

Circular Number: FE 12/26

Date of Issue: 03 September 2026

Subject: Collection and Coding of Previous Institution Data

Target Audience:

- Principals of Further Education
- FE College MIS

Summary of Contents:

This circular provides guidance on the collection and coding of the previous institution the learner attended prior to attending the FE College.

Enquiries:

Any enquiries about the contents of this circular should be addressed to:

Further Education Sector Performance
Department for the Economy
Adelaide House
39-49 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8FD

Related Documents: None

Superseded Documents: None

Expiry Date: **This circular will remain in effect until otherwise notified by the Department.**

Website: www.economy-ni.gov.uk

E-Mail: fe.sectorperformance@economy-ni.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This circular provides guidance to Further Education (FE) Colleges on the collection and coding of the previous institution attended by an individual prior to attending an FE College.
- 1.2 A previous institution may be a school, college or other education or training provider.
- 1.3 The guidance applies to the following Consolidated Data Return (CDR) fields:
 - **PREV_INST_CODE** (Previous Institution Code)
 - **PREV_INST_NAME** (Previous Institution Name)
- 1.4 The aim of this guidance is to improve completeness, consistency and comparability of previous institution data to support sectoral analysis and reporting.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Previous institution information has historically been collected by FE Colleges to support learner tracking and sectoral reporting. Prior to the implementation of the current Learner Management System (LMS), the coding of previous institutions was managed locally by individual colleges, resulting in variations in coding structures and naming conventions across the sector.
- 2.2 As part of the implementation of the current LMS, the sector introduced a standardised approach to the coding of previous institutions. This included the introduction of common previous institution codes and names for use across all FE Colleges.
- 2.3 The Department is issuing this circular to reaffirm the requirement to collect previous institution information for specified learner cohorts and formalise the agreed sector approach to coding and reporting previous institution data within the Consolidated Data Return (CDR).

3. SCOPE OF REQUIREMENT

3.1 Colleges are required to capture previous institution information for:

- All full-time learners
- Entitlement Framework (EF) learners
- Any other learner cohorts specified by the Department for reporting or programme monitoring purposes

3.2 Where previous institution information is required, Colleges must record both PREV_INST_CODE and PREV_INST_NAME in accordance with the coding guidance set out in this circular.

4. CODING FOR MIS

4.1 To ensure consistency across the sector, Colleges must use a standard value set for previous institutions within their Learner Management System (LMS). Each previous institution must be assigned a unique PREV_INST_CODE, with the corresponding PREV_INST_NAME recorded using the standardised institution name. Codes and names must be applied consistently across all learner records.

4.2 Each previous institution will be assigned one of the following institution types.

Value	Description
1	Further Education
2	Grammar
3	Independent
4	Nursery
5	Preps
6	Primary
7	ROI School
8	Secondary
9	Special

4.3 The coding approach for previous institutions is set out below.

4.4 For individuals who previously attended a Northern Ireland school, previous institution codes and names will be based on the Institution Reference Number and Name published in the **Department of Education Schools Plus directory** <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/services/schools-plus>. Institution types will be those assigned by the Schools Plus directory.

Example:

PREV_INST_CODE	PREV_INST_NAME
121-0022	Belfast Boys' Model School

4.5 For individuals who previously attended a Northern Ireland Further Education College, previous institution codes and names will be as follows. Institution type will be 'Further Education'.

PREV_INST_CODE	PREV_INST_NAME
BMC	Belfast Metropolitan College
NRC	Northern Regional College
NWRC	North West Regional College
SERC	South Eastern Regional College
SRC	Southern Regional College
SWC	South West College
CAFRE1	CAFRE (Enniskillen)
CAFRE2	CAFRE (Greenmount)
CAFRE3	CAFRE (Loughry)

4.6 For individuals who previously attended a Republic of Ireland school, previous institution codes and names will be based on the sector-agreed consolidated list as defined in the CDR data dictionary. Institution type will be 'ROI School'.

Example:

PREV_INST_CODE	PREV_INST_NAME
ROI002	Abbey Vocational School

- 4.7 For individuals who previously attended an institution that is not included within the sector reference dataset, the previous institution code 'OTHER' must be used and the previous institution name recorded as 'Other School Not Listed'.
- 4.8 Colleges must not create local previous institution codes where a standard code exists.
- 4.9 Colleges must ensure that the previous institution codes and names held within their systems remain aligned with the reference datasets set out in this guidance and make any necessary amendments to support the collection of data for specified learner cohorts.
- 4.10 Validation rules will be provided to support implementation of the requirement.

5. VALIDATION AND AUDIT

- 5.1 Colleges are responsible for ensuring that this guidance is implemented in full and that previous institution data is recorded accurately and maintained throughout the academic year.