

**Q: What does MiDES stand for?**

A: Market Intelligence Data Exchange Service

**Q: What is all this about?**

A: MiDES is a joint project between AoC and RCU to give colleges 'in-year' access to a wide range of new management information derived from the ILR. It's **free to AoC members** because the Skills Funding Agency has agreed to fund it as a Shared Service. If you would like more details please contact RCU on 01772 885999 or email [mides@rcu.co.uk](mailto:mides@rcu.co.uk)

**Q: What will we have to do?**

A: We've designed MiDES to place as little a burden on colleges as possible. All we ask is that your MIS Manager sends a copy of each ILR return to MiDES at the same time as you send it to the Data Service. This started in February 2011 with the LR02 and ER06. The latest Learner Responsive and Employer Responsive ILR should then be uploaded at the relevant national census points in line with the Data Service timetable.

**Q: How will this work?**

A: We've set up an easy to use and fully encrypted web interface for safe and easy transfer of the files. A user guide is available to download from the RCU website, alternatively if you have any questions please contact us on 01772 885999 or email [mides@rcu.co.uk](mailto:mides@rcu.co.uk)

**Q: What do we get back?**

A: All AoC members get a series of electronic reports within just a couple of weeks of the closing date for submission of each ILR. These reports provide a range of analysis of your ILR set against flexible comparators. The range of pull-down menus allows you to compare your figures to the sector norms for your type of college, your region, colleges serving similar socio-demographic areas and so on.

For example, the first two reports available are:

1. Current **in-year** retention by month, subject area and level vs. a chosen comparator group (such as the national average, a specific region or a specific provider type).
2. An analysis of your **current** curriculum profile by Sector Subject Area and Level compared with the national picture or other selected comparator groups.

We are piloting this service in 2010/11 and further free standard reports are to include Deprivation, Fee Income and one on your Employer Responsive position (where this exists). There is also the option of interrogating the MiDES dataset further and purchasing additional data analysis reports if you have a real need to delve deeper.

**Q: If we want to know more, what sort of additional data analysis can be done?**

A: AoC Members are able to commission additional analysis using the MiDES dataset to answer a wide range of specific queries. This could be **anything that can be answered by ILR data** but examples might include:

- How typical is our retention pattern?
- How does our retention compare to the top quartile/decile nationally?
- Is recruitment in these curriculum areas dropping everywhere?
- What's the average cohort size for these qualifications?
- What's our market share in this area compared to other colleges?
- What sort of qualifications are local learners taking who study out-of-area?
- Do other colleges with similar demographic profiles retain more learners than we do in these subjects?

You would have to bear the cost of this but these costs would be well below the normal cost for research of this kind because all the database set-up costs have already been covered by the Skills Funding Agency subsidy to AoC.

**Q: How's this different to what we can get already?**

A: First of all MiDES reports are based on **in-year data** and are designed with speed and flexibility in mind. Reports based on each data return will be sent to you within a couple of weeks of submission. The standard set of reports will include pull-down menus allowing you to decide the best comparators for your data.

**Q: What reassurances can you give that sufficient data protection procedures are in place and that the college will remain anonymous in any reports produced?**

All processing of the data will comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act. RCU's Data Protection Policy can be accessed on request and our ICO registration number is z5000856. Data is stored and processed in accordance with RCUs Information Security Management Policy and all systems are accredited under the International Data Security Standard ISO 27001.

Uploaded data is stored on a secure server that is strictly controlled. Uploads and downloads to the server are via secure SSL links and any personal data is removed prior to analysis. The data being collected from member organisations is for the sole purpose of data sharing between AoC members. RCU will ensure that reports from the data do not identify individual colleges to other members or third parties. Each college member will be able to see standard reports linked to their own ILR dataset and how they compare to a set group (such as the national average, a specific region or a specific provider type). Any comparator group that becomes disclosive due to small numbers will not be included in the reports and other providers will not be named in the reports in order to protect confidentiality.

**Q: What should Colleges do about personal identifiers within the data?**

The ILR data uploaded by colleges is college data. Colleges may choose to remove personal identifiers from their data prior to uploading using software such as the DLA. If this is not done RCU will however remove all personal identifiers prior to using the data.

**Q: How will MiDES benefit us and what will be in the standard reports?**

MiDES is a free service to all AoC member colleges which allows members to get real-time market intelligence from the in-year ILR. AoC sees this as part of an agenda for the sector to take control of its own data. Members will receive standard reports, free of charge, enabling you to get real time market intelligence which can help inform internal systems such as your curriculum planning and Self Assessment Report.

The first standard report was available in Early March 2011 and the second in April 2011. These are interactive Excel spreadsheets that provide information on:

1. Current in-year retention by month, subject area and level vs a chosen comparator group (such as the national average, a specific region or a specific provider type).
2. An analysis of your curriculum profile by Sector Subject Area and Level compared with the national picture or other selected comparator groups.

Further free standard reports will be produced in subsequent weeks and months to include Deprivation, Fee Income and one on your Employer Responsive position (where this exists). There is also the option of interrogating the MiDES dataset further and purchasing additional data analysis reports if you have a real need to delve deeper.

If you have any other questions, simply contact the RCU team via [mides@rcu.co.uk](mailto:mides@rcu.co.uk)

**Q: How has retention been calculated for the 'In-Year Retention Analysis Tool'?**

The MiDES 'In-Year Retention Analysis Tool' enables you to compare the retention trends in your institution with the national picture and other selected comparator groups (such as provider type, region and deprivation).

In-Year retention has been calculated as completers plus continuers, divided by all enrolments minus those who transferred. The enrolments which are included in the analysis can be filtered in two ways:

Option 1:

- Learners aged 16+ and on Skills Funding Agency funded courses.
- Courses which are expected to be 24 weeks or longer.
- Enrolments which were active during the month of September but not finishing before the end of the month.

Option 2:

- In addition to the criteria in Option 1, an additional filter can be applied to remove any enrolment which withdrew in the first six weeks of the course.

**Q: How many colleges have registered with this free service and are they all included in the report's comparator group?**

As MiDES is a voluntary data exchange service between members it does not yet provide 100% comprehensive information on learners in the current academic year (some providers are not part of AoC and some AoC members have not yet submitted ILRs to MiDES).

Nevertheless, by the end of April 2011, 288 colleges had registered to the service and with 242 providers (70%) submitting data it does provide a powerful 'in-year' insight for AoC member colleges.

More and more members are registering as word about the MiDES reports gets around. If you are interested in joining please get in touch (email [mides@rcu.co.uk](mailto:mides@rcu.co.uk)).

**Q: Colleges want an easy way to forward MiDES reports to others within the College. Can the reports be imported? How can the reports be integrated with SharePoint to produce personalised reports in college?**

The tool is designed in excel allowing ease of use. When downloading the reports there is an option to save the file enabling the user to save it and store it as appropriate, some colleges have even posted it onto their intranets. The reports can be forwarded onto colleagues through email or imported directly into applications such as SharePoint.

**Q: What does statistically significant mean within the Retention report?**

Statistically Significant means there is a greater than 95% chance that the observed difference (within the report) did not occur by chance.

**Q: Within the Curriculum Profile Report what is meant by "Other" as a qualification level?**

These are qualification aims coded on the Learning Aims Database (LAD) as U (unknown), X (not applicable) or M (mixed) - this includes qualification aims which are not yet coded.

**Q: Data would be useful for sixth forms at course level rather than SSA. Is this possible?**

This is something RCU will be discussing further with the Sixth Form Colleges Forum.

**Q: How is current Employer Responsive data dealt with, should it have been included in ILR uploads already made to RCU, if not, how will the Apprenticeship report be pulled together?**

At the end of April 2011, 109 colleges had uploaded their ER data and we would actively encourage all colleges to upload their data as soon as practicable as we will be working on an Apprenticeship report over the next few weeks. To ensure the first Employer Responsive report remains comparable for all colleges we would ask that the ER06 be uploaded in the first instance.

**Q: Comparisons to national average data - how will MiDES data differ from national benchmarks?**

MiDES is a voluntary exchange of data between participating colleges and as such it may not contain complete datasets. Current reports being produced are however based on approximately 70% of AoC member colleges. The benefit of this service is that it is designed to

provide an 'in-year' market intelligence tool to help colleges review their performance and make real time comparisons. The more colleges who choose to participate, the better the data will be.

**Q: Trend data would be useful for curriculum profiles, colleges would like to be able to download and save reports to make comparisons over time.**

Colleges can save the reports as excel spreadsheets. Trend analysis reports will be produced over time.

**Q: Can colleges access data through MiDES if they haven't uploaded their ILR?**

Data is only available to participating colleges who have uploaded their data. There is however a demo using dummy data on the RCU website [www.rcu.co.uk](http://www.rcu.co.uk) <http://www.rcu.co.uk/rcu/services/mides.php> which should give you an idea of what you can expect.

**Q: How frequently will the in-year report outputs be updated?**

As the service is still in the pilot year, reports are being produced periodically and updated following the upload of new Learner Responsive ILR files (such as the February LR02 and May LR03 return). However, they are also being updated between these dates to reflect the increasing size of the comparator groups as more and more providers sign up and as new report outputs are being designed.

The first Apprenticeship report, based on Employer Responsive ILR data, was released in May 2011. Updated versions of this report will be released following the upload of further ER data.

Going forward the reports will be produced and updated 5 times per year in line with the Learner Responsive census points.