A2C

The Exams Office Conference
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Chris Wiltshire

A2C Programme Director

Agenda

- What is A2C?
- Pilot results
- Focus on vocational qualifications
- Integrated transport rollout
- Implications for centres

What is A2C?

A2C was designed to replace

- JCQ EDI format for GQ (Electronic Data Interchange)
- Pearson's Edifact format for Edexcel
- City & Guilds Walled Garden file upload (UK)
- multitude of CSV files, etc
- alternative to having to use AO websites

so that a centre can manage all their exam processes in one place (from within their MIS) using similar processes regardless of which exam board and type of qualification.

Governance

- The A2C specification is owned by JCQ which represents the GQ AOs (AQA, OCR, Pearson, WJEC, CCEA and SQA) and C&G

- FAB AOs have been consulted and NCFE is now involved in the governance of A2C

- Supported by DfE and departments in Wales, NI and Scotland

- Supported by all regulators

- Conforms to DfE's Information Standards Board data model

- Aligned with other systems and developments within the Education and Children's Services sector (data exchange, HEDIPP, EFA, Ofqual register, LRS, etc)

- Supported by AoC, EOA, et al

A2C Plan

- A2C was proposed in 2010
- Migration App delivered in 2012 – achieved cost savings at earliest opportunity
- Spec for the new system finalised Jan 2015
- AO and MIS development and testing
- Pilot October 2015 - February 2016

Pilot

- CCEA, WJEC and OCR

- 15 schools using SIMS

- C2K in NI; Cardiff and Gwynedd in Wales

- GCSE Maths and English, Functional Skills, Welsh Bacc

- All entries processed and results returned in A2C

Pilot Findings

- A2C spec is fit for purpose

Lessons

- Feedback to Capita on MIS interface
- Works well for new AO systems but some qualifications for some AOs require manual interventions for legacy AO systems which would not be sustainable for a full rollout at this time
- Better to split the upgrade to switch transport from the Migration App to the MIS *before* switching to A2C functionality
- Spec refined in January 2016

A2C Direction

- Original intention was to focus on general qualifications first and to replace EDI
- The AOs have different markets, different drivers and different constraints
- MIS have different markets, different drivers and different constraints
- The rollout plan was dependent on all GQ AOs wanting to move at the same time and on at least the major MIS implementing A2C at the same time
- Takes time to rollout MIS and for centres to switch even once MIS are compliant
- The most tangible benefits are in the vocational arena
- Although more complex, Vocational easier to rollout – fewer constraints and less risk
- GQ easier to implement once MIS rolled out

JCQ Statement

Following a review of the A2C programme, the JCQ board has agreed that JCQ awarding organisations will support:

- rollout of an integrated transport to replace the A2C Migration Application.

- using the new A2C message formats for vocational qualifications.

Some of the JCQ awarding organisations have stated an intention to move to the new A2C message formats for general qualifications (GCSE and GCE) and some have not.

General Qualifications (GCSE and GCE)

Pearson and CCEA are planning a GQ pilot with Capita SIMS starting September 2018.

WJEC, OCR and AQA will continue to use JCQ EDI format for GQ.

Vocational Qualifications

The new A2C message format will initially be used for the following vocational qualifications:

- Pearson's (Edexcel) vocational qualifications for schools and colleges (including BTECs)

- All City & Guilds qualifications

- OCR's vocational qualifications

- All NCFE qualifications

- SQA vocational qualifications (also GQ over A2C transport)

AQA, WJEC, CCEA do not offer significant vocational qualifications.

Vocational Rollout

- Other FAB awarding organisations are developing A2C solutions and will inform their customers when they are ready
  - Portico will have A2C compliant system for SQA
  - Creatio new entries functionality which will be A2C
- The focus on VQ makes it easier to rollout incrementally and does **not** require:
  - all AOs to go together or
  - all MIS to implement A2C at the same time
  - all centres for an MIS to switch at the same time
  - for a centre to switch all AOs at the same time

VQ Timescales

- 2018-2019
  - Pearson, OCR, NCFE pilot from September 2018
  - SQA aiming for 2018
  - C&G during 2018-19
- 2019 and 2020
  - VQ rollout
- Testing May-Dec 2017
- User testing Jan-Aug 2018

Integrated Transport

- Replaces Migration App

- Centres can send entries and receive results directly from MIS without having to export/import files

- Updated encryption to latest standards

Still using JCQ EDI message format

Transport Timescale

- AOs ready to support rollout now
- A few centres will be upgraded between Feb (entries) and Aug (results).
- Suppliers that are ready will be upgrading centres from September 2017

Why Now?

- Pilot demonstrated that switching transport first de-risks A2C switchover

- Easier for exams officers – no need to use Migration Application

- Removes failure point – exporting/importing files between MIS and Mig App

Transport Switchover

- No need to change access keys.

- You do not need to switchover immediately. If you prefer to carry on with Migration App you can do so until it's convenient to switch.

- Your MIS supplier will advise on detailed procedure and provide support.

- AOs will provide support with access keys e.g. forgotten passwords

Basedata & Catalogues

There **will** be a mix of EDI and A2C

In order to mitigate the impact on centres, JCQ is proposing to convert basedata to A2C product catalogue format.

MIS are encouraged to deliver product catalogue browsers.

You will be able to use A2C product catalogues even for AOs using EDI and even if MIS haven't fully implemented A2C.

Product Catalogue Browser

- Gives users a consistent view of products regardless of whether they are EDI or A2C.
- Catalogues will be enhanced with data from JCQ, Ofqual, DfE.
- Delivers benefits of A2C catalogues as early as possible.
- No need to import data from other sources.
- Orders, amendments and results would still be in EDI for AOs not supporting A2C, but MIS believe this could be almost transparent to Exam Officers.

Advice (mostly GQ)

For GCSE/GCE you will have a choice:

1. remain on EDI for all AOs and continue using basedata as at present

2. use A2C catalogues but continue to use EDI for entries (if supported by MIS)

3. switch to A2C for some AOs (initially Pearson)

For transport:

- either switch to MIS integrated transport or

- continue using the Migration Application

Advice (Vocational)

If you have significant numbers of vocational qualifications there is more incentive to switch to A2C, particularly if these are with multiple AOs.

- retire
  - Edifact for Pearson VQ
  - C&G Walled Garden format
  - JCQ EDI use for VQ
  - AO extranets
- Entries and results through your MIS for C&G, NCFE and potentially many more
- use Product Catalogue browser for non-A2C GQ
- Flexibility to switch to A2C for Pearson VQ but remain on EDI for Pearson GQ if you want all GQ on EDI.

Communications

Thank you for your feedback from the conference registration.

More regular and targeted communication now we are in the implementation phase.

The main form of communication will be through your MIS supplier.

JCQ will shortly be updating and improving the A2C website.

JCQ will send a programme update to the NCN contacts before the summer.

Questions

Available during coffee break today

Email: a2cenquiries@jcq.org.uk

Talk to your supplier