



Skills Funding
Agency

Minimum Standards

How the Skills Funding Agency will apply
Minimum Standards for 2013 to 2014

October 2014

Of interest to colleges and training organisations

How the Skills Funding Agency will apply Minimum Standards for 2013 to 2014

Background

The Government is committed to:

- increased freedoms and flexibilities
- reduced bureaucracy
- reducing its intervention in the further education (FE) sector

After extensive discussions with the FE sector and a review of Minimum Levels of Performance (MLP) we introduced Minimum Standards of performance in 2012 to 2013. We have made further improvements to simplify how Minimum Standards are calculated in 2013 to 2014 in line with the new funding methodology and changes to Qualification Success Rates (QSR). We will also publish QSR and Minimum Standards in the same set of reports.

It is our intention to explore how we can include other measures within Minimum Standards from 2014 to 2015 following the recent consultation on [Outcome Based Success Measures](#). This will take a wider view of success and recognise whether individuals make progress into further learning or into / within work.

The Minimum Standards Methodology

The methodology for applying Minimum Standards to Apprenticeships has not been changed and remains the same as 2012 to 2013.

The methodology for Classroom and Workplace learning has been simplified following the changes made to the calculation of [Qualification Success Rates in 2013 to 2014](#).

The QSR changes for 2013 to 2014 mean that the overall and timely method are now used for all programmes and a success rate is calculated for each qualification type: including Functional Skills and Units which are counted in QSR's for the first time.

As a result we are able to apply Minimum Standards to qualification types without the need to distinguish between programme funding and the planned duration of learning. This is a significant simplification because it was possible for the same aim to have three separate success rates (workplace learning, classroom long and classroom short) in the 2012 to 2013 Minimum Standards methodology.

Thresholds are applied to success rates at aim and Apprenticeship framework level. If the success rate for an aim or framework is below the threshold in the table below, then we will classify that specific aim or framework as falling below the Minimum Standard.

When calculating if a provider falls below Minimum Standards and is in scope for intervention we will use three categories in 2013 to 2014:

- Apprenticeships - all ages
- Classroom and Workplace Learning - Group A
- Classroom and Workplace Learning - Group B

Table 1: Minimum Standards thresholds and qualification type groups

<i>Qualification Type</i>	<i>Threshold %</i>	<i>Qualification Type Group</i>
Apprenticeship Framework	55	Apprenticeships
A-Level	75	A
AS-Level	63	A
Award	75	B
Certificate	70	A
Diploma	70	A
ESOL	63	B
Functional Skills SfL	63	B
GCSE Maths and English	75	A
GCSE Other	75	A
Other non-Regulated	75	B
Other Regulated	65	B
QCF Unit	75	B

We have grouped classroom and workplace learning into large and full qualifications and smaller or more responsive provision. There can be significant differences in the types of learning offered by some colleges and providers. This approach ensures we continue to recognise those differences within Minimum Standards, in a similar way to grouping classroom learning by long and short planned duration did last year.

Tolerance level

The tolerance level will remain at 40% for 2014 to 2015. We will calculate the number of leavers (aims or frameworks) below the Minimum Standard in each qualification type within a category of provision, as a proportion of the total leavers in that category. If 40% or more are below the Minimum Standard in any of the categories the provider is in-scope for intervention.

Minimum Standards reports

The QSR and Minimum Standards reports show the QSR at provider level compared with the national average and highlight education and / or skills provision that falls below Minimum Standards by group, qualification type, level, sector subject area and by aim or Apprenticeship framework. The reports are intended to support colleges and training organisations to identify poor performance and improve quality.

Colleges and training organisations should ensure that they do not use the Minimum Standards thresholds as quality benchmarks. The national average success rates are significantly above the thresholds used in the Minimum Standards. Colleges and training organisations should aim much higher than this and put in place improvement strategies to provide excellent education and / or skills training provision for all their learners.

We expect all colleges and training organisations to set challenging quality improvement targets using appropriate benchmarking data. It is for colleges and training organisations to identify the improvements required in the quality of the learners' experience to achieve this.

Failure to Meet Minimum Standards

If a college or training organisation fails to meet Minimum Standards, the Agency's [approach to intervention](#) will apply. We may also use the results of Minimum Standards to inform business decisions. If we do this, we will specify how as part of those business processes.

Proportionality

We will not intervene formally where the proportion of leavers in underperforming provision exceeds the tolerance level but there are fewer than 100 leavers in the cohort that is below the Minimum Standards threshold. We expect a provider in this position to set challenging quality improvement targets as a priority.

The Future of Minimum Standards

We intend to review the Minimum Standards thresholds and tolerances each year and will notify the FE sector of any changes as soon as possible before the implementation of any changes.

We are currently considering a number of possible developments for Minimum Standards in the future, which may involve:

- including OLASS provision from 2014 to 2015. We will share QSR reports with OLASS providers this year and undertake further modelling and impact assessment before setting thresholds and agreeing business rules.
- looking at intervening on the basis of a wider set of measures which could include outcome measures such as those identified in the BIS consultation on [Outcome Based Success Measures](#):
 - learner destinations (into further learning or employment)
 - learner progression (progress to a higher level qualification)
 - Earnings (following completion of learning)