



Consistent performance measures for post-16 learning

Progress report, February 2016

This briefing provides an update on the Welsh Government's programme to develop consistent performance measures for learner outcomes in further education (FE) and sixth forms. It outlines the proposed measures and our intended timescales for implementation.

The details of how the measures will be calculated are still being worked through. During 2016 and 2017, we will be consulting widely on the measures, including arrangements for transition from the current FE and sixth form measures. We will also be looking at how data can be presented and published in user-friendly formats, both for staff in colleges and schools, and for a more general audience including learners, their parents and carers.

Why are we doing it?

The current measures for learner outcomes in FE and sixth forms are entirely separate:

- In FE, the main measure is 'learning activity success' which is based on all terminated learning activities, and therefore combines learner completion and attainment but without taking any account of grades or qualification points scores.
- In sixth forms, measures are based only on pupils who are entered for examinations; they therefore do not include retention/completion, but do take account of grades and points scores.

This lack of consistency means that colleges and schools cannot be held accountable for outcomes in the same way, or compared on a 'level playing field', even where learners are doing the same qualifications in different settings. It also means that learners cannot make an informed choice about studying at school or college.

We have therefore made a commitment to replacing the existent performance measures with a new set of consistent measures which will be applied across FE and sixth forms. We are also working closely with Estyn to ensure that our approaches to analysing and measuring learner outcomes are better aligned.

It is not our intention to simply extend any of the existing measures so that they are used consistently across settings. Instead, we are reviewing our whole approach, with a view to having a more 'rounded' set of measures aligned with programme-based planning and funding.

The proposed measures

■ Success	Sub-measures: (i) Welsh Baccalaureate success (ii) Main qualifications success
■ Post-16 value added	
■ Learner destinations	

Annex A summarises current proposals on each of the measures.

The challenges

Introducing a consistent set of performance measures is not straightforward, because:

- There are still separate data collections for sixth forms and FE, based on systems that have been in place for more than a decade. Establishing a single data collection system would be a major piece of work which is not within the scope of this programme, so we need to amend the existing collections in some cases (including the new full-year Post-16 collection from schools), and undertake extensive data matching exercises in others.
- We have to work within existing staff and budgetary resources and this means that our work, including capacity to undertake statistical analysis to inform the new measures, has to be prioritised.
- The post-16 curriculum is complex and there is not always a clear consensus on what constitutes a 'positive' outcome for a particular qualification or learner. There are also changes taking place, such as the introduction of the new Welsh Bacalaureate programmes, which need to be accommodated.
- Some of the work we are doing cannot be delivered 'in house', but needs to be contracted out, or delivered in partnership with other agencies.

All of this means that progress can be slow. We are still committed to the introduction of consistent measures and are now getting to the stage of putting a firmer timetable in place, which we will publish in the next few months.

Learner Voice Wales

Learner Voice Wales is a survey of learners in further education, work-based learning, adult community learning and Welsh for Adults, used to derive an overall measure of learners' views. We ran the survey in 2013, 2014 and 2015, and completed a [pilot](#) with a number of sixth forms in 2015.

The survey is currently on hold for 2016 and 2017 so that we can focus on the development of the other measures outlined in this paper. We will consider how the survey could evolve in the future to meet Welsh Government, Estyn and provider needs, including and the feasibility of extending it to sixth forms and making it one of the consistent performance measures.

What happens next?

We will be working closely with FE institutions, schools, local authorities and Estyn this year to develop and consult on the measures. We have an established steering group for the FE sector and will shortly be expanding this to include local authority and school representation, to help us with detailed work on the new success measures.

We anticipate publishing further updates in the summer term 2016 (including key principles underpinning the measures, and a timetable for their introduction) and again in autumn 2016.

Meanwhile, if you have any questions or would like to be involved in pilot work, please contact us at post16quality@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

Headline measure: Success

To measure retention and attainment, reflecting the learner's aims

- The existing FE learning activity success measure is being reviewed, to more fully reflect learner outcomes based on their original learning aims (including outcomes across two years where appropriate).
- We have introduced a post-16 data collection from schools which will enable us to measure retention/completion.
- During 2016 sector working groups will help us define new measures for vocational and academic success, which can be applied to both FE and sixth forms.

Development and modelling of new measures: spring/summer 2016
 Initial analysis issued to providers (based on 2014/15 data): autumn 2016
 Parallel running with existing FE success measure for 2015/16 data
 Proposed introduction of new measure(s): winter 2017 (based on 2016/17 data)

Headline measure: Post-16 value added

To measure attainment, taking account of learners' starting points including their prior attainment

- Value added takes account of learners' prior attainment and other variables to predict their attainment in their current learning activities.
- Following a scoping exercise in 2015, we are currently procuring an external contractor to develop and implement a methodology which can be applied across the post-16 sector in Wales.
- Initially, this will focus on Level 3 qualifications with other qualifications explored during the pilot phase.

Contractors appointed to develop, pilot and implement a methodology: late April 2016
 Pilot phase including consultation with all post-16 providers: June 2016 – June 2017
 New measure in place: September 2017

Headline measure: Learner destinations

To measure learners' progression into further learning or employment

- We have published two [statistical releases](#) summarising the educational destinations of 'Key Stage 5' learners in FE and schools (16-19 year olds studying at Level 3).
- In England, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has instituted a major programme of data matching which includes information on earnings and benefits. We hope to take part in this programme to inform destinations measures as well as wider research on learner progression and long-term outcomes.

We hope to undertake a pilot exercise this year, subject to resources and to further discussion with BIS. A fuller update will be issued once we have a firm timetable.