# The Unique Learner Number (ULN)

## Factsheet for HE Provider Admissions

**What is the Unique Learner Number?**

The ULN is a unique 10-digit identifier allocated to the majority of learners aged 13+ and above in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is allocated by schools and colleges through the Learning Records Service (part of the Skills Funding Agency) and is designed to follow an individual throughout their education.

**What is the Unique Learner Number currently being used for?**

* The ULN is the key to the student’s Personal Learning Record (PLR). The PLR gives both students, and organisations registered with the Learning Records Service (LRS), access to a single on-line record of a student’s verified achievements.
* Many awarding bodies are using the ULN as the candidate number, printing the identifier on certificates.
* Awarding bodies upload verified qualifications to the Personal Learning Record, for example the GCSEs the individual has taken and their results.

**Why is the ULN being adopted in Higher Education?**

The ULN is a critical element in the vision of a joined up learning landscape in which robust data sharing is enabled and existing cross sector data collections are streamlined or rationalised. With over 20 million ULNs allocated in the FE sector in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, higher education is the gateway to completing the longitudinal journey of the identifier. The ULN is already being used by some HE providers and is collected by HESA and UCAS.

**How should we be using the ULN?**

The ULN is entered into UCAS Apply by the applicant and is supplied by UCAS to HE providers. The ULN should then be stored by HE providers in the student record system and returned to HESA in the Student or Alternative Provider student data return. UCAS is exploring the business case for including ULNs in the Awarding Body Linkage (ABL) file.

**Why should HEP admissions and students be using the ULN?**

Students:

* The ULN provides access to the Personal Learning Record (PLR) which is an on-line record of verified qualifications achieved since 2008. The benefits of the PLR to the student include:
	+ Enables students to share their achievement information
	+ Supports students planning future learning opportunities
	+ Improves the application and enrolment experience
* HE qualifications are not currently included on the PLR. Including the ULN in the higher education application will in the future enable HE qualifications to be written to the PLR, enabling students to view all their verified qualifications from school through to HE in one place.
* Having a complete record of verified qualifications online will allow students to share this information with employers and professional bodies who have registered as approved users with the LRS.
* Having a complete record of verified qualifications online removes the need to provide paper copies of certificates or replace lost exam certificates and, in future, transcripts.

Admissions:

* The ULN can be used to access the PLR and verify entry qualifications that are not available on the UCAS ABL file. This would reduce the need to collect paper copies of certificates.
* UCAS and the Learner Record Service are exploring how the ULN could be used to streamline applications to higher education.
* The ULN will facilitate improved linking and sharing of data enabling improved analysis of progression from schools, to FE, HE and finally (in some cases) into employment.

**Exceptions**

The Unique Learner Number will be adopted in phases. Initially the following exceptions apply:

1. Scottish domiciled students do not have a ULN, they use the Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) and international students will not be allocated ULNs yet.
2. Mature students who have not undertaken FE study since 2008 may not have been allocated a ULN.
3. Many students from independent schools will not have been allocated ULNs yet.

**Key links**

Further information on the adoption of the ULN by HE can be found at the following link:

[www.hediip.ac.uk/the-uln-in-he](http://www.hediip.ac.uk/the-uln-in-he/) or by contacting the Higher Education Data and Information Improvement Programme (HEDIIP) at info@hediip.ac.uk

General information on the Learning Records Service is on gov.uk at the following link:

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/learning-records-service](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/learning-records-service)

For a HE Provider to verify qualifications on the Learning Records Service you will need to register as a Learning Registration Body (LRB). The user guide for an LRB is available at the following link:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/learner-registration-bodies-user-guide](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/learner-registration-bodies-user-guide)

The application form for becoming an LRB is available at:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/lrs-registration-documents](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lrs-registration-documents)

It is the LRS Organisation Registration Form and LRS Learning Providers Agreement that will need to reviewed and completed.