

# Newsletter

September 2009



## Welcome to the fifth edition of the ISB Newsletter

I'm delighted to have been reappointed as Independent Chairman as reported below. I feel that we have only just begun to make the necessary inroads into standards making a difference in the frontline. So I'm pleased and proud to be able to continue contribute in such a direct way.

The last quarter has been particularly busy for the ISB. This newsletter brings you up to date with the work of the Technical Support Service and subject matter experts in developing standards to support our colleagues working on 14-19 reform. This is a really important piece of work and shows how we are meeting real-time business needs. You will also find details of developments in the area of vocabularies, learner records and e-learning content.

I hope you find the coverage of the current and forthcoming activity of the ISB informative. If you have already played a part in the standards development process, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you. If not, can I encourage you to engage with the ISB? In either case, I hope you have had an enjoyable summer and look forward to updating you again later this year.

Dorian Bradley, your Independent Chairman



## Re-appointment of the Independent Chairman

Kevin Brennan MP, Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Consumer Affairs at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and Diana Johnson MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools and Learners at the Department for Children, Schools and Families have approved the reappointment of Dorian Bradley as Independent Chair of the Information Standards Board (ISB) for education, skills and children's services in England.

Dorian is the first independent chair of the ISB and has held this position since retiring from the post of Children's Director at Ofsted in August 2007. Dorian's wealth of experience is helping drive the ISB forward and under his leadership we look forward to continuing our progress.

## Inherited status for Common Data Definitions



The ISB has approved the MIAP (Managing Information Across Partners) Common Data Definitions (CDD) as an inherited standard. Details are on the website at [www.escs-isb.org.uk/standardslibrary/Common+Data+Definitions+\(CDD\)](http://www.escs-isb.org.uk/standardslibrary/Common+Data+Definitions+(CDD))

MIAP CDD was developed as a common set of data definitions to be used across a variety of data processes between MIAP and partner organisations. The standardisation of these key data definitions supports the interoperability of organisations sharing MIAP data, and will facilitate the deployment of a MIAP Learner Record.

### Inherited status

In approving inherited status, the ISB acknowledges the current role and use of the standard, and informs others of what the standard should and should not be used for. In the future it is planned that standards with inherited status, like CDD, will be replaced by a set of more granular Business Data Standards that can be applied across all of ESCS. The intention is that where possible these will build on existing standards such as MIAP CDD.

### 14-19 Reform

DCSF's 14 – 19 Reform Programme presents a new operating model for education where the focus is on the learner, not the institution. With new qualifications, such as the 14-19 Diplomas, learning will be delivered by a range of learning providers in different locations. It is critical for delivery success that these providers can exchange information and that learners can access resources relevant to them wherever they are.

The Technical Support Service is working quickly to develop a set of business data standards that meet the new business requirements, and that can be applied more widely.

With input from subject matter experts, the Technical Support Service has identified business services for which Business Data Standards are required to support data exchange:

- application and enrolment in a learning provider (school, college, university etc.). This incorporates the Common Application Process (CAP) work that is being led by colleagues within DCSF. It may also include some updates to the Exchanging Course Related Information (XCRI) standard approved by the ISB in January 2009
- attendance
- timetabling
- exam/qualification registration, assessment, results and awards
- behaviour

Additionally work has also been undertaken to establish a set of common identifiers that will support the exchange of data.



More information available from the Technical Support Service  
[ITgovernance.SECRETARIAT@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ITgovernance.SECRETARIAT@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Structured vocabularies to get quality standard**

A system-wide quality standard needs to be agreed for structured vocabularies. This will set out minimum requirements for controlled vocabularies across the system including adherence to national and international standards, and best practice. As a result vocabularies will be effective in managing access to and exploiting information.

A draft quality standard was issued in advance of the July Vocabularies Special Interest Group meeting. The intention is to present it to the September ISB meeting for approval.

## **Version 2 Data Model released for internal review**

The Enterprise Architecture Data Model is now an intrinsic part of the ISB standards development process. In future all standards will be aligned with the Data Model. In simple terms the Data Model will establish a standard set of definitions and rules for data that will facilitate a consistent approach to system design and data exchange.

The Data Model is likely to be released more widely by the end of September. More information available from Steve Palmer through  
[ITgovernance.SECRETARIAT@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ITgovernance.SECRETARIAT@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk)

## **E-learning and content packaging progressing**

The E-Learning and Content Packaging Special Interest Group has approved a project brief for the development of a content packaging specification, produced jointly by teams from RM Education and EdICTs. The brief defines the project success criteria, approach, milestones and deliverables, and includes a communication and engagement strategy designed to ensure key stakeholders are able to directly influence development. The specification is intended to deliver content interoperability within learning platforms in use in England.

The Group is also preparing the specification for interactive whiteboard content interoperability for consideration by the ISB. The major European interactive whiteboard suppliers have committed to adopt the IWB common file format specification published by Becta. A file viewer application will be released soon. Several suppliers are expected to implement the specification in the near future.

## **Divergence of learner records being tackled**

There are a number of instances of learner records being developed, including the higher education achievement record, skills accounts and personal learning record.

The Portfolios Learning Opportunities and Transcripts Special Interest Group is on the case. The Technical Support Service facilitated a meeting in June to identify overlaps and agree areas for standardisation. Further meetings are planned in the Autumn to progress this issue.

## **Collaboration across the UK**

Although having authority in England only, ISB interests extend beyond national boundaries. At a frontline level learners may live in one UK nation but do their learning in another. At a practical level the ISB wants to align with best practice and to avoid duplication and redundancy of effort. Working together across boundaries is good business sense and is a two-way flow.

Dorian Bradley led recently a very constructive meeting with Welsh colleagues to discuss common standards issues that exist between England and Wales with a view to developing standards that can be applied to both nations. Similar meetings are planned with colleagues in Scotland and Northern Ireland over the course of this year. The arrangements for regular Four Nations' meetings are being strengthened.

## **Standards development experts to support business data standards development**

The ISB has appointed a panel of standards development experts. The panel will be responsible for the development of all National business data standards. These business data standards are granular 'lego bricks' made up of entities and their attributes or code lists from the ESCS Enterprise Data Architecture. Their purpose is to provide a technology independent message specification that can be used by projects, commercial vendors and others to develop the technical specifications they need.

## **Farewell Richard and Robin**

Richard Stiff and Robin Sibson have stood-down from the ISB. As founder members they have made valuable contributions to the work of the Board. We thank them and wish them well for the future.

## Interested in joining the Board?

The ISB can only fulfil its remit if it has high-calibre, committed Board members. Maybe you fit the bill?

Board members are appointed in an individual capacity by the Independent Chairman with advice from the Board and are chosen because of their specific knowledge, understanding and interest in information and data standards at a business level. Appointments are generally for a period of two years with an option of renewal for further periods of two years.

The ISB meets at least six times a year and there may be other commitments such as stakeholder events and visits to frontline services.

Board members are expected to demonstrate a strategic understanding of the business benefits of effective information sharing, and to contribute their overarching knowledge and experience as well as their insights about specific sectors and topics.

At this stage the Chairman and Board are seeking expressions of interest, this time particularly from people involved with children's services, to [ITgovernance.SECRETARIAT@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ITgovernance.SECRETARIAT@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk) with a short note on what you think you offer. We will then be in touch about the appointment process.

## People

James Vincent recent head of the ISB Secretariat has moved to the Cabinet Office on secondment.

We wish James well and welcome Heather Neufville as the new Secretariat lead and the day to day manager of the technical support service.

## ISB collaboration space available soon

The ISB Collaboration Space is being rolled out in two phases. The first phase will be rolled out to colleagues with access to the DCSF network. We are pleased to report that for this group the Collaboration Space is now available and we will be releasing further information on registration and access soon.

The second phase will be rolled out to external stakeholders in the Autumn.

## ISB Contact Details

Feedback on this newsletter and suggestions for articles are most welcome at [itgovernance.secretariat@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:itgovernance.secretariat@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk)

[www.escs-isb.org.uk](http://www.escs-isb.org.uk)

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