

Recommendations for the Department For Education

Streamlining Learning and Skills Services

Efficient Information Transfer for Prospectus and Application Processes across Local Boundaries in the 14-19 sector

1. Context

- 1.1 The previous government aimed to ensure that 16 year olds had as much knowledge as possible of the further educational course opportunities in schools and colleges that they could apply to.
- 1.2 The government's decision to give each local authority responsibility for Area Wide Prospectuses (AWPs) and student application systems (Common Application Processes or CAPs) has led to different implementation strategies within each authority.
- 1.3 These differences concerning the distribution of student applications, their monitoring and the links to school and college management information systems have added to the complexity of expanding local systems to include neighbouring local authorities.
- 1.4 This piecemeal approach has also neglected the need to exchange information about learners and about learning opportunities automatically between systems in different authorities and systems managing apprenticeship applications.
- 1.5 These cross-border issues are critical to the success of information systems that support the large group of learners that live and learn across the boundaries of local authorities.

2. East Midlands Cross-Border Project

- 2.1 The following recommendations arise from a 2009/2010 JISC-funded project¹ led by the University of Nottingham's Centre for International ePortfolio Development to demonstrate data transfer across local authority boundaries in the East Midlands Region. This project partnered with Connexions services, local authority, software vendors and Further Education Colleges, and reported to the Government's Information Standards Board.
- 2.2 The project has supported the continuing implementation of XCRI-CAP in the East Midlands, and several feeds are now being used for live services. An ecosystem of interconnected web-services is growing and is starting to provide an infrastructure of user-defined services, which can be re-used and re-purposed in response to changing agendas where a spirit of openness exists amongst stakeholders.

¹ The Full Report as submitted to the JISC can be found here
http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/eportfolio/x-border/JOSEPH_Ext_Report_XCRI-X-Border_14-19.pdf

- 2.3 The partners have shown the efficacy of a strong regional partnership in the creation of new ways of refining data transfer processes in the interests of the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall system and for the benefit of learners.
- 2.4 The aims of the project were to investigate these issues practically and produce real-world recommendations on:
 - 2.4.1 Efficient use of existing course data through use of the XCRI course standard
 - 2.4.2 Seamless course search and course application processes for school leavers
 - 2.4.3 Standardisation of course and application information to allow interoperability between different local systems
 - 2.4.4 Shared vocabularies and methods for data sharing

3. Summary of Recommendations

3.1 Common Application Process

- 3.1.1 A Single national Common Application Process system with established procedures and business rules would be most efficient.
- 3.1.2 If a national system is not politically possible, then a lightweight brokerage system should be investigated
- 3.1.3 Investigate/sponsor the development of interoperability-based solutions between the different models employed by the various authorities
- 3.1.4 Strong interoperable links between Local Authority Client Caseload/Management Information systems and the Application process

3.2 Data Standards

- 3.2.1 Use of the UK XCRI ² data standard for transferring course information
- 3.2.2 Use of the Common Application profile³ developed by the project
- 3.2.3 Commitment of all vendors/local development teams to interoperability
- 3.2.4 Strong leadership from Government and authorities on shared vocabularies and data structures and standards (see data definition recommendations⁴)
- 3.2.5 National Apprenticeship system to expose apprenticeship opportunities via an XCRI web service, trial.

3.3 Streamlining Learning and Skills Services

- 3.3.1 Focus on the efficiency of information flows, supporting access to seamless services and quality information for learners
- 3.3.2 Build on successful regional partnerships and initiatives

² eXchanging Course Related Information <http://www.xcri.org/download/overview.pdf>

³ Capapult data standard developed for JISC <http://www.samson-portal.org/capapult.aspx>

⁴ 14-19 Data definition recommendations as developed by the project
http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/eportfolio/x-border/Data_Standards_for_14-19.pdf

- 3.3.3 Regular stakeholder seminars with a wide membership and objective technical input
- 3.3.4 Investigation into the Systems Interoperability Framework (SIF) at a local authority level

4. Further Information

- 4.1 These activities were funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) led by the University of Nottingham's Centre for International ePortfolio Development and APS Ltd.
- 4.2 The full report is accessible from http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/eportfolio/x-border/JOSEPH_Ext_Report_XCRI-X-Border_14-19.pdf
- 4.3 The University of Nottingham's Centre for International ePortfolio Development (CIePD) team are funded by JISC, the EU and others to carry out technological research and implementation projects supporting learning, transition into FE and HE, employer engagement, widening participation, employability and IAG through web services interoperability and ePortfolio technology. The CIePD has been involved in development and trialling of data standards in an educational and skills context since 2006.
- 4.4 For more information about this project, please contact:

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