Reporting to the Ag ITO

Those providers that have to report Unit Standard outcomes to the Agriculture ITO, rejoice – great improvements are just around the corner. Thanks to an excellent initiative by the Ag ITO *Take2* will provide you with a simple method to report Unit Standard completions to the ITO using the same mechanism as the return to NZQA.

All things being equal this should be available by November, just in time to report the bulk of your results.

And the best bit? It won't cost you anything!

We would be interested to hear if there are any other ITOs to which *Take2* users have to report Unit Standard outcomes? Is it possible they could share the same mechanism?

Normal Service Resumed

Sad to see that the trouble free April SDR round was just an aberration and that, with the August SDR round we were back to normal service – i.e. STEO was unavailable when you needed to make your return.

Imagine what it's going to be like when you do the December SDR and they have just introduced a new server and new procedures for processing SDRs!

Depressing to note too that the Ministry still hasn't released the SDR Manual for 2007. They must think we like dealing with complex changes at short notice and, of course, meeting the corresponding increase in compliance costs.

Take2 Training

Take2 training sessions are to be held in the main centres in late October/early November. A notice about the training sessions accompanies this Newsletter.

If you are interested in attending, please get back to us by 6 October.

It is possible for us to hold sessions in other centres, providing there are sufficient numbers – meaning upwards of 10 persons from at least 5 providers. Please contact the Help Desk if you wish to discuss setting up a session.

The Ministry's new server is readied for deployment.

Fancy a $400 Credit?

You may be surprised to learn that there are training providers that do not yet use *Take2*. On the other hand you may know some of these folks and, indeed, you may be in a position to recommend to them that they have a look at *Take2*.

If you do, and they purchase a *Take2* license before 31 December 2006, naming your organisation as the deciding factor in their decision to purchase, we will give you a $400 credit towards your next annual support fee.

So, how could you persuade a provider to go with *Take2*? Well, hopefully because you like the product yourself and enthusiastically explain how good it is. You could also mention that Meta Office specialises in software for tertiary providers – we don't spread our resources over other products.

We keep up with the play – for example we are working with StudyLink right now to get a certified Results of Study report.

Our Help Desk has an excellent reputation for responding promptly and effectively.

We provide an increasing range of support materials, especially the *Take2* Tip Sheets which have proved very popular. Regular training sessions are also available.

Take2 is certified by the Ministry of Education for the SDR and NSI.

Take2 provides a large range of interfaces and reporting mechanisms, SDR, NSI, ERS, Students OnLine, NZQA, FITEC, the Agriculture ITO.

We could go on and one – but we won't.

Aunty Annie's Awesome Answers

We have been fortunate enough to obtain the services of Aunty Annie, a very experienced administrator who has worked in a number of training institutions over the years. Annie is available to answer your queries on almost any topic, so feel free to write to her care of the Help Desk.

In the meantime here are some questions that we have been sent over the last little while, and Annie's awesome answers.

Q   Sometimes I have difficulty finding a student because I can't remember their family name. How else can I search for a student?

A   You can use the *Advanced Search* button on the *Students* form. This allows you to search for a student in various ways; for example by ID number, National Student Index Number, first name, address, phone number, etc.

Q   How can I quickly copy a student's name and address to use in a letter?

A   On the *Students* form you will see a *Copy* button on the *Basic Details* tab, right next to the student's address. Click this button and you will see the student's name and address in a new window. Click *Commit* and then go to where you want to insert these details – for example a Word document. Click the *Paste* button or type "Ctrl" + "v" and the job is done.

Q   I am worried that I am not recording course completion codes at the right time. When is the right time?

A   Good question! There are those who would say there is never a right time for course completion codes but, seriously, the answer to your question is that you must make sure that you have correct course completion codes for all records that are reported in an SDR. This means, in effect, that you don't need to record codes continuously; you could just do so immediately before preparing each SDR – especially if you use the wonderful *Take2* course completion code mapping process which derives course completion codes from academic outcome data. If, though, you don't use the mapping process, it may actually be easier to enter the course completion codes on a continuous basis as you record academic results.

Q   I'm new in my job and my boss has told me I must do the next SDR. I asked my boss how this is done but either she doesn't know or she isn't telling me. Where do I start?

A   Yes, it is a challenge and there is no easy answer but you would be well advised to follow these steps. Start early. Whatever you do don't leave it to the last minute. Make sure that you know the date of the SDR returns – you can get this information from page 17 of the Ministry of Educations SDR Manual (on the STEO web site). Make sure that you have a valid login for the Ministry of Education's STEO and NSI sites. Read the Take2 Tip Sheets numbered 12, 13, and 14 on the Take2 web site. Go through the eSDR training module on the STEO web site. Make sure that all your students have a valid National Student Index Number and an active NSI status. Use the Take2 process to validate and extract SDR files (Tip Sheet 13), and then run a trial SDR on the STEO Web site. Fix any errors that are identified by the STEO validation. Get your boss to think about the EFTS forecast that must be completed before a final SDR can be submitted. Make it very clear to your boss that not submitting an SDR on time risks funding being cut off. Also, make it clear to your boss that there must be at least two people in your organisation who know how to do an SDR – after all you might like a holiday now and again.

Q   Take2 seems to be going very slowly and sometimes the Take2 database becomes corrupt so that I have to repair it.

A   First of all, it's good that you know how to repair the database – well done! Secondly, let's think about why the problems may be occurring. As with most things relating to computers there are various possible answers. The most obvious answer is that the volume of data you have stored in *Take2* is getting too big. Even if your organisation doesn't enrol that many students each year, you may still run into problems if you don't archive old records regularly. In any case, if you have over 5,000 student records and you are using the Access edition of *Take2*, you should probably talk to the *Take2* Help Desk to discuss your options. Another possibility is that your workstation(s) aren't up to scratch. For example, if you are running Windows XP Service Pack 2 on a workstation with less than I gig of memory, then you will get a slow performance. Again, the Help Desk can give you advice.

Q   A person in my work place doesn't seem to like me. Why?

A   Well, it's strange you should be asking me this question just when I have received letter from the person to whom you refer asking the same question. It seems to me that life would be better for both of you if you stopped the name calling. "Cancerous and corrosive" are not nice words, and nor is "corruption". I am sure that you both want to work together harmoniously and so I would like to suggest that you both make an effort to get to know each other better. What about a nice barbecue one Sunday? I am sure that Helen and Peter would love to come over and there is so much you could talk about – but remember, no religion or politics!