

December 2011

National Office

Level 12, Public Trust Building
117-125 Lambton Quay
PO Box 1666
Wellington
New Zealand

Phone: 0-4-463 8000
Fax: 0-4-463 8001
www.minedu.govt.nz

File: NSIReplacement_Advisory01

Dear Education Provider

Replacing the National Student Index

The Ministry of Education is leading a cross-agency project to replace the National Student Index (NSI), to take advantage of developments in technology, solution architecture and master data management. This project was recently approved and is now being initiated.

We are committed to maintaining a transparent and consultative approach for the NSI replacement project, involving your organisation at relevant points.

I attach a set of Frequently Asked Questions relating to the project. We are happy to answer any other questions you may have.

Further information and regular updates will be provided as the project progresses.

If you would like to discuss this project, please contact the project team at NSIReplacementFeedback@minedu.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely,

Leanne Gibson
Chair, ICT Management Committee
Chief Information Officer, Ministry of Education

Copies of this letter have been sent to the following in your organisation:

- Vice Chancellor/Chief Executive or other nominated (to TEC) contact
- NSI users
- Agency (TEC, NZQA and StudyLink) Chief Information Officers

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1: What is the purpose of the NSI replacement project?

A1: To take advantage of developments in technology, solution architecture and master data management to ensure the NSI can:

- cope with changing demands on it going forward,
- better support the way in which it can be used, and
- better support the improvements needed in data quality.

Q2: What will the NSI replacement project deliver?

A2: The NSI replacement project intends to deliver:

- a replacement NSI application that will:
 - continue to provide the mechanism through which unique numbers are assigned to each individual learner in New Zealand
 - continue to be the register of core learner identity data
 - provide, as a minimum, the same functionality as the current NSI, plus any new and enhanced functionality identified during the requirements gathering phase (see Q5 below) that is prioritised for inclusion
- business process improvements (where sensible)
- user training for the replacement application, to embed business process changes and support improvements in data quality on an ongoing basis.

Further details will be provided as the project progresses.

Q3: What is the timeframe for this project?

A3: The implementation project started in November 2011. The replacement NSI is currently scheduled to be ready for implementation in May 2013.

Q4: What is the current status of the project?

A4: The project and its funding were formally approved in November 2011.

Q5: What work has been done to date / is currently underway?

A5: Earlier in the year the Ministry of Education released a Request for Proposal (RFP) on the Government Electronic Tender Service (GETS) website for a supplier to deliver a replacement NSI solution. A preferred supplier has been selected and contract negotiations are well underway.

In parallel, work has been undertaken to ensure the project is ready for the supplier when they come on board (currently anticipated to be in early 2012). Specifically to:

- formally set up the project (including a communications plan)
- refine requirements
- analyse data quality issues associated with the NSI
- develop plans to clean up existing 'dirty' NSI data and address data quality issues / support improvements in data quality going forward.

Q6: How will the NSI Replacement project affect me / my organisation?

A6: The replacement NSI will impact on you/your organisation, in terms of how you use the application and how your systems (SMS) interface with it.

It is intended that the replacement NSI will be 'backwards compatible' for a fixed period of time (the 'sun-down' period). This means developing it in such a way as to ensure that existing systems (for example, SMSs) will be able to talk with it in exactly the same way as they talk with the current NSI, with changes to these systems only being required after that sundown period expires. The duration of this 'sun-down' period will be determined, in liaison with your organisation and your SMS vendor, during the design phase of the project, currently scheduled for May through to July 2012.

We know the amount of time we give you to adjust your systems is crucial and we will work through this with you accordingly, as a priority, to ensure:

- we fully understand the impact of any changes
- the changes do not place undue burdens
- that the timeframes (sundown period) for you to adjust your systems are agreed and acceptable, and
- that we get the best possible outcomes for you.

We will engage with you/your organisation in due course about training and user support.

Q7: Who will fund the required changes?

A7: The project will fund the costs of replacement NSI application, including some investment to ensure that education providers are able to continue using their existing interfaces for the sun-down period. The project is looking for an approach that does not place undue burdens (including costs) on education providers. However, any changes to your organisation's systems (including your SMS) will need to be funded either by your organisation or your SMS vendor, as agreed between you.

Q8: What do I need to do now?

A8: Nothing, other than be aware of the NSI replacement project, and look out for our project updates starting in the New Year.

Q9: How do I find out more?

A9: We will provide regular progress updates during the course of the project, through one or all of the following:

- the NSI replacement project page on the Ministry of Education website [yet to be established]
- the Welcome page of STEO and the NSI application
- email
- other communication mechanisms / vehicles – to be determined.

Alternatively, please direct any questions to
NSIReplacementFeedback@minedu.govt.nz

Q10: How does this project fit with the other central government initiatives such as the Tertiary Learner Event Collection (TLEC)?

A10: The TLEC project is a Tertiary Education Commission initiative to collect core learner events and other information from tertiary education providers. This will consolidate numerous interactions already in place, including decommissioning the Single Data Return (SDR) system. TLEC will use NSI to validate student details. The TLEC project is currently consulting with the sector and forming its requirements.

The NSI and TLEC projects are part of the Tertiary Information Future State (TIFS) programme. This is a joint-agency initiative by the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Commission, New Zealand Qualifications Authority and StudyLink to align improvements to how students and education providers interact with these agencies.

The combination of NSI, TLEC and other projects in the TIFS programme will provide timely, useful and reliable information relating tertiary activities to the outcomes they achieve to enable insights, inform decisions and effect positive change. Behind the scenes the four agencies are working together to maximise the benefits for, and to reduce the data burden on education providers.

Q11: How can we find out more about TIFS and TLEC?

A11: Please direct any questions to tifsprogramme@tec.govt.nz.