



Literacy and Numeracy

We have been approached by a number of clients regarding the possibility of building into Take2 a mechanism to bulk upload details of students to the new Literacy and Numeracy web site.

This seems like a jolly good idea and we will do it as soon as we can. There is a tiny problem, though; we are having difficulty getting a technical specification for the file. As is normally the case TEC has been no help whatsoever in this regard but we seem to have finally tracked down a nice person at NCER who says she can help.

Watch this space!

Ag ITO

This article is directed at those of our clients who deal with the Agriculture ITO. If you don't enjoy this privilege be thankful and skip to the next article.

Last week we received an email from the Ag ITO telling us of changes to the return required of providers. We understand that the mechanism for returning results remains unchanged but that a new "Course Attendance" file is to be submitted. The change comes into effect on 3 May.

There are a few problems with this:

- The specification provided is incomplete and impractical. It would, incidentally, involve you in a heap more work.
- So it is no surprise that we understand from one client at least that they don't understand what data is required and so cannot advise how the data would be collected and entered in Take2.

We are trying to follow up with the Ag ITO but, in the meantime we would be most grateful if affected clients could share with us their understanding of how they would collect and

record attendance data in Take2.

Performance Indicators

As you will see overleaf we have replaced the usual "Top Tips" section of this month's

Newsletter with a discussion of course completion measurement. In short we are banging on again about performance measurement and TEC's high-handed and arbitrary ways. Sorry about that but this is important. You are being treated shabbily and in a manner which, if you were to practice it with your students, would lead to you being severely reprimanded by NZQA.

TEC is constantly changing the way in which you are to be measured and they are applying measures retrospectively. The Minister, who seems to have more intellectual firepower than many of his predecessors, is still being hoodwinked by TEC into believing that their measures are meaningful. Blindfolds seem popular right now!

It really is time for the sector to take the lead and it could do this by shifting the focus through developing its own performance measurements and promoting these publicly.

Take students' literacy and numeracy, for example. If that is now being measured (and were it to be measured in a way that could be counted) then a meaningful measure would be use this as a dimension when looking at completions.

What about looking at prior activity, highest school qualification, age, etc. as predictors of student outcomes and therefore as variables that need to be taken into account?

Targeted funded trainees' outcomes are measured in terms of employment and further education/training. Why not do the same for students funded through SAC funding?

But a final thought from Flavius Josephus that may put you off the whole idea of measurement.

"Measures", an innovation that changed a world of innocent and noble simplicity into one forever filled with dishonesty.



Work starts at Meta Office on the new interfaces

Course Completions – And You Are Still Being Short Changed

The definitive specification for measuring 2009 course completions has still not been released by TEC (as at 31 March 2010) but we do have a proposed specification circulated for consultation at the end of last year. This is what is being used for the following analysis.

Those of us with long memories will recall that the course completion measure was introduced originally as a measure of retention. It was a typical knee jerk reaction which had a significant flaw for those organisations that delivered Unit Standards but had not disaggregated to Unit Standard level.

Over the last few years the course completion measure has mutated into a measure of successful academic achievement, equally flawed with regard to the question of Unit Standards and disaggregation. If you deliver Unit Standards but have not disaggregated to this level (i.e. your Course Register entries represent clusters of Unit Standards) your ratio could understate your performance by a significant margin – we have found an example of up to 11%.

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The changes included in TEC's new specification will push down your completion ratio still further however you have disaggregated, and here's why.

Changed Denominator – When you calculate a ratio you divide one number by another. You are dividing a “numerator” by a “denominator”. Say you had 3 apples and 1 orange and you wanted to work out the ratio of apples in your fruit bowl you would divide 3 by four: 3/4 which is 75%.

Up until 2009 the calculation for successful completion counted only the “final” course completion values of “2”, “3”, and “4” in the denominator. Other values such as “1” and “0” were ignored. The new 2010 method includes all completion values in the denominator. In both cases the numerator is the count of “2” values. Here's a comparison.

Course Completion Code	Number of Instances	2010 Method		2009 Method	
0	2	Numerator	10	Numerator	10
1	2	Denominator	20	Denominator	16
2	10	Success Ratio	50%	Success Ratio	63%
3	3				
4	3				
Total All Codes	20				
Total Final Codes	16				

EFTS Weighted – In the example above each course completion value was treated as equal. It didn't matter that, for example, one course was worth 1.0 EFTS and one was worth 0.5 EFTS. This means that if a student is unsuccessful in any course the effect is the same. From 2010 the course completion values are going to be weighted by their EFTS value. The example below illustrates the effect.

Not Weighted		
Course Completion Code	EFTS Value of Course	Number of Instances
0	1.00	2
1	1.00	2
2	1.00	10
3	1.00	3
4	1.00	3
Numerator		10
Denominator		20
Success Ratio		50%
Weighted		
Course Completion Code	EFTS Value of Course	Number of Instances
0	1.00	2
1	1.00	2
2	0.50	10
3	1.00	3
4	1.00	3
Numerator		5
Denominator		15
Success Ratio		33%

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Obviously the examples provide above are extreme and designed to illustrate the possible effect of the changes. However there can be no doubt that the change to the denominator will reduce your success ratio if you have, say, students enrolled in 2009 who do not have a final outcome by the time of the April 2010 SDR, which TEC will be using when working out your performance.

The EFTS weighting is more subtle but the research we have undertaken shows that it can push down your success ratio by 2% to 3%. This makes sense when you think about it: higher EFTS courses are likely to be longer and more demanding, hence students are more likely to withdraw than from a shorter and less onerous course.

Chances are, then, you are being short changed by TEC unless they reduce your targets.