The Provider Gateway is at the hub of the Learning and Skills Council’s activities, providing valuable information to more than 3,000 institutions so that they can continually strive to improve their performance.

A secure web-based data portal launched in the summer of 2005, the PG enables LSC, inspectorates and providers to access information which supports self-assessment and quality improvement. The secure website can only be accessed by people with user names and passwords. Different access permissions are set for different users, but only providers can see their own learner level data. All users have read access to the document exchange section of the PG. There are currently 8,400 user names with access to the PG and 89% of these are actively using the facility.

This bulletin aims to provide further background about the Gateway and its benefits.
The reasons for using the PG are too numerous to mention in this short briefing. However, with the LSC’s new major initiative The Framework for Excellence being trialled in the summer of 2007 it is becoming imperative that all institutions use the PG.

The Framework for Excellence is an initiative which has the potential to shape all learners’ and employers’ choices in the post 16 education sector.

The new all-inclusive and radical approach to managing performance across the learning and skills sector is driven by the LSC Agenda for Change and the Further Education White Paper. It also builds on the work carried out on Measures of Success and aims to steer the sector towards self-regulation.

The Framework is designed to be simple and easy to use. The basis for it is a scorecard of seven KPIs that can be brought together to describe the three key dimensions of a college’s or provider’s performance: responsiveness, effectiveness of provision (quality) and finance. They will be scored on each and then receive an overall rating which they will be able to compare against a national average.

The PG will help providers calculate some of their scores for the KPIs with the FfE and this is why it is imperative that all those involved in the post 16 sector make use of the PG.

Key advantages include:
- Enables policy implementation
- Includes elements of Agenda for Change
- Improved quality of provision
- Improved planning and funding
- Improved service to partners, employers and learners.

The PG improves efficiency
- It is time saving - acting as a “one-stop shop”.
- Reduces bureaucracy - simplified capture, analysis and publication of provider performance information.

Implements Effectiveness
- Use of resources
- Business processes
- Enhanced LSC reputation

Other advantages
- Drives LSC performance
- Links to LSC Performance Scorecard
- Provides access to benchmarking
- Access to a wider range of provider performance reports
- Security enhancements for controlled access /analysis of all Provider performance information for National/Regional/Local LSCs
- Includes partners (for example, ALI, Ofsted, DfES), Employers and Learners
- Potentially a new tool to support risk based planning.
Always developing and moving forward

The PG is constantly being developed and now includes:

- Provider Gateway User Group - representatives from inspectorates, colleges, work-based learning providers, local authorities, schools with sixth forms
- Training/Help (LSC website link)
- Detailed communications plan for each release
- Better communications channels being developed through PG (for example e-mail notification, messages, alerts)
- Provider support - potential improvement to provider-facing support being considered with PaM
- College Financial Reporting (CFR) to use existing PG communications channels
- Usability is a central theme to improvements to PG
- Interdependent projects flagged up for enhanced programme management.

Did you know?

The aims are:

- Improved services from providers to learners and employers
- Administrative simplification and reduced bureaucracy
- Industry standard usability and look and feel
- Link with and complement to broadcast services (directgov for individuals and businesslink for employers).

Objectives

- Enable policy Implementation
- Improve efficiency
- Improve effectiveness.

Scope

Currently contains a secure web portal for access to:

- Learner Achievement Tracker
- Document Exchange
- Will support the implementation of Framework for Excellence (from FE White Paper).

The vision

The place where LSC providers and other partners come when they need to exchange data with the LSC and each other.
Who uploads documents to the Gateway?

Colleges upload:
- Their self-assessment reports (SARs) including their annual calendars;
- Three-year development plan (following approval from the LSC);
- FE Stats Update Workbooks;
- OLT (Other Learner Types) Workbooks.

Work-based learning providers upload:
- Self-assessment reports (SARs);
- OLT (Other Learner Types) Workbooks;
- Three-year development plan (following approval from the LSC).

Local Authorities upload:
- Three-year development plan (following approval from the LSC).

Ofsted uploads:
- College performance reports (CPRs);
- The template for the FE Stats Update Workbook.

The LSC uploads:
- Qualification Success Rate (QSR) reports and Provider Financial Management (PFM) reports.

Q: Does the fact that every Ofsted and ALI inspector can access the documents of every college and work-based learning provider on the Gateway present a risk to the security and confidentiality of the provider’s information?

A: All inspectors in Ofsted and the ALI have signed an undertaking not to disclose confidential information.

Q: When do colleges need to upload their Self Assessment Reports?

A: Colleges should upload an advanced draft of their SAR for the previous academic year during the autumn. In many cases final SARs, that is those signed off by the governing body or in the case of Independent Specialist Colleges, the most senior tier in the organisation, will not be uploaded until early the following year. Colleges are not required to upload their SARs from previous academic years.

Q: When do colleges need to upload their FE Stats Update Workbooks?

A: The FE Stats Update Excel Workbook will only need to be completed and uploaded to the PG by colleges following notification of inspection or notification of an Annual Assessment visit that includes re-inspection. In these circumstances, colleges are requested to complete the workbook and upload to the PG within five working days of notification. It is not expected that colleges will complete the workbook unless they specifically wish to provide the information for Annual Assessment Visits that do not include re-inspection.

Help is at hand

If you have any queries about your PG access, for example if you have lost your password, please contact your local LSC.

A list of contact names by LSC area is on the website at: http://ffe.lsc.gov.uk/using/provider_gateway.htm

This website page contains other helpful information about the PG.

We also have a dedicated email address for the PG – provider.gateway@lsc.gov.uk. We aim to answer any queries within three working days of receipt.