



Department  
for Education

# **Funding Information System (FIS) user guide 2025 to 2026**

**August 2025**

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## What is the Funding Information System (FIS)

FIS is a desktop application designed to help you prepare your ILR file for submission to the DFE through the 'Submit Learner Data' service. FIS includes an application program interface (API) which will indicate and allow updates via a simple downloadable link when:

- new reference data is available (usually twice per month)
- a new full version of FIS is available (these will now only be necessary if a change has taken place)
- there is also an improved facility to check for connection issues

You do not have to use FIS to prepare your file for submission, but some providers find it useful. It gives you a good idea of the quality of the data you have collected, and this generates provisional reports.

To do this, it uses most of the current year's validation rules to give you an idea of the errors and warnings your file may generate.

As reference data changes all the time, you may still find your file has some errors or warnings when you submit it, even if it does not have any in FIS.

## Data security

By using FIS, you take responsibility for the security of the data.

# Where to find the FIS download

## Things you need to have to download FIS

- Net Framework 4.6.1 - download this from [Microsoft](#)

## Download the latest version of FIS

Select the link to 'FIS (Funding Information Service)' from the tools and services menu on the [Submit Learner Data](#) sign in page. Or you can go direct to the FIS download page using: [FIS Tool](#).

Figure 1: Link for FIS

**GOV.UK** Submit learner data

**LIVE** Your [feedback \(opens in new tab\)](#) will help us improve the service.

## Submit learner data

This service is for organisations submitting, validating or viewing data for the following data collections:

Use this service to validate and submit:

- Individualised learner records (ILR)
- Earnings adjustment statements (EAS)
- ESF (European Social Fund) supplementary data
- Funding Claims
- further education staff and vacancy data
- further education governor data
- Skills Bootcamp contracts (SBC)
- Search for Employer identifiers using the new Employer Data Service

Devolved Authorities can download reports and upload reference data.

**Sign in**

**Before you start**

You'll need a [DFE Sign-in account](#) to use this service. Read about our [user roles and permissions](#).

### Help and support

Find further information at the [Customer Help Centre](#) where you can [read our help articles](#), talk to our Community, chat to our [Virtual assistant](#) or submit an enquiry.

### Related content

- [How to become an approved training provider](#)
- [Individualised Learner Record \(ILR\) technical documents, guidance and requirements \(all years\)](#)

### Tools and services

- [FIS \(Funding Information Service\)](#)
- [Find a Learning Aim](#)
- [Enter learning data](#)
- [ILR Learner entry tool](#)
- [ILR FileMerge](#)
- [FE staff data desktop application](#)

## Where to find FIS for download

Ensure you select the latest version for the academic year to download.

When downloading previous academic year versions of FIS, be aware that all versions prior to V1.2 in academic year 2020 to 2021 will contain static reference data relevant to the version at the time, the introduction of the API was at V1.2.

If downloading for the first time, choose the latest version of FIS available and select the downloadable link.

Figure 2: Link for FIS downloads

# FIS (Funding Information Service) tool

FIS is a desktop application for the Department for Education’s data collections system. Providers can use it to validate Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data.

## Filter by year

The page will refresh after you select each filter.

☐ 2025 to 2026    ☐ 2024 to 2025    ☐ 2023 to 2024    ☐ 2022 to 2023    ☐ 2021 to 2022

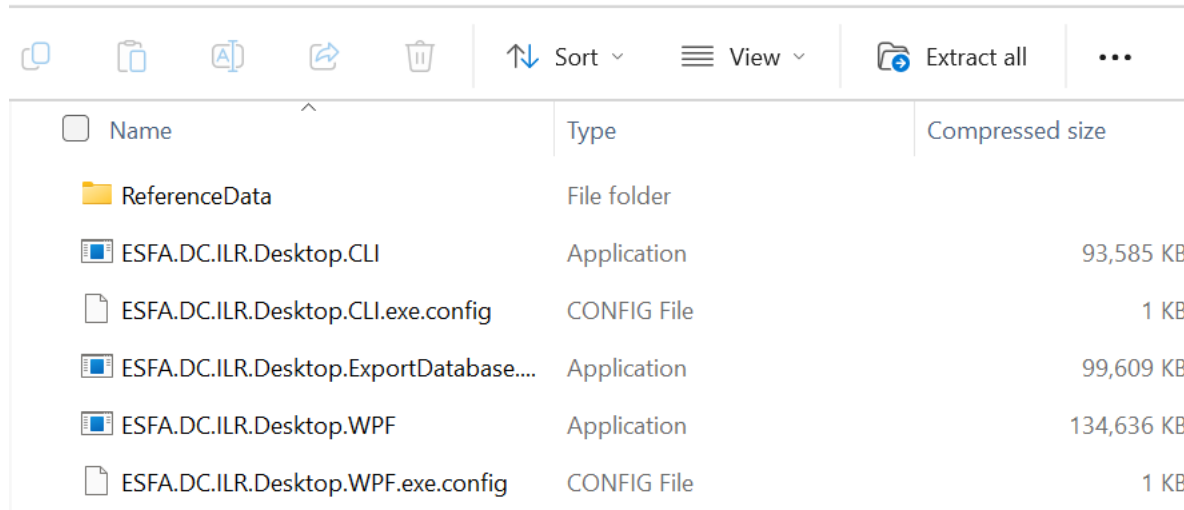
### Academic year 2025 to 2026

Version	Date and time uploaded	Download Link
2526.1	12 August 2025 at 6:21pm	<a href="#">Download 2526.1</a>

## How to download and configure FIS for the first time

Once you have selected the downloadable link a FIS Desktop compressed (zipped) folder will download. Move this to your chosen folder location to store and run FIS from.

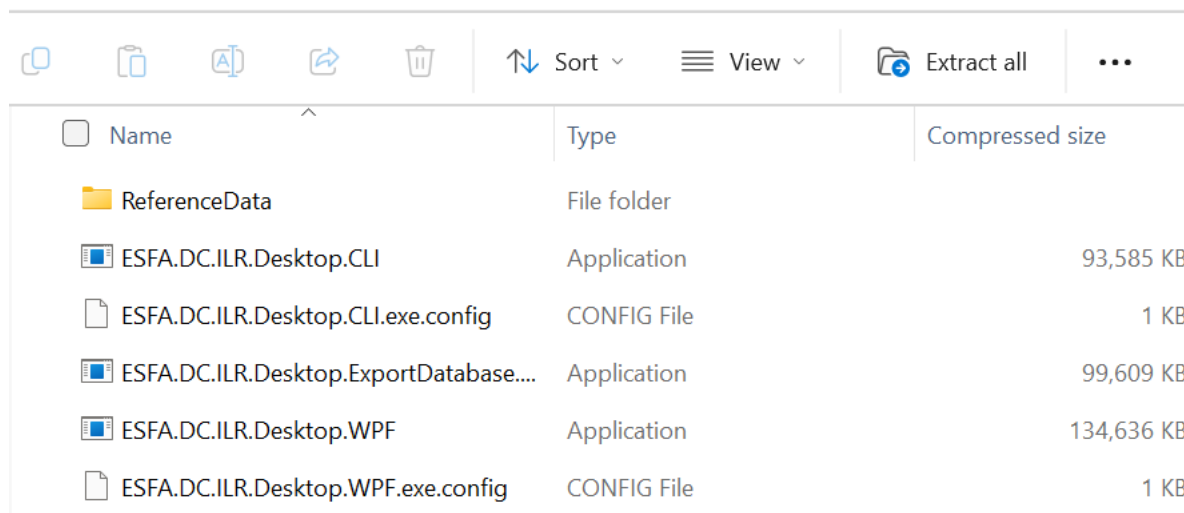
**Figure 3: Compressed file for download**



<input type="checkbox"/> Name	Type	Compressed size
ReferenceData	File folder	
ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.CLI	Application	93,585 KB
ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.CLI.exe.config	CONFIG File	1 KB
ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.ExportDatabase....	Application	99,609 KB
ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.WPF	Application	134,636 KB
ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.WPF.exe.config	CONFIG File	1 KB

Right click on the file and then select 'Extract All'.

**Figure 4: Extracting from the compressed file**

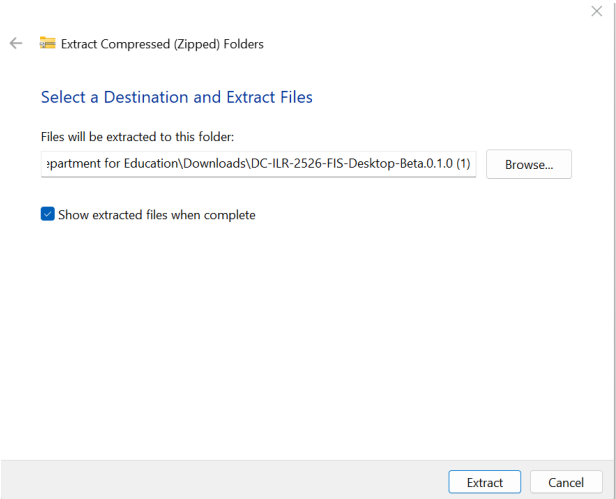


<input type="checkbox"/> Name	Type	Compressed size
ReferenceData	File folder	
ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.CLI	Application	93,585 KB
ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.CLI.exe.config	CONFIG File	1 KB
ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.ExportDatabase....	Application	99,609 KB
ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.WPF	Application	134,636 KB
ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.WPF.exe.config	CONFIG File	1 KB

Select the folder (browse to location if required) where you would like FIS to be extracted to and then click on 'Extract'.



**Figure 5: Choosing extract location**



The extract will create a new File Folder, double click on the file name.

**Figure 6: Extract creates a new folder**

<input type="checkbox"/> Name	Status	Date modified	Type
▼ Today			
ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.ExportDatabase.Console	✓	12/06/2025 10:52	Application
ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.CLI	✓	12/06/2025 10:51	Application
ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.CLI.exe.config	✓	12/06/2025 10:51	CONFIG File
ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.WPF.exe.config	✓	12/06/2025 09:42	CONFIG File
<b>FIS</b> ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.WPF	↻	12/06/2025 09:42	Application
Logs	↻	12/06/2025 09:42	File folder
ReferenceData	✓	12/06/2025 09:42	File folder







Whilst processing a bar will display to indicate completeness of download.

**Figure 7: Progress bar during extraction**



Open the new folder and the FIS extract files will now be displayed, scroll down to the file showing the FIS Icon and double click the file named 'ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.WPF'.

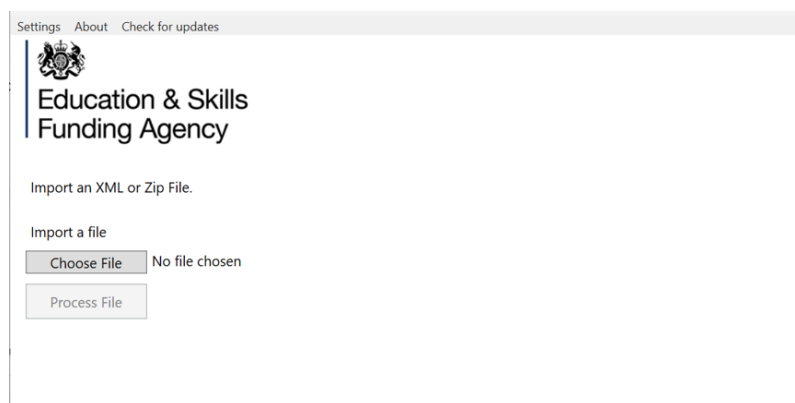
**Figure 8: Opening FIS**

<input type="checkbox"/> Name	Status	Date modified	Type
▼ Today			
 ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.ExportDatabase.Console	✓	12/06/2025 10:52	Application
 ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.CLI	✓	12/06/2025 10:51	Application
 ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.CLI.exe.config	✓	12/06/2025 10:51	CONFIG File
 ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.WPF.exe.config	✓	12/06/2025 09:42	CONFIG File
<b>FIS</b> ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.WPF	↻	12/06/2025 09:42	Application
 Logs	↻	12/06/2025 09:42	File folder
 ReferenceData	✓	12/06/2025 09:42	File folder

The FIS Application for 2025 to 2026 will now open. When opening new versions of FIS they will normally contain the latest reference data. It is always advisable to 'Check for Updates' to ensure this is the case, especially when the version has been available for some time.

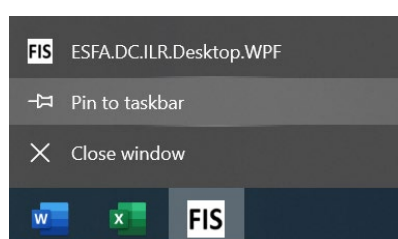
See section on: [Checking for Updates – new versions for download or new reference data.](#)

**Figure 9: FIS main screen**



When opening FIS, the FIS icon will appear on your taskbar. If you use FIS often it is a good idea to right click and pin it to the taskbar.

**Figure 10: Settings function**

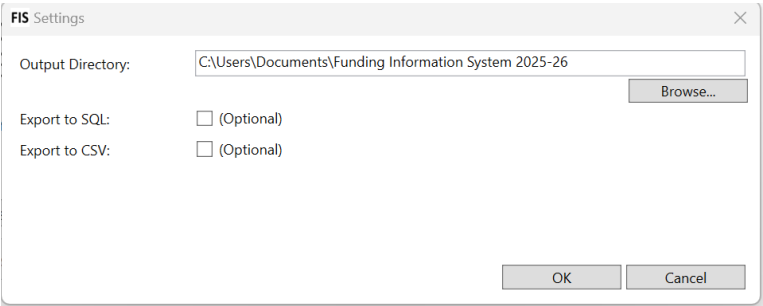


# How to change output location

When the FIS Application is open select ‘Settings’ in the top left-handed corner. For ‘Output Directory’, choose the folder where you want the reports FIS generates to be exported to.

Figure 11: Settings function

Figure 12: Choose output location



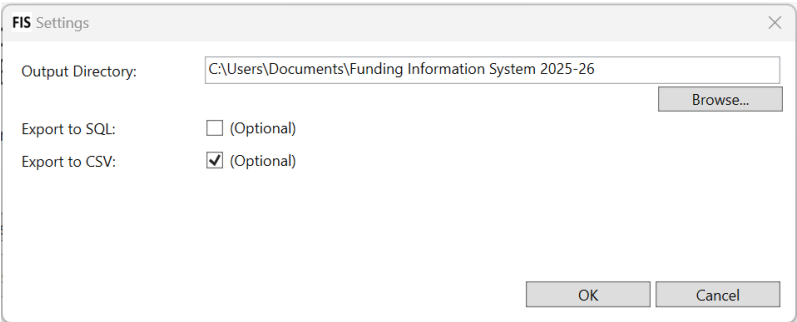
You can also ‘Browse’ to change the location.

For advanced technical users there is an option to [connect and export output to SQL](#).

## Export to CSV

If you wish to export to CSV, tick the ‘Export to CSV’ box and then select the ‘Output Directory’ where the data should be exported to. Click on ‘OK’.

Figure 13: Selecting to export to CSV



The CSV zip file will appear in the selected output directory.

Figure 14: Example of CSV outputs

<input type="checkbox"/> Name	Status	Date modified	Type	Size
FIS-CSV-20240612-123456		12/06/2024 14:06	File folder	
DC-ILR-2425-FIS-Desktop.2425.1		12/06/2024 10:55	Compressed (zipped)...	382,922 KB

## Logs

When running FIS logs are created to advise on any errors and the steps processed. These logs will be found in the output directory location previously selected. If you are experiencing any issues and raise a call to our helpdesk it is important that the associated logs are also sent, as they hold vital information to enable us to investigate.

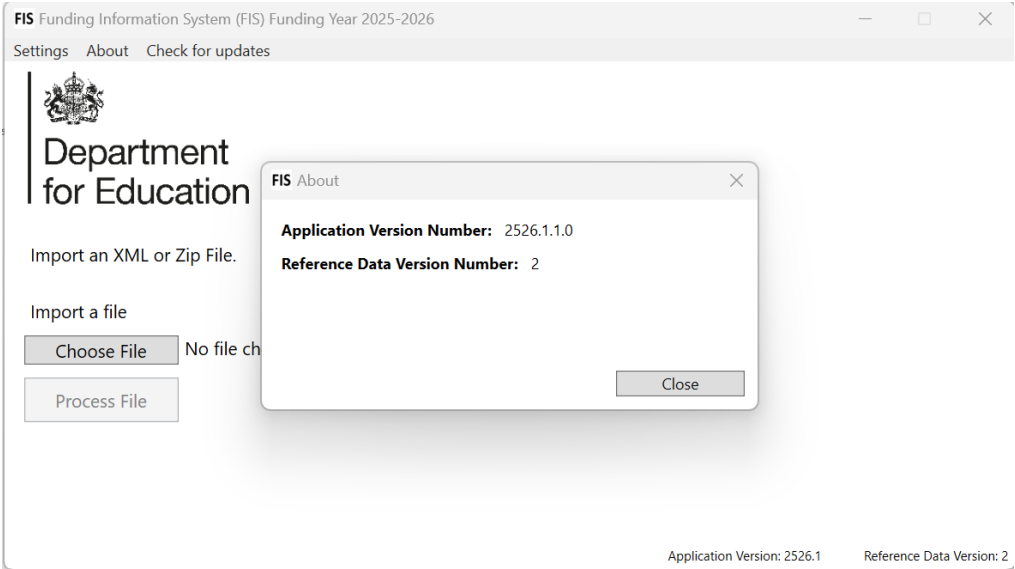
**Figure 15: Example log**

DateTime	Level	Message
35:11.4	INFO	Writing appsettings to C:\Desktop\FIS 2324\ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.WPF.exe.config
35:17.0	INFO	Checking Reference Data in [C:\Desktop\FIS 2324\ReferenceData\]
35:17.0	INFO	Found Reference Data File C:\Desktop\FIS 2324\ReferenceData\FISReferenceData.4.zip
35:20.7	INFO	Deleting Sandbox Directory : Sandbox
35:20.7	INFO	Creating and Populating Sandbox Directory : Sandbox, C:\Users\ILR-12345678-2324-20230815-090100-01.XML, C:\Desktop\FIS 2324\ReferenceData\FISReferenceData.4.zip
35:21.2	INFO	Starting File Validation Preparation Service
35:21.2	INFO	Finished File Validation Preparation Service
35:21.2	INFO	Starting Loose Message Provide
35:21.7	INFO	Finished Loose Message Provide
35:21.7	INFO	Starting Message Validation
35:22.2	INFO	Finished Message Validation
35:22.2	INFO	Starting Valid Learner Filter
35:22.2	INFO	Finished Valid Learner Filter
35:22.2	INFO	Starting Map to Tight Schema
35:22.2	INFO	Finished Map to Tight Schema
35:22.2	INFO	Starting Validation Output
35:23.0	INFO	Finished Validation Output
35:23.1	INFO	Starting ILR File Retrieval.
35:23.4	INFO	Finished ILR File Retrieval
46:41.1	ERROR	File Validation Failure Output
46:41.2	ERROR	Task Execution Handled Failure - Step 7

# About

At any point you can check the ‘About’ tab at the top of the screen to see what application version and reference version you are using.

**Figure 16: About - showing application and reference data version details**



## Check for updates – new versions for download or new reference data

This feature will let you know if there is new reference data available or a new application version is available. New application versions are only necessary when structural enhancements are made, whilst reference data is normally updated twice monthly. On opening FIS it will automatically perform checks for all updates and if found will indicate the results by highlighting in the blue banner, these results may be:

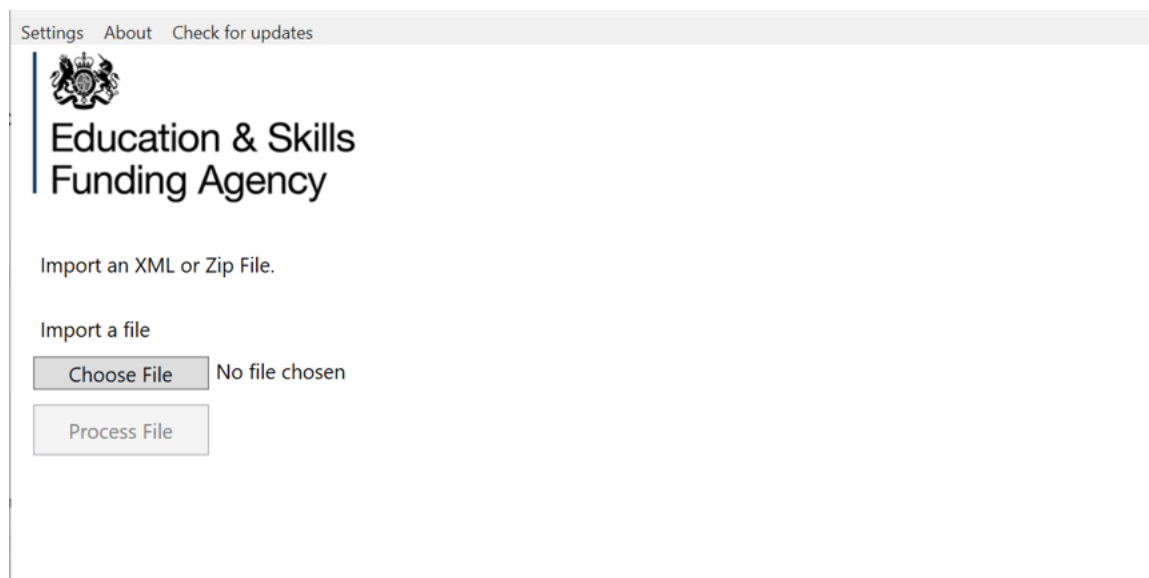
- you are using the latest version
- new reference data or a newer version of the FIS application may be available

It will also warn you if your connection has failed.

If you have left FIS open for a few days, it is always good to close it down and reopen as it will perform the updates check. This can also be done at any time by selecting the 'Check for updates tab' at the top of the screen.

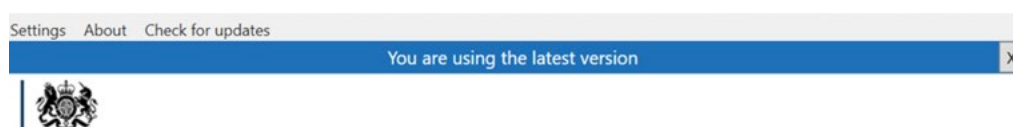
The blue banner contains an X button option to close the banner, should you not wish to proceed with any updates.

**Figure 17: Check for updates**



## No updates needed

**Figure 18: Check for updates confirms you are using the latest version**



## New version of FIS is available

When a new version of FIS is available the following message will appear – all new versions will contain the latest reference data when the version was created. The link will take you back to the FIS Download page as shown previously. It will be necessary to select the latest version of FIS for download and follow the earlier steps to download and configure FIS.

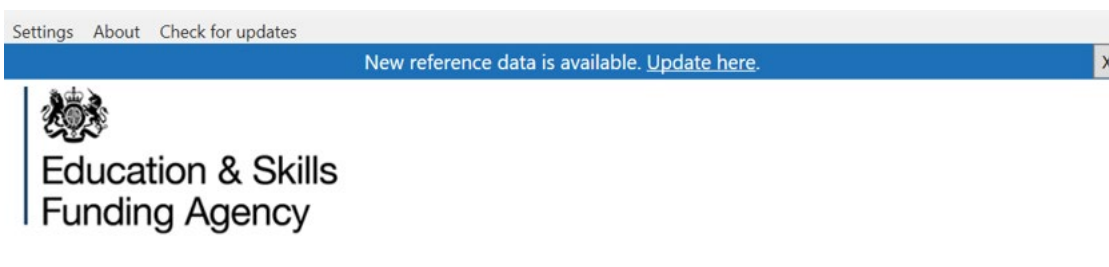
**Figure 19: Example where new version is available**



## New reference data is available

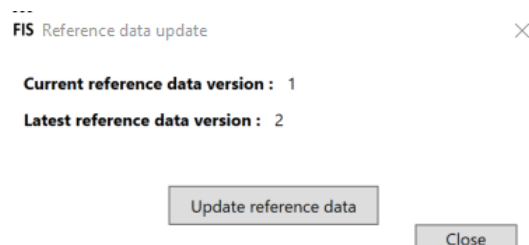
When only new reference data is available the following message will appear. For the reference data you will be able to update it within your current version by clicking on the 'Update here' link.

**Figure 20: Example where new reference data is available**



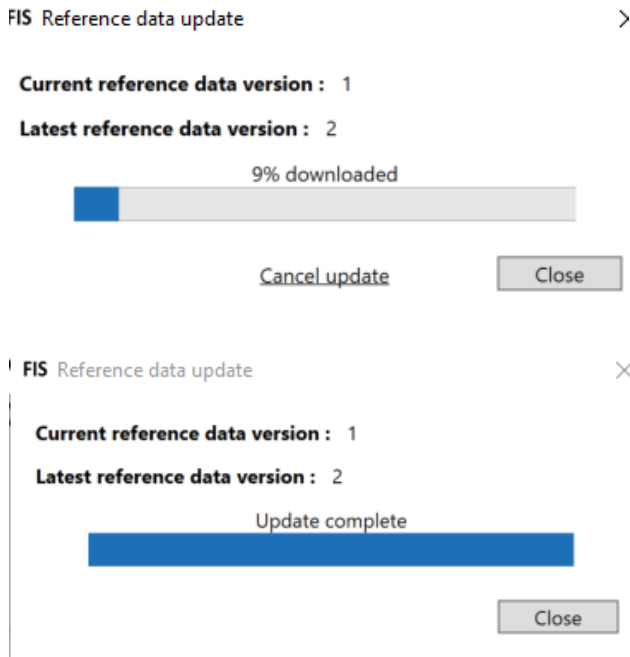
Select the 'Update here' link and the next screen will display version details with an option to 'Update reference data'.

**Figure 21: Displays version details and update options**



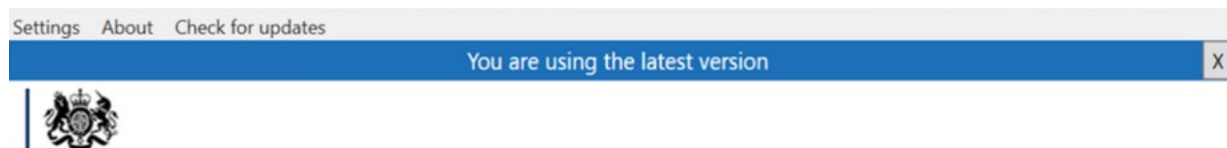
When uploading reference data the screen will indicate the % downloaded and also advise when completed.

**Figure 22: Advisory messages showing % to download**



Once completed select 'Close' and the screen will show you are using the latest version.

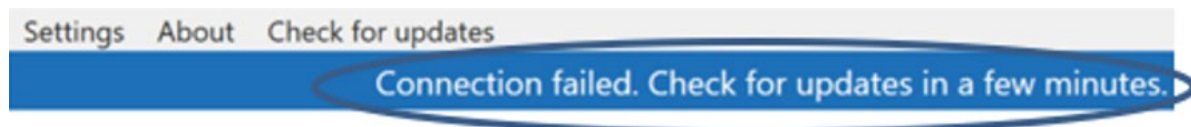
**Figure 23: Advisory messages showing you are using the latest version**



## Connection failed

If the API connection is unavailable the following message will appear. To retry, select 'Check for Updates again'.

**Figure 24: Advisory message showing you your connection has failed**





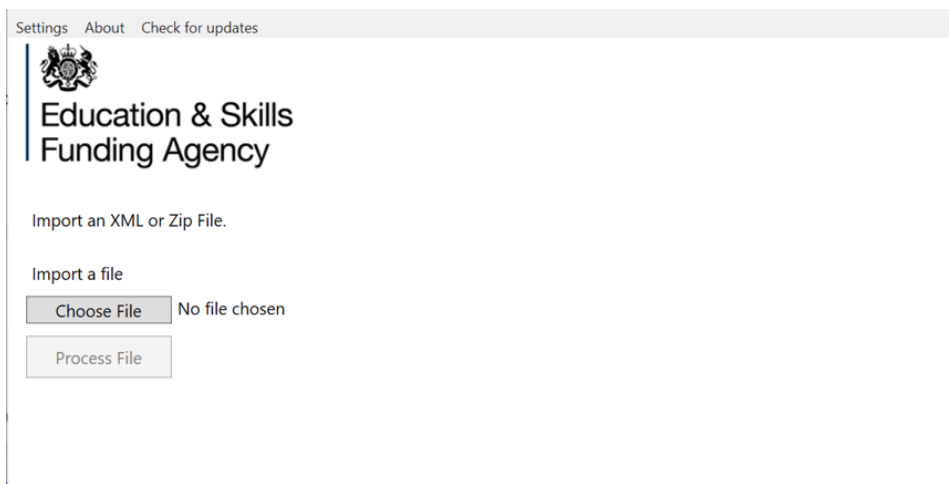
# How to use FIS

To open FIS either:

- go to the file folder where FIS is stored and click the “ESFA.DC.ILR.Desktop.exe” file
- you may have pinned FIS to your taskbar

Select ‘Choose file’ to select your Zip or XML file from your file location and then click on ‘Process File’.

**Figure 25: Choose file**



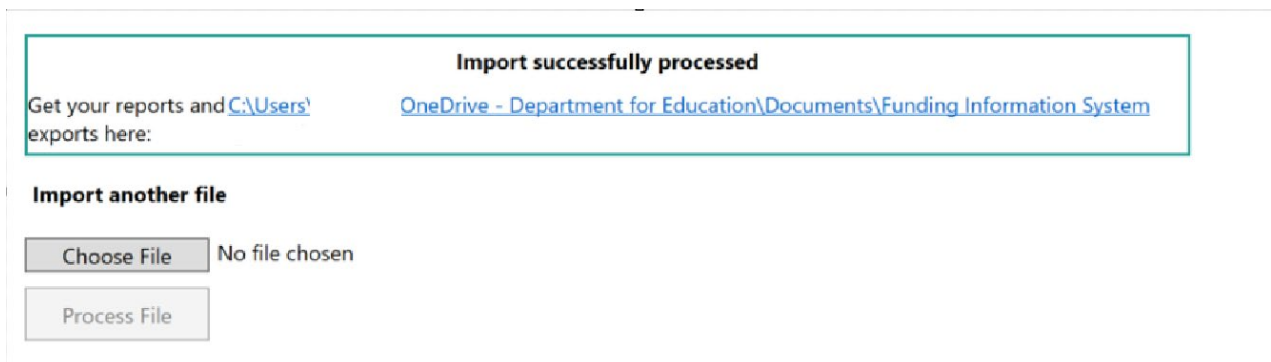
You will see a progress bar indicating how long is left to process your file.

**Figure 26: Progress bar**



When processing has finished you can get your reports by selecting the link, this will be the Output Directory you have chosen in ‘Settings’.

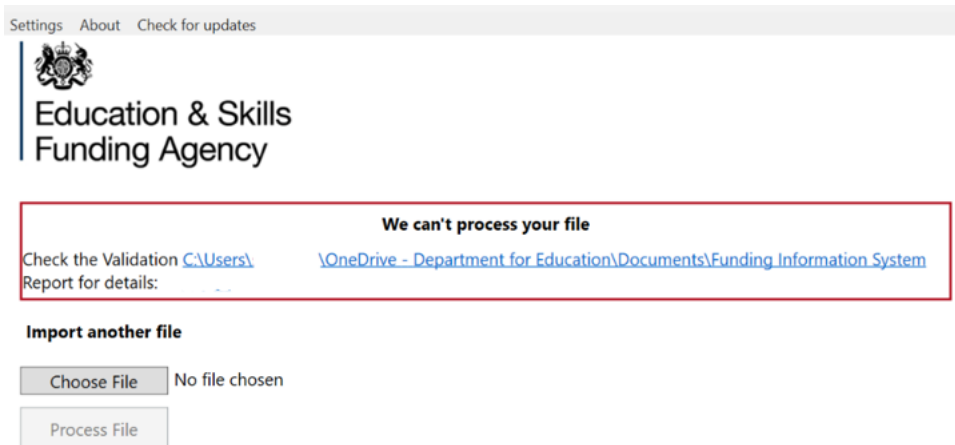
**Figure 27: Example location where outputs are stored**





Open the file folder and your reports will be displayed.

**If the file could not be processed you will receive the message ‘We can’t process your file’. You will also receive a link to the validation reports, where you can find out why the file did not work.**

**Figure 28 Example validation issue**



**Figure 29: Example output folder**

 ILR-123456789-2526-20250623-090745-02  09/07/2025 14:35

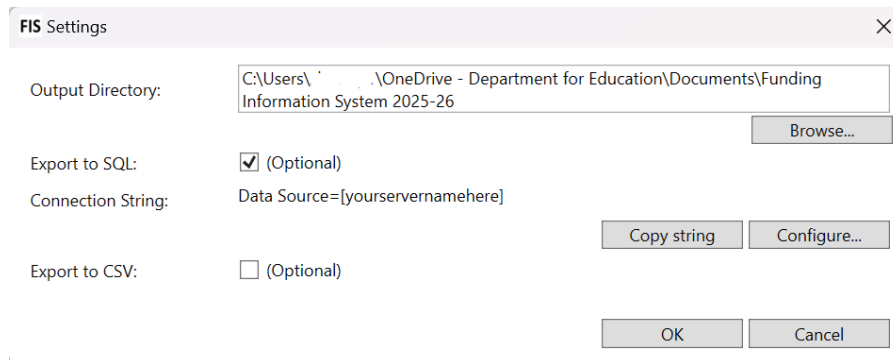
## Figure 30: FIS reports

<input type="checkbox"/> Name	Date modified	Type	Size
 16-19 Funding Calculation Full Output Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel W...	110 KB
 16-19 Funding Claim Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel W...	44 KB
 16-19 Summary of Funding by Student Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel C...	1 KB
 Adult Funding Claim Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel W...	14 KB
 ALLB Occupancy Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel C...	5 KB
 Apps Indicative Earnings Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel C...	10 KB
 CL Summary of Learners by Non-Single Budget Category Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel W...	14 KB
 Devolved Adult Education Funding Summary Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel W...	38 KB
 Devolved Adult Education Occupancy Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel C...	7 KB
 Funding Summary Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel W...	19 KB
 High Needs Students Detail Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel C...	1 KB
 High Needs Students Summary Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel W...	30 KB
 Main Occupancy Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel C...	6 KB
 Maths and English Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel C...	1 KB
 OfS HE Quality Control Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel W...	50 KB
 Rule Violation Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel C...	2 KB
 Rule Violation Summary Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel W...	14 KB
 Summary of Funding Model 35 Funding Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel C...	6 KB
 Trailblazer Apprenticeships Employer Incentives Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel C...	2 KB
 Trailblazer Apprenticeships Occupancy Report 20240815-145402	15/08/2024 14:55	Microsoft Excel C...	7 KB

## Connections and export output to SQL (optional)

You may wish to integrate FIS with your SQL server software if you have it. This is entirely optional. In general you would only do this as an advanced technical user. If you do wish to, select the checkbox that says 'Export to SQL' and then 'Configure' to add connection details.

**Figure 31: Selecting export to SQL with no connection string set up**



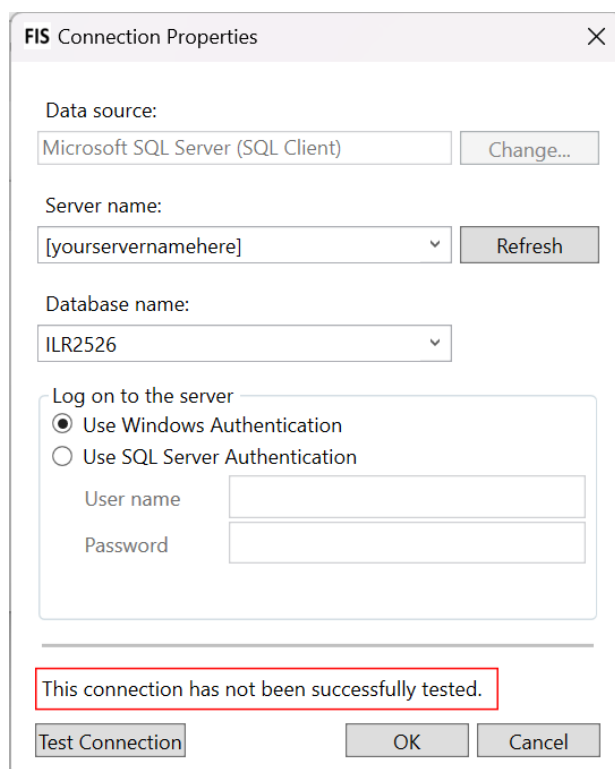
The FIS Settings dialog box is shown. It has a title bar 'FIS Settings' with a close button. The 'Output Directory' field contains the path 'C:\Users\...\.OneDrive - Department for Education\Documents\Funding Information System 2025-26' and a 'Browse...' button. The 'Export to SQL' checkbox is checked, with '(Optional)' next to it. The 'Connection String' field contains 'Data Source=[yourservernamehere]' and has 'Copy string' and 'Configure...' buttons. The 'Export to CSV' checkbox is unchecked, with '(Optional)' next to it. At the bottom are 'OK' and 'Cancel' buttons.

To configure you will need to:

- select the server name
- select the database name
- add the username and password (if needed)

The connection string will be created automatically once you click 'OK'. You will be able to see your updated connection string on the Figure 31 screen.

**Figure 32: Choosing server details - configure**

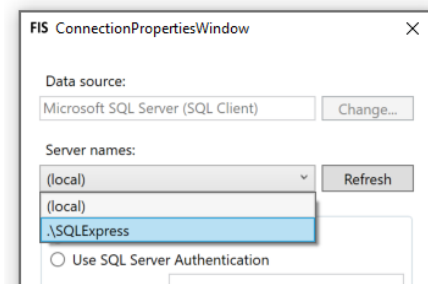


The FIS Connection Properties dialog box is shown. It has a title bar 'FIS Connection Properties' with a close button. The 'Data source' field contains 'Microsoft SQL Server (SQL Client)' and a 'Change...' button. The 'Server name' field contains '[yourservernamehere]' and a 'Refresh' button. The 'Database name' field contains 'ILR2526'. The 'Log on to the server' section has two radio buttons: 'Use Windows Authentication' (selected) and 'Use SQL Server Authentication'. Below these are 'User name' and 'Password' text boxes. At the bottom, a red-bordered box contains the message 'This connection has not been successfully tested.' Below this are 'Test Connection', 'OK', and 'Cancel' buttons.

The screen will display a warning if the connection has not been successful.

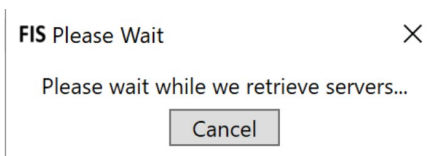
To select the server name choose from the drop-down list of SQL servers connected to your PC. You can also use 'Refresh' if you wish to select a different SQL server.

**Figure 33: Choosing server name**



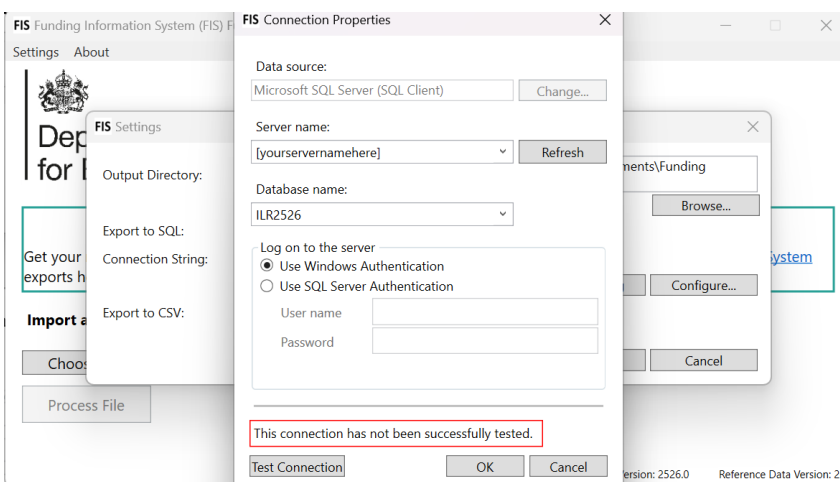
Whilst retrieving server details the following message will appear.

**Figure 34: Message whilst retrieving server details**

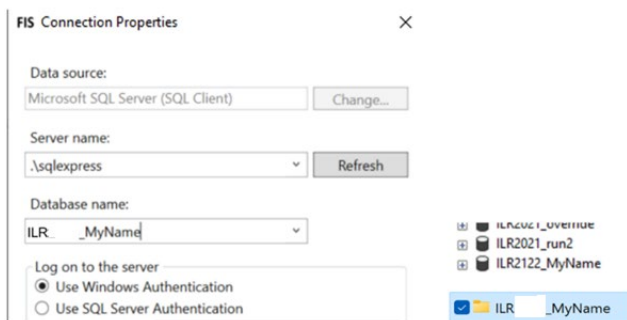


Once the server is selected the database name dropdown will be populated with all available databases for this server. The default value is "ILR2526", or you can type in your database name for selection.

**Figure 35: Adding database name**

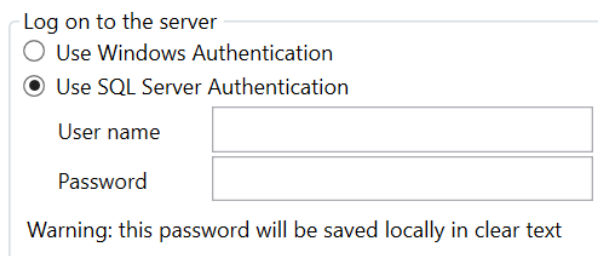


**Figure 36: Changing database name**



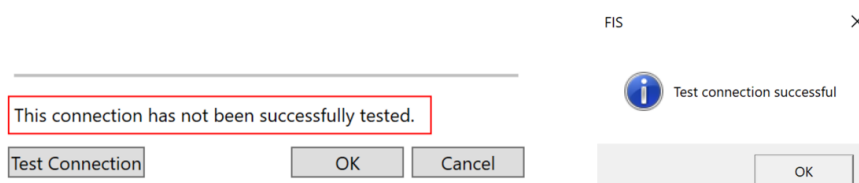
For logging on to the server there are options to use Window Authentication, or a username and password will be required (if selecting SQL Server Authentication).

**Figure 37: Selecting SQL server authentication**



Once you have completed all server and database details you will need to ensure your connection is successful. Whilst setting up the message 'This connection has not been successfully tested' will appear. You can click 'Test connection' to ensure your connection is now successful. The success window will appear and you can select 'OK' to continue.

**Figure 38: Test connection results**



Once 'OK' is selected you will be brought back to the FIS settings page which will show the connection string details. You will need to select 'OK' to complete this configuration. You cannot change the connections string here, if required you will need to go back through the configure functionality.

**Figure 39: Selecting export to SQL shows connections string set up**

The screenshot shows the 'FIS Settings' dialog box. The 'Output Directory' is set to 'C:\Users\... Documents\Funding Information System'. The 'Export to SQL' checkbox is checked, with '(Optional)' next to it. The 'Connection String' field is highlighted with a blue oval and contains the text 'Data Source=.\SQLEXPRESS;Initial Catalog=ILR ;Integrated Security=True'. Below this field are 'Copy string' and 'Configure...' buttons. The 'Export to Access and CSV' checkbox is unchecked, with '(Optional)' next to it. At the bottom are 'OK' and 'Cancel' buttons.

The connection string will display where the database is created. If required you can also use the 'Copy string' option to copy the connection string. This may be useful in the Provider Data Self-Assessment Toolkit (PDSAT).

## Help and support

The DFE Support Desk is open:

- 9:00am to 5:00pm, Monday to Thursday
- 9:00am to 4:00pm, Friday
- 8:30am to 6:00pm, on ILR return days

The DFE Support Desk is closed weekends and bank holidays.

Queries can be raised out of hours by using the [Customer help portal](#).





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