
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

POST-PRIMARY ONLINE DATABASE

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Purpose

This note explains why it is necessary that the entry of a new entrant in a school on to the Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD) is limited to one year in advance of the student taking up enrolment in that school.

This note is not intended to alter in anyway the role and function of a school regarding its admission policy as provided for under the Education Act, 1998.

The necessity for placing a limitation of one year to the period in which schools may enter students onto P-POD in advance of the students taking up their enrolment in the school.

The Post-Primary Online Database (P-POD) is a database hosted by the Department of Education and Skills for the recording of student enrolments by individual schools. The enrolments for all 720 plus post-primary schools will be recorded on P-POD. The return date for enrolments to the Department in a school year is the 30th September. However, in advance of this date a parent/guardian may have applied for enrolment for their child in more than one school and have been accepted by more than one school. Therefore, before the 30th of September it is not possible to restrict the enrolment of students in a school year to just one school on P-POD. Neither is it possible to alert a school that a child is already enrolled in a different school without the consent of the parent/guardian to the sharing of such information.

Data management on P-POD

There are a number of data management and data protection issues which require a limitation to a period of one year for the entry of students onto P-POD before they take up their enrolment in the school, namely:-

- Data integrity
- Integration of the Primary Online Database with the Post-Primary Online Database
- Data Protection

Data integrity

As part of the requirements for the proper management of data on P-POD the Department will be requesting schools to remove the record of any prospective new student who has failed to take up enrolment in their school before the 30th September unless the school is instructed to do otherwise by the Education Welfare Service (formerly NEWB). The net effect on P-POD of parents applying to more than one school and accepting offers of a place will mean that a number of different Department Pupil Identity Numbers (DPINs) as allocated by the Department through P-POD will, at least on a temporary basis, have been assigned to the same student.

If enrolments were allowed to be keyed for a number of years in advance this would lead to a multiplicity of cases where the student has more than one DPIN and would add greatly to the complexity of data management and may undermine the integrity of data on the P-POD system.

Progression from Primary to Post-Primary and the development of a Learner Database

With the development of the Primary Online Database (POD) which is being piloted in 2014/15 with planned roll out to all schools for 2015/16 it will be possible for the student's data or a subset of it to travel with the student when he/she progresses from primary to post-primary. This integration of data between POD and P-POD allows for the development of a Learner Database to track progression, retention and for the better assessment of the effectiveness of various education policy outcomes. Again the recording of new entrants for a number of years in advance would mitigate against the effective development of a Learner Database and greatly add to the complexity of managing student records on P-POD.

Data Protection

Student data which is personal data must be obtained and processed in line with the provisions of the Data Protection Acts, 1988 and 2003. One of these provisions is that personal data may only be kept for specified purposes which are explicit and lawful. The purpose of entering enrolments on P-POD is to comply with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills for the reporting of student enrolments. The Department requires this data in order to validate the number of recognised students in a school. The number of recognised students is required for the allocation of teaching posts and funding and the capture of entrants for the State examinations.

The entering of students onto P-POD in the months leading up to the start of a school year in which the student is due to take up enrolment could be said to fall within the purposes of the P-POD database. However, entering children onto P-POD who may be a number of years away from taking up enrolment in a school would not fall within the purpose for which data is stored on P-POD and therefore would not be compatible with the provisions of the Data Protection Acts.

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