Take2 Newsletter

from Meta Office

February/March 2005

Version 7

Where are we up to with version 7? Well, not as far as we would like to be. We had wished to release version 7 after the 2004 Course Completion return – i.e. in early March. This isn't going to happen for several reasons:

- We failed to anticipate the very significant effort involved in helping clients with the 2004 course completion. This has diverted resources that would otherwise have been completing testing and documentation.
- Although a new SDR Manual was released on 10 February it still contains errors as do the accompanying appendices. Also, we have not be able to get information on changes to the NSI.
- An invitation to submit *Take2* for certification by the Ministry was not received until 24 February and the set of testing data has yet to be received from the Ministry.
- A mechanism to test the new NZQA data reporting routines has only just become available.

We realise that it must be frustrating for you not to get version 7 when we said it would be available, and we do apologise. As things stand we are likely to take the following steps:

- Aim to release the Access edition by 19 March with or without certification. If the Ministry can sort out the certification before the release data, so much the better, otherwise it will have to be retrospective.
- Delay the inclusion of the new NZQA reporting functionality until later in the year if the testing proves troublesome. The existing functionality will continue to work and, in any case, NZQA has no documentation available at present.
- Aim to release the SQL Server edition mid April.

In the meantime you can continue to use version 6 and the only thing you need to look out for is the new set of course completion codes. The next article provides information on this topic.

Course Completion Codes

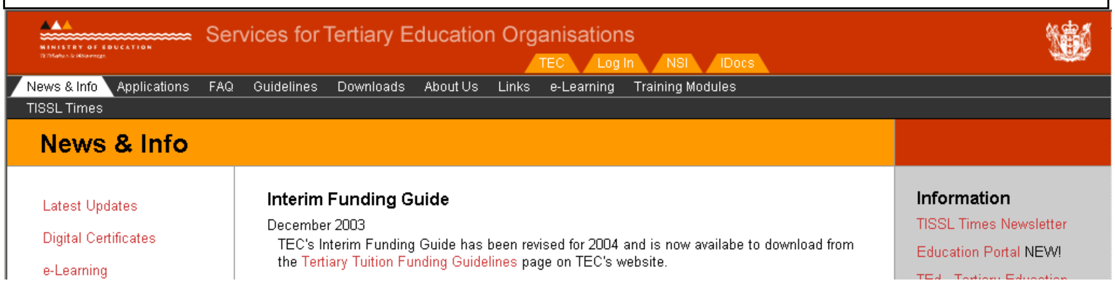
Once you have successfully completed the 2004 course completion return (the one due by 28 February 2005) you need to start worrying about how to record 2005 course completions, and you do need to worry.

The reason you need to worry is simply that you must now report course completions every four months at the same time that you make your standard SDR. This might not bother you if you have been entering completion data as you go along but many providers have treated course completions as a "once a year" exercise. You can't do this any more. You must get into the habit of recording course completions on an ongoing basis.

And, when you are recording completions, you must now use the new completion codes. So, the first thing to do, is to set up those new codes in *Take2*.

- Open the Administration Module.
- Click *System Managements* and then *External Lookups*.
- Go to the *Enrolment and Outcome* tab and enter in the set of codes shown in the tables overleaf. Notice that six of these codes should already be there, so you are, in effect, just adding the four new codes (highlighted) and changing the description for code 1.

Back to the future – spotted recently on the STEO Web Site. No mention of the 2005 Guide!



Please note that the descriptions in the table are not the full descriptions provided in the SDR, due to a lack of space. When you get version 7, the full descriptions will be provided.

Code	Description
0	Still to complete course: valid extension 1 - 8
1	Still to complete course: 1 - 8
2	Completed successfully
3	Completed unsuccessfully
4	Did not complete course
5	Practicum to complete - on job training: 1 - 8
6	Yet to complete: 9 - 10
7	Extension granted or under moderation: 9 - 10
8	Recognition of Prior Learning
9	Code cannot be determined

Once the new codes are available start using them.

The other point to note relates to error 366, an error that some providers first experienced when doing the 2003 course completion return.

This error was described in our August 2004 Newsletter and in August 2004 we released an update (version 6.1.2 for Access users) that included a modification to assist you in identifying records which may be affected by error 366. The important thing to do is to ensure that any course enrolment record that has a course completion code other than “4” does not have a withdrawal date reported in the normal SDR. The 6.1.2 update helps achieve this by printing a list of records that may be thus affected.

From version 7 we have been able to go one step further by handling withdrawals in a smarter way. Roll on version 7!

Compliance Costs

Providers were recently sent a circular by the Ministry of Education on the topic of tertiary data quality Those of us with long memories recall that the original purpose of the Single Data Return was to reduce compliance costs and improve data quality.

This patently has not happened. We can see from the circular that data now needs “cleaning” and we also know that providers are still reporting the same data to different agencies.

The introduction of a four monthly course completion return is going to significantly increase your workload, as described in the previous article.

In fact one suspects that behind the circular there is an increasingly urgent message from the Minister to the Ministry to do something to reduce compliance costs but, unless the various agencies (MoE, TEC, and NZQA) genuinely start working together, and unless the Ministry can break out of its tired old habit of mandating change without first thinking of the consequences, the Minister is going to be sorely disappointed. (My word, what a long sentence!).

As a software supplier our natural reaction to the additional compliance effort heaped on our clients should be one of joy. We will have to do more modifications and provide more resources for our Help Desk. That will cost you more money in support fees.

In fact, though, we would much rather direct our efforts into improving our software in more productive ways. So we think that a loud and clear message from providers to the Minister is needed now. Tell him that compliance costs are unreasonable. Money better spent training students is being wasted on administration. It is time that Kim listened to Kath.