addition, Coombe Dean has been extensively involved in functional skills trials. The school aims to ensure that all students undertaking functional skills assessments will have their results 'captured' for future use. The team at Coombe Dean are therefore using, and planning to use, the ULN in several ways:

- To support the administration of Diplomas.
- To support the administration of functional skills assessments.
- To upload, download & move learner information using the ULN as an identifier.
- To share information with other organisations including other schools, colleges and consortia. The school aims to use the ULN with the Local Authority who often request or send data to the school.
- To record and monitor learning events, using the ULN as an identifier.
- To match data from multiple sources, using the ULN as the main identifier. The sources can be internal or external to the school, for example Fisher Family Trust, the Local Authority or the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring.
- To open 'learner accounts' with agencies outside of the school. Diploma students must have accounts registered via the Diploma Aggregation Service. Wide ranging partnerships in Plymouth mean that students need to be monitored across a number of institutions.

You can read more about the experiences at Coombe Dean by downloading the full case study at:

<http://www.miap.gov.uk/documentlibrary/case-studies/Benefits/>

## The ULN in Wales

The Unique Learner Number (ULN) underpins the implementation of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) in Wales and MIAP is working with learning providers who will be involved in this initiative over the next academic year. Lynne Thomas is MIAP's Account Manager for Wales and, alongside her work to promote MIAP's shared services to the Higher Education (HE) sector, she has been helping schools and colleges to access the Learner Registration Service (LRS) and get ULNs for their learners.

Stephen McMillan, who is the Welsh Assembly lead for MIAP in Wales, said "It is a great step forward to have Lynne on the case, focusing on smoothing the way for Wales to engage with MIAP. She is already making a big difference."

The QCF will form part of, and build on the principles of, the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW), which was

adopted as a policy by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) in 2002, covering HE, General and Vocational Education and a range of other learning achieved outside of approved qualifications, such as company training, voluntary sector provision, work experience and community service. There is a commitment from WAG (through DCELLS) to implementing the CQFW in Wales by 2013, which will involve substantial change across the education sector. A QCF Strategic Implementation Board has been established to manage the delivery of the QCF in Wales.

If you are interested in learning more about MIAP's activities in Wales, please contact Lynne at [lynne.thomas@miap.gov.uk](mailto:lynne.thomas@miap.gov.uk)



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

## What's On?

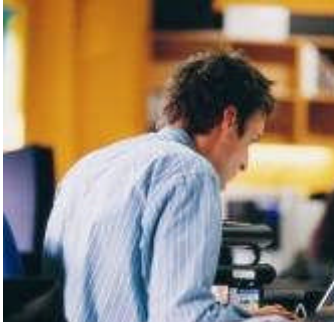
### MIAP Surgeries

Booking will open shortly for the following training / update events:

3 Nov – London  
5 Nov – Peterborough  
10 Nov – Plymouth  
11 Nov – Bristol  
17 Nov – Newcastle  
18 Nov – Sheffield  
24 Nov – B'ham  
25 Nov – Liverpool  
3 Dec – London

Look out for an email containing further details on how to reserve your place.





# Dealing with Fraud

£2.1 million per year spent on answering enquiries

With an increase in fraud over the past few years, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have to deal with a significant number of queries from potential employers (they do still exist!) and others about whether someone was a former student and achieved a given result. The Higher Education Funding Council for England funded HEDD (Higher Education Degree Database) project, led by Chris Harris, Executive Director at Higher Education and Research Opportunities (HERO), estimated that English HEIs spend in excess of £2.1 million per annum in answering these queries.

The task that often takes the most time is that of identifying the student from the data that they have given to those making the enquiry. Matching students through names, former names, gender, date of birth, year of degree and other information can take time, as can directing the query to the wrong HEI. However help is at hand. Chris commented that: "Adding the ULN to the list of matching criteria will simplify the process considerably and thereby save both

employers and HEIs time and effort".

The benefits will increase as more former students have ULNs. The HEDD project, now based with the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU), will use these benefits to pilot and develop better systems so that, with the relevant learner's permission, fast responses can be given to those enquiring here and from abroad, to the reputational benefit of students, HEIs and the UK.

For more information contact Chris Harris ([chris.harris@hero.ac.uk](mailto:chris.harris@hero.ac.uk)) or Lynne Thomas at MIAP ([lynne.thomas@miap.gov.uk](mailto:lynne.thomas@miap.gov.uk))

## LSC Returns

In May's newsletter we stated that from July this year the LSC would require actual ULNs in their returns rather than the 999999999 number of last resort.

The Information Authority has advised that in fact, the guidance in the ILR specification for 2009/10 says that for learner and employer responsive returns a valid ULN must be entered. If a provider is experiencing difficulty in obtaining a ULN it may enter '999999999' temporarily. Providers will be asked to explain the reason for a high incidence of '999999999' being returned compared to other similar providers and where this explanation is not reasonable, to return data containing more complete ULN information. Apologies for any panic caused.

## *In Brief...*

### Web References

Please note, if you have links to MIAP web pages on your own website, the URL address may have changed since the launch of our new site. If you have any difficulty finding a replacement link, please get in touch.



### Data Tip

When searching for a learner using the portal, if the search is unsuccessful try changing round the given name and family name and resubmitting the search. If you do this, you must double check additional details with the learner to ensure that you have not inadvertently found another learner's ULN. The middle name field can be valuable in supporting the decision making process.



### Contact:

MIAP  
Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT

Email: [newsletter@miap.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@miap.gov.uk)

Helpdesk: 0845 602 2589 or  
[lrssupport@miap.gov.uk](mailto:lrssupport@miap.gov.uk)