



Enrolment Dates – Part 2

You may recall that last month we published an article on the question of what dates should be used when recording course enrolments to be reported through the SDR.

The question arose because of the ambiguity of the definitions provided in the SDR Manual and what to do if a student started later than others in the same cohort. The initial advice from TEC though was pretty clear: *“if SAC-funded students cannot turn up on the official start dates of the programs, please report their actual start dates.”*

Then there was an onset of cold feet at the TEC Service Centre and the matter was escalated to the Ministry of Education. Weeks later and without any satisfactory explanation or indeed acknowledgement of who provided the final advice, the hapless personnel at the Service Centre had to reverse their earlier advice. The format of the changed advice was a sequence of often contradictory emails but it appears to come down to an instruction to use an “official” start date. So a student who enrolls a week late in an intake which started on 30 May should have an enrolment start date of 30 May.

Now this whole exercise illustrates several things:

- TEC and the Ministry don't play well together.
- The method of providing what presumably is supposed to be important and definitive advice is haphazard and confusing.
- There has been no attempt to present the advice in a simple and unambiguous manner.
- There is an element of “deniability” about the advice because it makes no reference to an authority, human or documentary.

Then, of course, there is the whole question of how much sense the advice makes. Here are a couple of things to think about.

- You have a FTTO contract. It runs for the whole year. Students can enrol at pretty much any date. What dates are you going to

use for an individual student – the dates of the contract or the student's actual dates?

- What dates do you use if you are providing distance education with rolling start dates?

TEC – Rules & Conditions

Which brings us neatly to the next article. Is it just us or do you find the TEC rules and conditions a trifle confusing? For example, try as hard as we could we can't find any TEC rule or condition that would cover the question of what enrolment dates to use where a student starts late.

What is the difference between a rule and a condition in any case?

Try going to the TEC web site and using the *Search* field to search for “Rules and Conditions” and what you will get is 12 apparently random rules and conditions. Click on one of those and you get what appears to be an index of rules and conditions that is as much use as an ashtray on a motorbike.

Click on, say, SAC051 – 100, and you get 50 rules and conditions which may or may not be related to each other and we still don't know the distinction between rule and condition!

It is a wonderfully extreme example of how not to communicate important information to your clients.

Rapture

You may have picked up on recent events relating to 6pm on Saturday 21 May. Whilst nothing came of Mr Camping's predictions you will be pleased to know that the Meta Office Help Desk did attempt to put a contingency plan in place.

Unfortunately we fell at the first hurdle which was to decide which of the two Richards was to stay and which was to go. After lengthy debate and much reflection it was decided that neither actually met the basic criteria for promotion to glory. Accordingly we both agreed to come to work on Monday. And we did, only to find that the office dog (Nessie, a West Highland Terrier for those of you who haven't met her) was gone leaving behind only her tartan collar and lead.

RESOURCE CENTRE
Frequent questions
Rules and conditions
ENR 001 - 050
ENR 051 - 100
ENR 101 upward
GEN
ITO
Literacy and Numeracy - all
MOR - all
SAC 001 - 050
SAC 051 - 100
SAC 101 - 150
SAC 351 - 400 and YGT
SAL and TEOC

TEC's idea of an index

Top Tips – SDR Follow Up

Now almost everyone has completed the April 2011 SDR it might be useful to follow up on some of the issues that arose. That way you may have an easier experience when doing the August 2011 SDR! So here are a number of issues in no particular order.

1. You can be assured that at most SDR rounds (and always at the April round) one or more of the TEC/Ministry of Education systems will fail. This time there were problems with the EESA login and delays in approving changes to the qualification and course registers. The moral of the story is **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY BEFORE THE FINAL DUE DATE**. Run trial SDRs well in advance of the SDR round itself and then start work on your actual SDR on the first possible day. For the August SDR round that will be 1 September 2011. Put it in your diary now. (Sorry to be so bossy but this really is the best advice we can give you!)
2. Some years ago quite a lot of country codes were phased out. The ones that still cause grief are ENG (England), HIL (Scotland), NID (Northern Ireland), WAL (Wales), and IOM (Isle of Man). All of these have been replaced by GBR (United Kingdom).

It would be wise to check the list of country codes stored in your external lookups (found in the Administration Module, System Management) and delete the phased out codes. Simply select the record and use the *Delete* key on your keyboard.

Code	Country	Domestic
VIR	USA Virgin Islands	<input type="checkbox"/>
VNM	Viet Nam	<input type="checkbox"/>
VUT	Vanuatu	<input type="checkbox"/>
WAL	Wales	<input type="checkbox"/>
WFLI	Wallis and Futuna	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Error 391 (COMPLETE is 0 for more than three consecutive SDR periods) was the subject of every second call to our help desk. This error has crept up on us through the actual validation being modified by TEC to close an apparent validation loophole. The bottom line is this. If you report a course completion code of 0 (i.e. an extension) you must subsequently – and not later than fourth SDR round after the 0 was first reported – report a “final” course completion code, namely 2, 3, or 4. A factor that also affected how often error 391 was occurring has been where a provider changed the start date of a course enrolment AFTER the enrolment had been reported in a December SDR. Changing enrolment dates after year-end is always going to cause grief.

There is a useful report in Take2 to help you identify records that have an extension and it can be found in the *Outcome Reports* category under *General Reports* in the Main Module. The report is called “By Course Completion Outcome” and it allows you to filter for a specific course completion code. Enter “0” here:

Course Completion Code:

Then move to the *Dates* filter and enter a *Course Finishing From* date range that encompasses the four months from a year prior to the SDR round you are reporting. For example, when you do your August 2011 SDR you would enter 01/05/2010 to 31/08/2010 in this date range.

Course Finishing From: To:

Any records that appear on the report must be changed from code 0 to 2, 3, or 4 before submitting your SDR.

4. The qualification completion file can sometimes cause problems – especially in the April SDR. Every SDR that you submit must comprise five txt files and one of those must be the QUAL (qualification completion) file. For many providers there are no qualification completions recorded in the first four months of the year and so, when they extract the SDR files from Take2, they will be alerted to the fact that there are no qualification completions. Cunningly, though, Take2 goes ahead and creates a QUAL file anyhow. It’s just that the file contains no data and is therefore 0 KB in size. Think of this file a “placeholder”. It contains no data but allows you to satisfy the requirement to submit a QUAL file.

There’s just one catch, though, and that is that a QUAL file with no data can only be submitted in a zip file. What this means is that you must zip up all five SDR files and submit them in this way on the STEO web site.

SDR Files

Student File

Enrolment File

Course Register File

Completion File

Course Completion File

Qualification Completion File

Qualification Completion File

Single Zip File

Single Zip File



Just one little problem here, though, may be that some browsers (Firefox) actually grey out the *Single Zip File* option. If that is the case for you will have to use Internet Explorer to be able to get the job done.