



SuccessFactors Learning

It is time for the patient users of SuccessFactors Learning to be rewarded. After what seems like an aeon, the release of a new administrator user interface into production use is in sight, and organisations with access to preview systems can get their hands on a fresh new version of SuccessFactors Learning right now. And it is not just a new lick of paint. This really is a ground-up rebuild of a large chunk of functionality, and that brings many additional benefits rather than just cosmetic changes.

This update is long-awaited, and it is critical. The legacy of the Plateau system from which SuccessFactors Learning comes, is such that to deliver a flexible interface, it was developed in a web technology created by Adobe. A technology known as Flash.

Flash has been famously plagued with issues around security and performance, to the point where even Adobe has thrown in the towel. The bell sounds on Flash at the end of this year with all major browsers pulling mainstream support. Therefore, a full replacement administrator interface must be in place for SuccessFactors Learning before then.

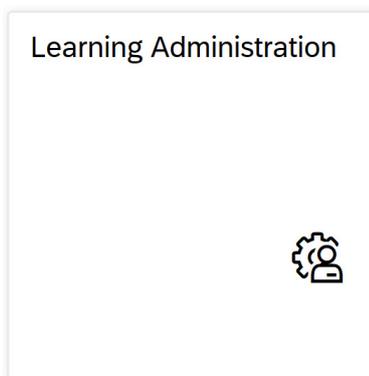


Administrator User Interface

Access

When Learning administrators wish to access the new user interface, they will do so via a new tile on the SuccessFactors home page. Existing links, such as those in Admin Center and the search field result, will continue to point at the old Flash-based user interface. The URLs, however, will work to a large extent interchangeably, the new interface simply uses an additional URL parameter (“UI5=Y”).

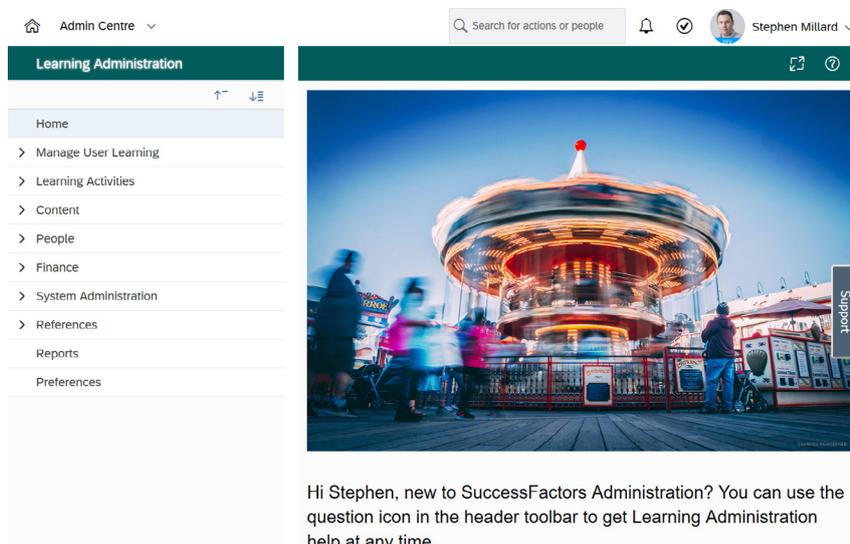
The new user interface feels much snappier to load, and the new interface is almost fully baked into the SuccessFactors interface. You can now access the standard SuccessFactors home menu and many of the user menu options under your username. However, as someone who regularly tests Learning using a variety of accounts, I am a little disappointed that I still have to jump back out to the SuccessFactors home page to get access to proxy as another user.



Home

Things now look very different, starting with the Learning Admin home page. Gone are the horizontal section tabs. Now we have a hierarchical menu down the left side of the page. Note that if you try to run this in a small

window, the navigation disappears and the only way to get it back is to increase the window size. However, you can also hide and show the navigation on purpose in a larger window by selecting the icon next to the help icon in the top right, which could be useful on the more data-dense screens.



Navigation

You may note that the navigation on the left is not an exact match to the previous navigation, and that is a good thing. The new navigation sports several important differences.

First, it is using different terminology. Now terminology is something that is changing throughout the system. While the big news is that it is changing the administrator user interface, there are consequently changes that replicate through to the end-user interface as well. If you have not considered the repercussions of that on your learning community, now's the time to think about how you will communicate the changes. The changes are meaningful and are intended to make things easier to understand, but for those who have already got used to a different set of terminology, it is perhaps worth a primer on what has changed and why. You can find a list of the terminology changes in an attachment to [KBA #2917843](#).

The second significant change is the actual structure of the navigation. The navigation stays open rather than being hidden as typically occurred in the old user interface. There are now single access paths to get to the functionality rather than the multiple, often oddly categorised, ways in the old user interface. The result is something more logical and more usable.

Overall, I find the new layout very clean and quite familiar from using other SAP products, including other SuccessFactors modules. This, combined with the usability

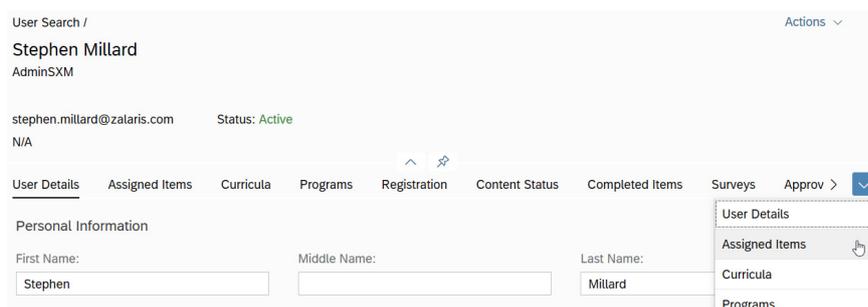
improvements to the navigation and terminology, brings about two clear benefits.

1. New administrators will be able to learn and use the system in a much shorter period. This is especially true where they are already familiar with Fiori-style user interfaces in other systems. It is no longer an ugly duckling user interface.

2. Existing administrators should also be able to get some speed improvements out of the navigation simply as it is more responsive and less confusing.

Something you may have noted is that alongside the (sub-)navigation in the old user interface was the recents and bookmarks section, and above this was the global search option. The former is due to be included within the H2 2020 release, but there are strong rumours that this may be released as a patch as soon as the summer, so keep an eye out for that. The global search, however, has been deprecated and is not planned for the new user interface.

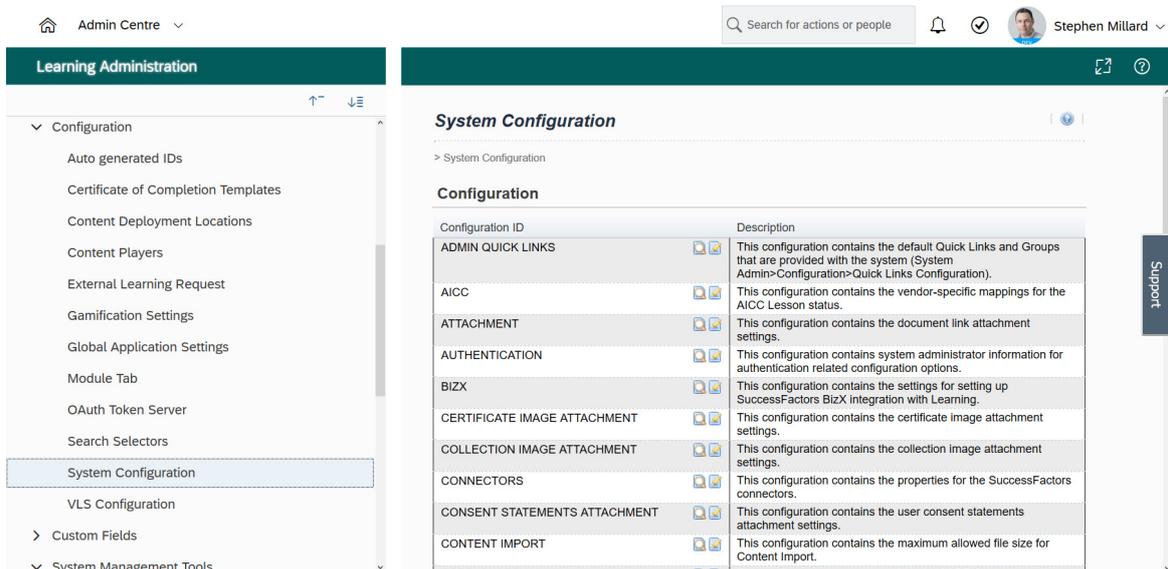
Navigation on records has changed. Records now having a split header area where the topmost part is displayed as you scroll down the page, with the bottom part of the header disappearing. Beneath this is the sub-navigation which is a horizontally scrollable list of all the sections and a menu of the navigation entries available on the right. You will definitely want that for the list of choices on the Item record, and I think it is high time we didn't have to hunt like savages for fields in "View All" and "More" sections. This new layout should make things much easier to locate.



Streamlining

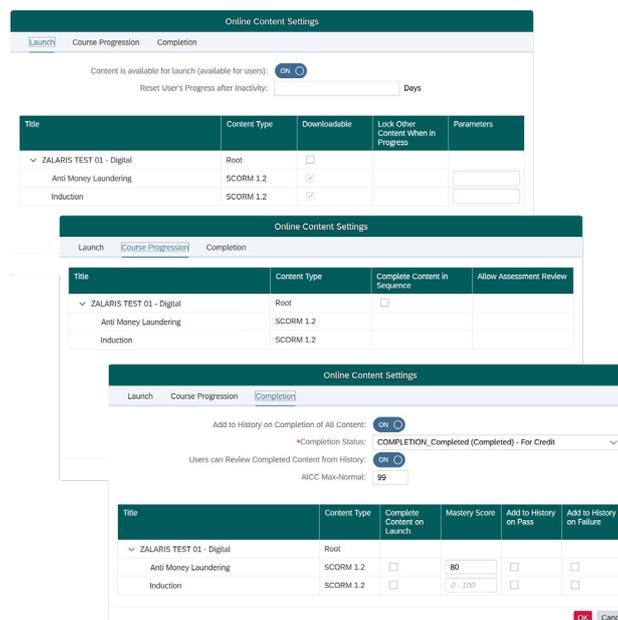
While there are a lot of changes, there are also a lot of familiarities. Many of the sections look for all intents, identical to

the previous user interface. That is not necessarily bad or something that has been overlooked. Quite a number of those sections have been replicated because they functioned perfectly adequately.



Some sections, however, were far from adequate. In this release, the changes are not purely cosmetic. SAP has analysed and revised several areas of the user interface. A great example of this is the structuring and approach to online content. The user interface for this has been redesigned not

only to provide a more logical layout but also to make it easier to set-up. Now you can just add the content and add the more technical settings later, allowing you to focus on the course structure right from the start – something many administrators have been craving for quite some time.



Some areas also have revisions that are more like small enhancements. For example, the assigned items listing for users now incorporates a revised and expanded set of filters that can be combined, making the filtering option easier and more powerful at the same time.

As you might expect with such a massive overhaul of the system, there are streamlining updates and performance optimisations tucked away in quite a few places. Some relate to the way data is presented in the user interface like the online content settings. Others, like the viewing of item assignments and completions, come purely from underlying augmentations.

Field Changes

Some of the functionality that is deprecated in this new release also includes a set of fields that will be removed. These are Coach, Edit Picture, Gender, Plateau Talent Gateway Access, Position, Prior Months of Service, Prior Years of Service, and Resumé. The logic behind this has been that the fields are either merely no longer of use, or that the data is held in SuccessFactors BizX, and does not need to be present in Learning.

The dropping of gender is a little contentious as one of the government reporting reports in Learning utilises that for a demographic basis. It is something that SAP may yet backtrack on. In the next year, the reporting should, of course, be addressed by the use of People Analytics with the Learning pack, whereby you will be able to combine Learning data with other SuccessFactors data.

If you do have some sort of key reliance on one of the fields above, for an existing custom report, or for assignment profiles, there is always the option of populating

a custom field and then referencing that instead. Of course, there is some effort required to make such changes.

A final note on fields is that in this release, the new administrator user interface does not include functionality for record configuration. If you want to manage this, you will need to use the old Flash-based administrator user interface. This functionality should be ported to the new administrator user interface in this year's November release.

The Hidden Feature

There is a final feature that the new administrator user interface delivers, but you cannot see it yet. The codebase for a large part of the system has undergone a huge rewrite. Code has been stripped out refactored, streamlined, and rebuilt using up to date development approaches. The result, according to SAP, is a system that is easier to expand with new features now that a lot of the troublesome legacy code has been removed or rewritten. The promise is, therefore, quicker development times for many future features. Good news for a community that has had to wait so long for this update.

End-User Interface

iFrame Removal

While the end-user interface is not receiving quite the same level of attention as the administrator user interface, there is an important foundation change being applied. Back in 1997, Microsoft introduced a new HTML tag for web pages called the iFrame. iFrame provides a useful, but crude way of embedding one web page anywhere within another. It has been simultaneously a useful quick fix/workaround and a thorn in the side of web developers ever since.



```
<div id="learningDivId">
  <div id="1__msg"></div>
  <div id="1__frame">
    <div id="2">
      <iframe id="2__iframe" name="iframelearning"
        class="learningFrame" src="https://
        part1.scdemo.successfactors.eu/learning/
        user/deepink_r...sp?
        linkId=HOME_PAGE&fromSF=Y&s_crb=...
        " frameborder="0"
        allow="fullscreen" allowfullscreen="true"
        webkitallowfullscreen="true"
        mozallowfullscreen="true" style="min-height:
        1194px; width: 964px; overflow: hidden; height:
        1156px;" scrolling="no">...</iframe>
    </div>
  </div>
</div>
```

When SuccessFactors Learning was first acquired (as Plateau), it was necessary to integrate the end-user interface into the SuccessFactors system, and an iFrame was used to accomplish this. Unfortunately, this has subsequently caused issues around accessibility, the appearance of phantom scroll bars, etc. In the latest release, SAP has managed to remove this dependency which addresses all these issues in one fell swoop.

Reporting

A couple of subtle but important changes are available in reporting in this release. One of the reports has been updated with an additional column, and job management now includes an additional automated constraint around failing reports.

The Learning Plan CSV report has somewhat surprisingly been modified to include Failure Date, the intention being to eliminate the need for customers to create custom reports to support this. It seems to be a little strange to take this step at this time with the fact that existing customers would have already done this, and we will soon be looking to People Analytics for Learning reporting requirements. They could have changed it long ago, or someone from SAP could have posted it to the custom report exchange forum.

Occasionally reports can fail, and now when this occurs four times in succession for a scheduled report, the scheduled job will be disabled, and the designated administrator and recipients will be notified. This seems sensible to not

only reduce the load on the systems of running unstable jobs but is a more positive step on identifying an issue than relying on a recipient to notice that a report hasn't run and notifying the relevant parties to have it investigated.

Mobile

Something learning-related that has continued to receive regular updates over the last eighteen months is the SuccessFactors Mobile application. Almost every month the app receives a set of feature updates on the Android and/or iOS/iPadOS platforms, and it seems that a month rarely goes by without some sort of update for the learning functionality, until now.

Since the Q4 2019 SuccessFactors update, we have had several updates for Android, allowing for deep linking to registrations, scheduled offerings and programme details. Instructor survey access brings parity with the Apple platform, and utilisation of the mobile navigation bar ensures better content compatibility.

On the Apple-side, the app was already ahead of the Android version feature-wise and has subsequently gained deep linking to scheduled offerings.

Curiously though there has been nothing announced yet about upcoming Learning updates for mobile, I find it very hard to believe that something is not planned in given the previous rate at which features were included. I wonder if this "pause" is somehow related to the new way in which SAP propagate the release information to customers and partners?



Timed Assessments

Finally, assessments can now have a time restriction applied to them for the period in which the learner has to complete the assessment. This, of course, only applies to non-resumable tests.

This option further broadens what is possible with assessments and being able to have timed online assessment rather than some sort of supervised face-to-face/virtual assessment frees up invigilators and enables learners to undertake the assessment at any time that suits them.

Conclusion

The wait is almost over. The new Learning Admin user interface is in preview systems, and it is delivering on SAP's promises. I fully expect there to be a few bumps ahead as the updated system is put through its paces, and the rougher edge cases surface. But, by all accounts, from what I have seen so far, there should not be too much disruption.

The terminology changes seem reasonable. The system design follows the standard Fiori-UI principles used elsewhere. The biggest challenge is likely to lie in the user community at this point. There are terminology changes to communicate to end-users. There are administrators who need guidance and time to familiarise themselves with the new system. This is, of course, also the time when you need to be testing the system against your own processes in your preview systems.

If you have not been giving this much thought to date, and you need to hit the ground running, I'd suggest starting with my "[Preparing for SuccessFactors Learning in 2020](#)" article.

This will pick out some of the critical points in conjunction with SAP's guidance. In addition, SAP has now released [KBA #2909180](#), which presents a list of a lot of useful knowledge base articles that explain how the new areas of the user interface now operate. It would be a good starting point for any administrator who needs to get up to speed very quickly.

Hopefully, your preparations will run smoothly, and your organisation will be primed to take advantage of this exciting new update.



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