

> 6 Million ULNs and Counting

April saw the issue of the six millionth Unique Learner Number (ULN), a landmark number that will have been significantly passed by the time you read this newsletter.

The cynics among you may well be crying “So what? Numbers are meaningless” but it is the critical mass of numbers issued that demonstrates that ULNs are in use and here to stay.

> Exposing the Myth of Duplicate ULNs

FACT: it is physically impossible for the Learner Registration Service (LRS) to generate the same Unique Learner Number (ULN) more than once.

It is a common misconception that there are “duplicate” ULNs. It is possible for a learner to have more than one ULN, but this is very rare. The LRS does not generate duplicates.

We are working continually in collaboration with our customers to proactively investigate and resolve any possible instances of where more than one ULN has been issued to the same learner.

Co-operation from those customers that have had field visits has been magnificent. Sillina Griffith, Data Quality Manager said, “It is very satisfying to know our customers value the importance of data quality and that our field visits are having a positive impact. Where more than one ULN for the same learner is identified, these records are merged and this means a continual improvement to the quality of the services we offer.”

Any LRB with data quality concerns should email the helpdesk at lrssupport@miap.gov.uk

➤ Data Tip – What’s in a Name?

This month’s data tip for improving data quality

Maintaining data quality and consistency when administering Unique Learner Numbers is vitally important

- Only use the learner’s legally registered name in the given name and family name fields. Alternatives or their preferred way of being called can be entered into the preferred given name, if provided.
- Ensure that given name, family name and middle names are not transposed.
- Accurate spelling is essential.
- Avoid using numbers in the name; John Smith the 3rd should be entered as John Smith.
- O’ as in O’Leary can be used.
- Do not include alternative or middle names in a field enclosed within brackets in the given name or family name.
- Double barrelled names can be included using a hyphen or space to separate the two names e.g. Julie-Ann.
- Avoid using special characters with inflections in the name such as á or ö.

➤ Optimising Learner Data Sharing

Leicester College believe learner data sharing is critical to the success of MIAP to deliver the expected benefits, to drive efficiencies in the education sector, and to ensure learners benefit from better educational services including efficient and effective enrolment and Information, Advice and Guidance.

Take a look at this new case study on the website at <http://www.miap.gov.uk/about/benefits/>



➤ Welcome to the New MIAP Website

If you haven’t yet had a chance to visit the new MIAP website, please take a few minutes to have a look. The new design has been built following feedback from our users and the site is now much clearer and easier to navigate. If you have any comments or suggestions for further improvements, please let us know.





Web Services

MIAP provides three ways of interacting with the Learner Registration Service (LRS); the web portal for obtaining individual ULNs and editing existing ones; the MIAP batch process for obtaining large numbers of ULNs through a single transaction; and web services.

Web services are designed to work seamlessly, in the background, with existing software. So, for example, if you are currently using Management Information software, as you enter or retrieve data via your MI system this would interact automatically with the LRS to provide the ULN into your system and also update the LRS, for example, with a change of postcode or preferred name.

Web services were introduced last summer (2008) and there are currently over 200 developers registered with MIAP for this service. The web services administrator ULNs via the LRS and this Autumn an additional service will provide qualifications data to customers providing the same data as will appear on the Learner Record.

The benefits of using web services include:

- The ability to assign a ULN as part of the enrolment process
- Service improvement to learners
- Improved efficiency and effectiveness of service, as all data is managed via a single system with very little administration
- Removal of the need to create MIAP batch files

Testimonial

“Integration of Ufi core service platform, the Learner Support Environment, with the MIAP LRS is an important element that underpins Ufi’s technical and business strategy for the foreseeable future. The prize for the sector for getting this right is a massive reduction in bureaucracy and associated improvements in service, effectiveness and efficiency. Working closely with the MIAP team has enabled us to deliver the first stage in this strategic initiative while at the same time as minimising the cost and impact on our business.”

Barry Haynes,
Chief Technical Officer, Ufi



Personal Learning Record Pilot

Did you know that there are 2.1 million Personal Learning Records currently held by MIAP that learners and approved organisations can access?

Learners at several pilot organisations have now accessed their Personal Learning Records via the Learner Portal. A learner at Oaklands College, St Albans was the first to register for this service.

The Learner Portal allows learners in the pilot to view their Personal Learning Record, change some of the details MIAP holds about them e.g. email address, ability to share, and ‘challenge’ any errors in the record. Such challenges are investigated by the MIAP Service Team.

Over the next six weeks we will be gathering feedback from pilot learners and pilot organisations regarding:

- Ease of use
- Data quality
- Benefits to providers and learners
- Our customer service (particularly around the handling of data challenges)

This feedback will then be analyzed in order to determine the way forward for the Personal Learning Record. It is currently anticipated that this will be rolled out by the end of 2009.



Preparing for the Next Wave of Diploma Centres

Keeping track of learners' progress towards achieving their Diplomas is now easier with the introduction of a new version of the Diploma aggregation service (DAS).

MIAP and QCA are now working together to make sure that the new wave of centres who will be offering Diplomas from September this year complete important legal agreements that will give them access to the LRS and DAS.

Centres have been given until 15 May to complete and return the MIAP organisation agreement, MIAP organisation registration form (for the LRS 'super user') and the DAS Head of Centre Agreement.

For more information about the DAS Head of Centre Agreement, go to www.qca.org.uk/agreements.

New features added to Diploma aggregation service

Keeping track of learners' progress towards achieving their Diplomas is now easier with the introduction of a new version of the Diploma aggregation service (DAS).

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) successfully launched the enhanced version – Release 3 – at the end of March.

Release 3 provides centres and awarding bodies with some notable new functionality that will improve user efficiency and help in monitoring learners' progress.

Among the new features is a completion status report that enables users to see exactly which parts of the composite qualification each learner

has completed and what they still need to achieve before they can be awarded a Diploma.

Termly management reports will provide senior leaders and consortia members with an overview of Diploma participation in their centres. Users who already extract data from their management information system to upload to DAS will also benefit from increased information on batch file processing and improved messages to help fix errors.

A new application programming interface (API) is now available which will enable developers to build a direct link between DAS and centres' MI systems.

For more information, including the Release 3 training and guidance materials, go to www.qca.org.uk/das and see the 'Service news and updates' section.



Password Puzzle

Forgotten your password? All users can reset their own password via the forgotten password link on the LRS website www.uklrs.miap.gov.uk. This will generate a new password and mail it directly to your email address.

A SuperUser also has the ability to:

1. Reset an account
2. Reset a password for a User from their organisation
3. Create additional account profiles

This functionality is available by accessing the 'User Management' section of the LRS website, and doing a search against their name using given name and family name. Additional guidance for creating users and resetting accounts can be found in the help pages at:

<https://www.uklrs.miap.gov.uk/miaphelp.html>

Once an account has been reactivated, it is advisable for the user to use the forgotten password link on the LRS website to receive a new password.

> Training Workshops

At the surgeries earlier this year we received a number of requests for training workshops. We have been to several providers to explore their training requirements and so far it looks as though we need to provide support in the use of the MIAP Batch file and resolving the exceptions; and a general introduction to the Learner Registration Service (LRS) for new users.

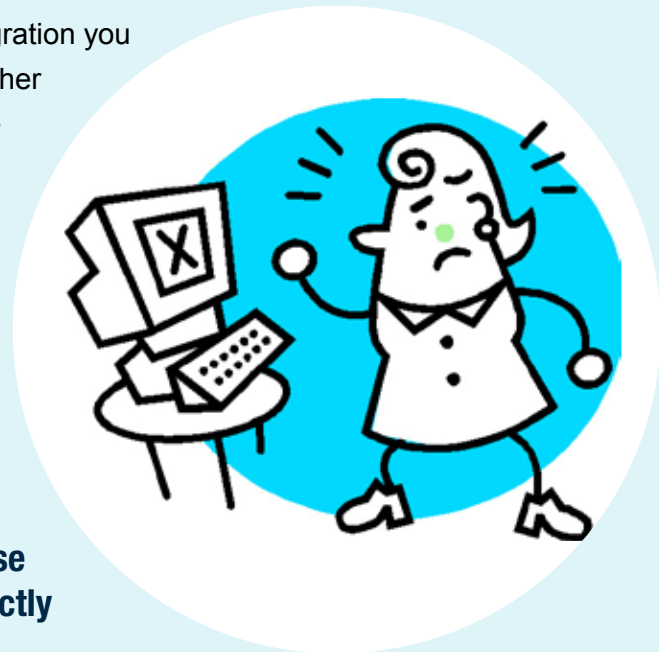
From July this year the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) will require actual Unique Learner Numbers (ULNs) in their returns – currently you can return 9999999999 as a number of last resort and the LSC software will include this if you leave the field blank.

If you are a new user you will need to know how to log on for the first time; how to set up additional super users (very useful for resetting forgotten passwords!); how to retrieve a learner using a ULN; how to obtain a ULN for a new learner; and how to edit a learner. This knowledge will also be required for resolving exceptions created in MIAP Batch File processing.

For users with no Management Information (MI) software integration you will need to know how to create a suitable MIAP Batch File, either CSV or XML; check the file using the Validator tool; upload the file; retrieve the output file; resolve exceptions; and be able to transfer the ULNs into your MI software.

For users with MI software integration you will need to know how to upload a file to MIAP – probably which button to press! Be able to retrieve the output file; resolve exceptions; and view the ULN within your MI software.

We are working towards putting workshops together, but in the meantime if there are any Learner Registration Bodies who are suffering frustration please get in touch with malcolm.edmonds@miap.gov.uk directly and let's get you moving!



> Dates for your Diary

We are planning two events for MIS Vendors / developers at the end of June which will focus on MIAP's planned developments including release 2c, due in September.

The proposed dates are June 17th in London and June 24th in Birmingham.

If you would like to register your interest in attending, please email your details to communications@miap.gov.uk putting MIS Developer Event in the subject line.