



Department
for Education

Academies chart of accounts and automation

Information for Finance Directors and
School Business Professionals

Brief overview of academies chart of accounts & automation

Academies chart of accounts (CoA):

Facts:

- The CoA is the Academy sector standard for financial reporting
- The CoA is currently not mandatory, but the DfE is expecting trusts to adopt
- The CoA underpins the automation process

Figures:

- At least 1/3 of trusts have now adopted the CoA



Automation:

Facts:

- 'Automation' refers to the instant transfer of data from the trusts FMS system to the DfE's financial return
 - **Accounts return**
 - **Draft trust financial statements**

Figures:

- 28% of trusts FMS suppliers used automation for 2021/22 accounts return
- 80% of trusts FMS suppliers estimated to be using automation for 2022/23 accounts return



The DfE works closely with trusts, FMS suppliers and external auditors to facilitate adoption of CoA and use of automation

Benefits of adopting CoA / using automation – DfE perspective

Benefits – adopting CoA:

- ✓ Provides standardisation across trusts and within trusts
 - improved rebrokerage process
 - auditors using one CoA
- ✓ Improved data quality as less subjective i.e. improved insights via VMFI and benchmarking
- ✓ Potential to improve financial management
- ✓ Impact of new DfE reporting requirements are reduced
- ✓ Enables use of automation



Added benefits – using automation:

- ✓ Time saving for completing the AR in terms of:
 - input time (high % of AR auto completed), larger trusts benefit most
 - reduction in human error
 - validation triggers are prevented through mapping and rounding
- ✓ Make use of draft financial statements
- ✓ Pre-populates 1/3rd BFR
- ✓ End to end audit trail
- ✓ DfE receive granular data
- ✓ Take advantage of new developments



The more trusts that adopt, the greater the benefit to all

What will my automated data populate?

**Automated data sent prior to
30th January 2024**

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**Populates a
large % of AR
22/23**



**Generates current
year data for draft
financial statements
for 2022/23**



**Prior year data for
draft financial
statements 2023/24**



**Populates 1/3rd
of the BFR 24**

The 3 steps to using automation

1. CoA

- The trust must adopt the academies CoA
 - Via native adoption OR
 - Mapping via FMS suppliers software

2. Automation

- The trust's FMS software supplier must have developed their functionality to use automation AND
- The trust's FMS software must be upgraded to use automation

3. IDAMS

- The trust must set up a Data Transfer Approver role on IDAMS

Next steps towards better financial reporting

- ✓ **Review your FMS software** - is it fit for purpose?
- ✓ **Talk to your FMS provider** - will it allow you to adopt the academies CoA and use automation?
- ✓ **Talk to your auditor** – how can they help?
 - initial mapping
 - ongoing efficiencies
- ✓ **Talk to your peers** – more than 1/3rd of trusts have already adopted the academies CoA
- ✓ **Review information available**
 - [FMS comparison matrix](#) (see next slide)
 - [Academies chart of accounts and automation webpage](#)
- ✓ **Use the Academies CoA** – mappings helpful to all trusts

Trusts who have not yet mapped to CoA

- Review current FMS software and matrix/talk to provider
- Talk to peers and auditors
- Review DfE information
- Practice using academies CoA mappings

Trusts who have mapped to CoA but not yet automated

- Talk to FMS provider to ensure your software can enable automation/review FMS matrix
- Talk to your auditor to find out how you can work together to improve ongoing efficiencies

FMS comparison matrix



‘Good’ financial management is underpinned by a dynamic financial management system (FMS).

The idea stemmed from trusts telling us they weren’t sure which FMS providers were offering the Academies CoA and automation functionality

Developed into an idea to provide better information to trusts who are looking to upgrade/move FMS provider

Information provides:

- The matrix - comparing circa 50 FMS providers
- A guide - including tips and a checklist for reviewing your FMS

Search **‘choosing a trusts financial management system’** in your browser

The screenshot shows a GOV.UK page with the following content:

- GOV.UK** logo and breadcrumb navigation: Home > Education, training and skills > School and academy financial management and assurance > Academy and academy trust finance and reporting
- Guidance** section with the title **Choosing a trust's financial management system (FMS)**
- Introductory text: "This page helps you compare different FMS providers so your academy trust is able to choose a provider who will enable you to automate your financial returns to DfE."
- Attribution: "From: [Education and Skills Funding Agency](#)"
- A button: "Get emails about this page"
- A tag: "Applies to England"
- Documents** section with three items:
 - Guide to the FMS comparison matrix** (HTML document icon)
 - Disclaimer** (HTML document icon)
 - FMS comparison matrix** (MS Excel Spreadsheet, 60.2 KB) with a note: "This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology." and a link to "Request an accessible format."

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/choosing-a-trusts-financial-management-system-fms>

Sign posting support for your trusts stage of adoption



Just starting out

- [Guide to adopting the ACoA](#) (section 1,2,3, & 6)
- Introductory webinar
- FMS comparison matrix
- Auditor/other Trusts
- Current FMS provider



In process of adopting ACoA/already adopted

- [Guide to adopting the ACoA](#) (Section 4 & 5)
- ACoA spreadsheet
- Mapping review workshop
- Technical updates webinars (May /June)
- Auditor support



Automation support

- [User guide for automation](#)
- 'How to' training sessions in partnership with FMS suppliers showing the end to end automation journey
- Bitesize sessions
- 30 minute 1-2-1 slots for trusts and their auditors who are automating for the first time
- Auditor support
- Your FMS Supplier help desk



Monthly Q&A dial in sessions for all

General help and information

Information:

- For academies CoA and automation information, please visit : <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-chart-of-accounts>, here you will find:
 - CoA spreadsheet (2 years versions)
 - Guide to adopting the CoA
 - Account code guidance
 - Automation guide
 - Future events including Q+A sessions and webinars
 - Ways to contact the DfE
- View our [Guide to the FMS comparison matrix - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-chart-of-accounts) to identify which FMS suppliers are using the academies chart of accounts and can automate

We also provide tailored presentations at regional conferences and local SBP groups either virtually or in person. Please contact us on academies.coa@education.gov.uk if you wish to arrange a session for your local group.