

Newsletter

January 2010



Message from the ISB Chairman Dorian Bradley

Welcome to the first ISB Newsletter of 2010.

As many of you will know the past three months has been particularly busy for the ISB, primarily as a result of the business data standards priorities explained below. I am pleased to say that the ISB was able to approve new standards developed in conjunction with the system-wide Enterprise Architecture. The great benefit of this approach is making sure that standards both meet specific business needs (14-19 Reform in this case) and are reusable across education, skills and children's services. It tells us that we must increase our efforts to highlight and avoid the inefficiency of point solutions being developed in isolation.

A critical part of the recent activity has been engaging with stakeholders in some robust and uncompromising debate. This is how it should be and the standards approved are much more thorough and credible as a result. The ISB and I are very grateful to all those who took the time and trouble to contribute to this important work. We aim to put future consultations on an even stronger footing.

2010 will I am sure will be even more demanding, not least because of well publicised tougher demands from politicians and the public for public service reform. We therefore look forward to your continued and growing support for our joint efforts to facilitate information sharing across the system in order to aid frontline delivery, improve efficiency, reduce costs and minimise bureaucracy.

The ISB and I wish everyone involved in education, skills and children's services data and information a happy and prosperous New Year.

Dorian



Business Data Standards approved

At its November meeting, the ISB approved a set of Business Data Standards and Code Lists covering Application and Enrolment (including the Common Application Process), Timetable and Attendance.

These important standards are of wide-ranging importance across the education, skills and children's services system. But, as reported in our last edition, they are of immediate value to and driven by 14-19 Reform, including the growing take-up of Diplomas. See our news release at <http://www.escs-isb.org.uk/news/news/ESCS+ISB+Approves+14-19+Standards.htm> for full details.

An important milestone

This is an important milestone for the ISB as these standards are the first to be developed in line with the system-wide Enterprise Architecture. Core elements are described below.

The process starts with a strong business case, setting out, amongst other things, specific business requirements, the generic business process that the standard is intended to address and the essential stakeholders who should participate in the review and consultation process.



The data assembly is the link between the business case and the business data standards needed to satisfy the agreed business requirements. It sets out how they relate to each other, and the context specific rules that need to be applied when implementing the standard.

Business data standards are the main output from the process and the basic building blocks that each define a particular type of data, what it means and how it is encoded. A standard also defines the rules that need to be applied when implementing the standard no matter where it is being used.

Code lists define the agreed set of permitted values that can be used within a given item of data in the business data standard. An example would be a list of agreed values to encode ethnicity. These Code Lists are standards in their own right

Supporting documentation provides more detailed and practical guidance on data quality and implementation issues.

The business data standards should be used by those developing systems to create technical data exchange specifications or standards that define the bindings and transport mechanism for the data messages. Normally this will be expressed as XML but other forms of encoding are possible and, of course, permissible

Standards for immediate use

The ISB approved the standards with the status of Recommended. This means that the standards are for immediate use and that the ISB Technical Support Service will work with stakeholders to make any necessary revisions resulting from implementation over, in this case, a 9 months review period. Once the standards have been bedded in, and we don't expect any fundamental changes, the ISB will be asked to give the standards Adopted status.

The ISB Technical Support Service will also be finalising the business data standards, code list and supporting documentation for the area of Registration, Assessment, Results and Awards; the remaining standards required to support 14-19 Reform, which are already out for consultation.

Parent Know How Vocabulary

The ISB also approved the vocabulary developed to support the Parent Know How (PKH) Directory with the status of Adopted.

The aim of the PKH Directory is to improve the reach and quality of parenting information and support services, and to enable practitioners to access the right information when needed. The vocabulary is a standard set of classifications which can be used across local authorities in England and registered national organisations and services to tag and identify information content about services.

Full information on this vocabulary can be viewed at <http://www.esd.org.uk/standards/ispp/>

ISB Stakeholder Event

After the success of last year, the ISB will be holding its second annual stakeholder event in March. Invitations will be sent shortly.

the information authority: **Progress made on harmonising success rates**



The cross-organisation Data Harmonisation Group continues to make significant progress on the harmonisation of success rate methodology and in making the processes involved more transparent for both learning providers and data users.

The Group consists of partner representatives from BIS, DCSF, the LSC, *the information authority*, the Data Service, Ofqual and QCDA and is supported by Ofsted. The Group's main aim is to develop and modify success rate reporting with a view that by simplifying the underlying calculation methods processes will become both transparent and rigorous.

Three things to watch out for

Coming activities include:

- The publication of a success rates timetable showing when the different methodologies for each funding stream (Learner Responsive, Train to Gain etc). Covers academic years 2008/09 and 2009/10.
- Changes to the calculation method of the Train to Gain success rate for 2009/10, which take into account the 'roll-on, roll-off' nature of the provision. This will replace any existing methodologies currently used by the LSC and other FE partner organisations.
- The extension of the window for recording apprenticeship timely success rates from one month to three, with the aim of creating an indicator that is more effective in monitoring and improving the learner experience.

Overall qualification success rates remain the primary measure used in performance and funding decisions for apprenticeships.

More information

A newsletter will be sent out to FE and training providers shortly to highlight some of the areas of work that have progressed and where further details can be found.

For more information see the Data Harmonisation pages on *the information authority* website at: <http://www.theia.org.uk/harmonisingsuccessrates/>

If you have any queries about the work being carried out to harmonise success rates please log your call with the Service Desk on 08702 670001 or email servicedesk@thedataservice.org.uk

How to get involved

If you would like to contribute to the work of the ISB the best way is through one of our special interest groups.

Currently our groups cover Data Management, Vocabularies, Identity Management, Portfolios Learning Opportunities and Transcripts, and e-Learning and Content Packaging.

For more information please contact the ISB on itgovernance.secretariat@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk

ISB Contact Details

If you would like to provide feedback on the newsletter or would like to provide an article, please contact us on itgovernance.secretariat@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk

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