

ACE DATA TRANSFER

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS

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What is the ACE Automated Data Transfer facility?

This is a new facility built into ACE to transfer both Apprentice basic information and achievement evidence from their Personal Learning Record (PLR) which are part of the Learning Record Service (LRS) database which is managed by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The aim of this new facility is to not only save both time and money for all who use ACE but also reduce instances of human error.

The information is transferred in two stages. Firstly, upon entering the Apprentice's names and Unique Learner Number (ULN) ACE will search for a matching PLR. If successful the Apprentice's Date of Birth, address and email will be transferred into ACE and populate the Apprentice's record.

Following completion of other sections of the ACE record, you will be able to initiate the second search. In doing so ACE will search the Apprentice's PLR record for qualifications required by their Apprenticeship Framework. Details of relevant achieved qualifications will then be saved into the ACE record providing verified completion evidence. This search will reduce the need to scan and upload evidence to the ACE record. Any qualification/s that are not successfully found with this search will require the achievement evidence to be scanned and uploaded as was previously the case.

Do I have to use the ACE Automated Data Transfer facility?

No you do not have to use the ACE Automated Data Transfer facility. The PLR database has only been around since summer 2008 so any qualification achieved prior to this date are unlikely to have been recorded. You can use ACE in the old way by manually completing the mandatory fields of the record and scan any achievement evidence. However we do recommend that you use this new facility as often as you can as not only will it save time but it will reduce the chance of any human errors.

How do I use the ACE Automated Data Transfer/Will I need a new or separate log in?

The ACE Automatic Data Transfer facility is built into the ACE system and therefore you do not need a new login but you will need to login to ACE as you would do normally. There have been minimal changes to ACE however the Framework and Certification Evidence tabs are two tabs where you will notice some changes. You will be able to make use of the data transfer by using the Apprentice's ULN accompanied by their forename and surname. A guidance document is available to take you through each stage of the process.

Can I still use the Bulk Upload facility?

Yes the Bulk Upload facility will continue to work removing the need for the first search for Apprentice basic information. Complete the bulk upload spreadsheet and load to ACE which will create the ACE records as was the case before, if you require further information on how to use the bulk upload facility please refer to the guidance on ACE. To use the data transfer facility to check for achievement evidence you will need to individually verify each ACE record from with the Basic Information tab.

What are the benefits of using the ACE Automated Data Transfer facility?

There are several benefits to using the ACE Automatic Data Transfer facility. We foresee that it will reduce time spent in populating fields within the ACE record, scanning and uploading evidence. We also anticipate that there will be reduced instances of human error which would previously have resulted in a rejection and delays in receiving the Apprenticeship Completion Certificate.

Will the Apprentice's personal details be downloaded?

Yes, in the initial search of the PLR the Apprentice's basic information will be transferred to the Apprentice's ACE record. This includes the Apprentice's Date of Birth, Address and where available the Apprentice's email. You will still be required to enter the remaining mandatory fields of the Basic Information, Employer and Identifiers tabs. In completing this initial search ACE will also lock the name and ULN fields. Any change to these locked fields will require a new search to validate the details entered.

In the second search carried out by ACE, no personal details are transferred, only the verification of relevant achieved qualifications. Although the personal details will be used to verify that correct PLR is being searched.

What information will be transferred to ACE?

In the initial search carried out by ACE it is only the Apprentice's basic information transferred across from the PLR.

If a matching PLR is found and verified the second search will transfer relevant achievement qualification details and these details will appear under the LRS Validation – Achievement banner within the Certification Evidence tab. This will not be a file to download but the key information is displayed for users. This information includes:

- Qualification title
- Achievement date
- Qualification level/grade
- QAN (where appropriate)

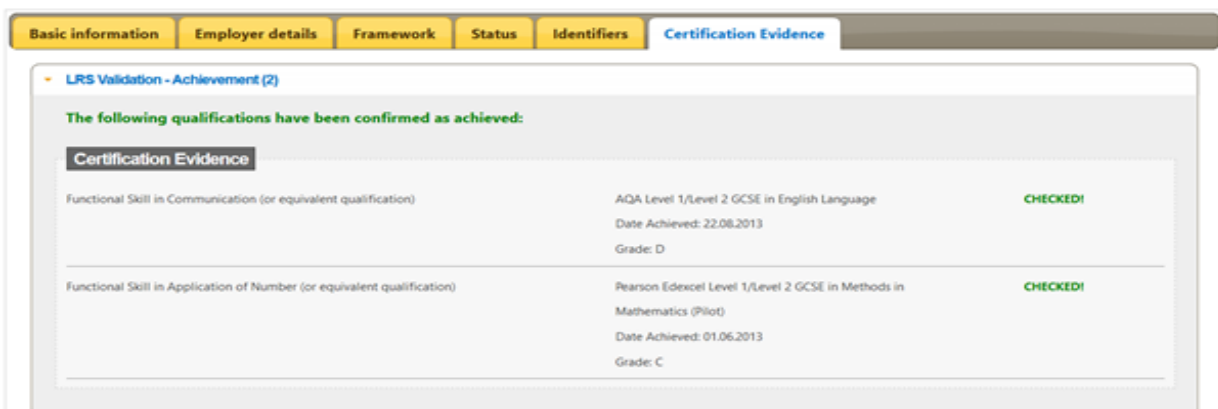
If the qualification search is unsuccessful, an error message will appear under the LRS Validation – Incomplete or missing evidence banner explaining that the qualification could not be found or was found but some validation information was missing, such as an award date.

How will the information be displayed?

The basic information search will display the information as it always has been within ACE with the many of fields being auto-populated for you.

The qualification search returns either qualification achievement information or a message to say why the search has been unable to validate a qualification.

Successful search for qualifications

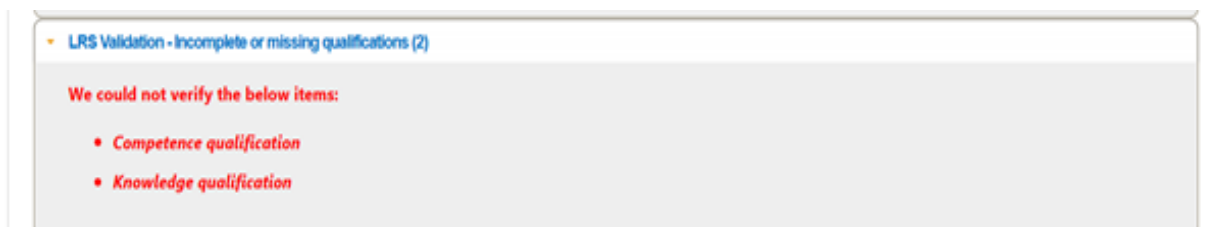


The screenshot shows a web interface with a navigation bar containing tabs: Basic information, Employer details, Framework, Status, Identifiers, and Certification Evidence. The 'Certification Evidence' tab is active. Below the navigation bar, there is a section titled 'LRS Validation - Achievement (2)'. Under this section, a message states: 'The following qualifications have been confirmed as achieved:'. Below this message is a table with the following data:

Certification Evidence		
Functional Skill in Communication (or equivalent qualification)	AQA Level 1/Level 2 GCSE in English Language Date Achieved: 22.08.2013 Grade: D	CHECKED!
Functional Skill in Application of Number (or equivalent qualification)	Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE in Methods in Mathematics (Pilot) Date Achieved: 01.06.2013 Grade: C	CHECKED!

If the search returns the checked message as shown above then the qualification meets the requirements of both SASE and the Federation.

Unsuccessful search for qualifications



The screenshot shows a web interface with a navigation bar containing tabs: Basic information, Employer details, Framework, Status, Identifiers, and Certification Evidence. The 'Certification Evidence' tab is active. Below the navigation bar, there is a section titled 'LRS Validation - Incomplete or missing qualifications (2)'. Under this section, a message states: 'We could not verify the below items:'. Below this message is a list of items:

- Competence qualification
- Knowledge qualification

If the return shows a message such as the above then the search either found no qualifications or a qualification was found but verification was unable to take place due to some missing information such as the award date. In these cases you will need to manually upload the evidence, as you always have done, into the Additional Evidence for upload section.

How will I know if there has been a problem with the ACE Automated Data Transfer?

Both searches should take a few seconds to complete, though this will be dependent upon your internet connection and speed. If the search fails to find either the Apprentice basic information or qualification achievement information you will receive an error message (see here for further details) to explain what the issue has been and how to resolve it.

If the search doesn't return any response within a few minutes there may be an undiscovered issue and as such please contact the ACE Support Team for further advice.

What if the qualification was achieved outside of England?

Unfortunately these qualifications are not recorded in the PLR database. However if the qualification is SASE compliant then a copy of the achievement evidence will need to be manually uploaded to ACE.

Where does the data originate from?

The data comes from the Apprentice's Personal Learning Record (PLR) which is held on the Learning Record Services database (LRS) which is hosted and managed by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESfA). Since 2008, the LRS have issued all learners, aged 14 and above, with a 10 digit Unique Learner Number (ULN) which they retain for their entire journey through the education and training sector in England.

Historically, data was uploaded to the LRS database from a number of sources. However, since 2013 Awarding Organisations (AOs) have directly started to upload achievement data to the PLR. Previously, data on the PLR was primarily supplied by the Department for Education and the Skills Funding Agency but data completion was not always fully completed or timely. As such, some of the earlier data on PLRs (i.e. pre 2013) may not be complete enough to provide the required level of compliance and robustness that is required to verify learner achievements, as part of an Apprenticeship Completion Claim made using ACE. In these cases, the automated data transfer of verified information, from the PLR into ACE, will not be possible and a manual upload of suitable evidence will be required.

What if I do not have the Apprentice's ULN?

If you do not have a learner's ULN then you can either:-

- Try to obtain it from either the learner themselves, the relevant Awarding Organisation or contact the LRS Service Desk for further advice or;
 - Complete an Apprenticeship Completion Certificate claim on ACE without using the automated transfer facility, which means the ULN is not a requirement. This means that all achievement evidence will have to be manually uploaded to ACE, as was previously the case.
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What do I do if I have the wrong ULN?

A ULN is a 10 digit number so anything less than this will not be accepted as a valid ULN by ACE or the LRS database. You may not realise you have an incorrect ULN until you attempt to use the automated data transfer facility in ACE. If there is a problem with the learner's ULN then the link between ACE and the LRS database will return a system error such as:- "The ULN was not found or does not match the Apprentice name entered". In this case you should double check that the ULN that you have entered is for the named Apprentice and that you have entered it correctly and that it is not simply a data entry error. Likewise, you should also check the forename and surname details that have been entered into ACE and ensure that there are no spelling errors.

If you are still unable to resolve the issue then you can either contact the LRS Service Desk for further advice or you can simply choose to complete an Apprenticeship Completion Certificate claim on ACE without using the automated transfer facility, which means the ULN is not a requirement. This means that all achievement evidence will have to be manually uploaded to ACE, as was previously the case.

What if no learner data can be found on the LRS Database?

If you have a valid ULN for a learner, and you enter this in ACE in order to check their PLR, then you may get an error displayed telling you that the ULN was not found or doesn't match the Apprentice name entered into ACE.

If, after double checking, you can find no errors with the data that has been entered into ACE, then it means that no learner data has been found on the LRS database that matches the details you have entered. In these cases, you will be unable to use the new automated data transfer facility but can still use ACE to make an Apprenticeship claim by manually uploading the required learner achievement evidence, as was previously the case.

What if not all of the relevant qualifications for the Apprentice's framework are found on their PLR?

When you select the Apprentice's framework details in ACE, the system automatically knows what specific qualifications are acceptable and these are the ones that it looks for on the learner's PLR. However, even if it finds a matching qualification on the PLR, it will also check that all the required data is present. This is to ensure that the PLR entry can provide robust, reliable evidence of the learner's full achievement of the qualification and that it matches any grade/level/date achieved criteria required by SASE. If any of the required validation data is missing, for example an award date or grade/level, then the learner's achievement for that qualification cannot be fully verified. In these cases the qualification data will not be transferred into ACE and suitable achievement evidence will need to be manually uploaded to ACE. However, the PLR search may be able to verify some of the qualifications required by the Apprentice's framework and data relating to them will be transferred into ACE. You will no longer have to manually upload evidence for any qualifications that can be fully verified by the PLR and are marked as "Checked!" in ACE.

Are learner's PLRs kept up-to-date?

Awarding Organisations are required to upload their learner achievement data within 10 days of the qualification being awarded. Since 2013, the quality and completeness of data uploaded to PLRs has much improved. Qualifications achieved prior to summer 2008 are unlikely to be recorded on a PLR as the LRS database did not exist prior to this date. If you find that PLRs are not up-to-date then please contact the relevant Awarding Organisation to discuss this with them.

How long does it take to carry out a PLR search for achievement data?

The search of the PLR, from ACE, should only take a matter of seconds and the search outcome will be clearly displayed in ACE, on the Framework Tab. Further information on search results will be found on the Certification Evidence Tab.

The speed of the search will be dependent on your available specific internet speed and broadband capabilities. Maintenance work, or technical issues, with the LRS database itself will also have an impact on the searching and data transfer facility. Whenever possible, we will notify you of any interruptions to the operation of the ACE data transfer facility.

If you believe that the new PLR search facility is not working as expected then please contact the ACE Support Team to discuss this further.

Can we rely on the information downloaded from the PLR?

The new data transfer facility between ACE and the LRS database has a series of built in “business rules” which clearly set out how the search has to be undertaken, what personal and qualification data is being looked for and what specific data validation checks are required. This is to ensure data being transferred is for the correct Apprentice and that it is both relevant to, and compliant with, their framework requirements. If an Apprentice’s name and ULN are marked with a padlock symbol in ACE, then this is your assurance that their PLR has been found and checked and that their key personal data matches. Any qualification data marked as “Checked!” in ACE has been fully verified by the Apprentice’s PLR and in these cases no further achievement evidence is required.

One area where PLR data may not be fully up-to-date is the Apprentice’s current address and contact details. Training Providers are more likely to have the most up-to-date details for these fields. We recommend that where an Apprentice’s home address and contact details are automatically completed with data from their PLR (i.e. not from a bulk upload or manually entered by a Training Provider) then this should be double checked to confirm its accuracy. Any amendments required can be made directly in the ACE record. However, this will not update the information in their PLR.

Will the data transfer facility work with any web browser?

Yes, the new facility has been designed to work with the most commonly used web browsers such as Internet Explorer, Chrome and Firefox. If you are experiencing any operational issues then, in the first instance, please talk to your own internal IT Support team as they may be able to troubleshoot the issue for you. However, if this is not possible, or successful, then please contact the ACE Support Team to discuss the issue further.

What do I do if I get an error message?

The new facility has been designed to return a number of system messages for the most likely errors. For example, where no matching learner record can be found on the LRS database or matching qualifications were found but they cannot be fully verified.

Below is a list of the most common error messages and their meanings and what action you need to take. If you are still unsure what to do, or the error persists, then please contact the ACE Support Team for further help and guidance.

If you receive any other system error messages then please make a note of what it says and what you were doing when it appeared and send this to the ACE Support Team who will investigate it further.

Possible error messages:

Message appears stating:	Meaning and possible action required
The ULN was not found or doesn't match the Apprentice name entered. Please ensure the Forename, Surname and ULN are entered exactly as they appear on the Personal Learning Record (PLR)	Double check the ULN and Name fields are correct and the ULN is for the named Apprentice.
Some or all of the qualifications required for this framework have not been achieved. Please check the 'Certificate Evidence' tab for more information. If you believe the qualification has been achieved, please speak to the relevant Awarding Body to ensure the Personal Learning Record is up-to-date.	Double check the framework details you have entered are correct as an inconsistency with the framework will mean a search for the wrong qualifications is carried out. If you believe these to be correct, check the PLR as to whether the qualification is available and if not contact the Awarding Organisation
EXAMPLE QUALIFICATION 606/1234/X was found however the Achievement date has not been recorded. If you believe the qualification has been achieved, please speak to the relevant Awarding Body to ensure the Personal Learning Record is up-to-date.	If the Achievement/Award date has not been recorded then the qualification is unacceptable. If the qualification has been achieved by the learner you will need to discuss this with the Awarding Organisation to ensure that the PLR record is accurate.
EXAMPLE QUALIFICATION 606/1234/X was found however the grade does not meet SASE requirements. Please ensure you have entered the start date correctly and try again. Alternatively, please upload alternative evidence.	Some grade achieved criteria changed in the new Transferable Skills guidance. If the start date of the Apprentice is pre the April 2015 then you will need to refer to the old guidelines. You will therefore need to double check the start date, or upload a suitable alternative qualification.
EXAMPLE QUALIFICATION 606/1234/X was found however it does not meet SASE date achieved criteria relating to the Apprentice's start date. Please ensure you have entered the correct start date and try again. Alternatively, please upload suitable, compliant evidence.	Check the start date of the Apprentice is correct. If the Apprentice started prior to 6th April 2015 then the old Transferable Skills requirements are applied which had date achieved criteria. Double check you have entered the correct start date, if this is correct you will need to upload compliant evidence based on these guidelines.
EXAMPLE QUALIFICATION 606/1234/X was found however it was achieved before the start date of the Apprenticeship. Please ensure you have entered the start date correctly and try again. Alternatively, please upload alternative evidence.	Competency qualifications must be completed as part of the Apprenticeship. Double check you have entered the start date correctly and ensure that the qualification is on the PLR (Awarding Organisations may not have updated the PLR record as yet). If you believe the start date to be correct and the record is not yet available on the PLR please discuss this with the Awarding Organisation.