

successforall

New Measures of Success: Priorities for Development

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ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

department for
education and skills



Learning+Skills Council

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Executive Summary of Measuring Success
in the Learning and Skills Sector



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Summary

The Learning and Skills Council and its partners the Department for Education and Skills, the Office for Standards in Education and the Adult Learning Inspectorate, are developing new success measures that will recognise learner success and measure performance effectively. This document sets out the priorities for this area of work with reference to the responses to consultation received from the sector. It establishes four priorities relating to: learner success; value added and distance travelled; performance measures (including measures for employer engagement and learner destinations); and value for money. Other aspects relate to non-accredited learning, learner satisfaction and staff data.

June 2004

Introduction

1 The partners developing the new measures of success are the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI). They are grateful to the many organisations and individuals that responded to the consultation. The responses are summarised at the Annex to this document. The full report is available at the *Success for All* website (www.successforall.gov.uk) and also at the LSC and inspectorate websites (www.lsc.gov.uk, www.ofsted.gov.uk and www.ali.gov.uk).

2 The partners have completed a full review of the original proposals. The resulting work programme and planned outcomes for 2004/05 are discussed below. These revised proposals build on the outcomes of consultation and take into account developing priorities and the budget available.

3 All the proposed new measures received significant support from the respondents to the consultation. This is reflected in the work programme, which includes outcomes linked to the new measures. Although work on every measure will not be completed in 2004/05, the commitment to their phased development remains.

Priorities

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The review identified four priorities for 2004/05. These are:

- a developing a new measure of learner success that can be applied to all providers of accredited post-16 courses and that takes into account their unique curriculum or training profile
- b value-added and distance travelled measures:
 - further development of a value-added measure for learners aged 16-19 who are taking graded qualifications at Level 3
 - development of a distance travelled measure for learners aged 16-19 based on their prior attainment
 - exploration of the feasibility of a distance travelled measure for adult learners that would command the confidence of the sector and other users
- c new measures to support the delivery of the Skills Strategy
- d continued development work on value-for-money indicators.

Priority 1

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Priority 1 is to improve the LSC's key measure of performance: learner success rates. This includes harmonising the application of this measure to all providers of post-16 accredited education and training in order to support valid comparisons of provider performance. The ability to make such comparisons will be important to the LSC and the inspectorates in fulfilling their responsibilities. The successful achievement of this priority requires the development of a measure that commands the confidence of providers and other users of success rate data. To achieve this it will be necessary to:

- introduce a common 'headline learner success indicator', using a refined version of the methodology outlined in Circular 03/16
- carry out a feasibility study to explore the issues arising from the proposed extension of learner success rates to post-16 provision in schools by September 2004
- agree definitions for 'start date', 'transfer' and 'success' that can be applied uniformly to colleges, adult and community learning and work based learning providers. We will explore the possibility of extending this approach to school sixth forms

- develop appropriate national benchmarks for learner success to enable judgements of performance to be made on a comparable basis
- review the basis of success rate calculations for work based learning providers. This will look at moving to a system based on the success rates achieved by learners who are expected to complete an Apprenticeship in a given year. At present, the success rate is derived from the relationship between the number who leave in a given year having successfully completed their qualification aim, and the total number of leavers.

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The aim is to develop learner success measures for all providers by May 2005 for introduction from September 2005.

Priority 2

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Value-added and 'distance travelled' measures of performance are designed to take account of differences in the prior attainment of learners. Such measures can be used both to assess provider performance and to provide information for reflection and improvement by providers. These measures complement the 'headline learner success indicator', and allow the overall performance of a provider to be better understood and represented. Three areas for development have been identified:

- an improved measure of value added that is applied to all learners aged 16-19 who are undertaking graded qualifications at Level 3
- a new measure of distance travelled for learners aged 16-19 that is based on their prior attainment at Key Stage 4
- a new measure of distance travelled for adult learners.

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The aim is to develop, test and review the first two measures by April 2005 and to implement them in stages in 2005/06. Implementation of a staff development programme, support materials and guidance will be rolled out from May 2005. These measures will be initially launched from 2005/06 using the available data, for a planned full launch in 2006/07.

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In the case of the distance travelled measure for adult learners, the aim will be to publish a report in spring 2005 that outlines possible approaches. This will form the basis for discussions with stakeholder groups early in 2005/06. This longer-term approach reflects the significant concerns expressed by a sizeable minority of the respondents to the consultation in respect of the proposed basis for this measure.

Priority 3

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The important contribution of providers to the delivery of the Skills Strategy is recognised by the proposal for a basket of measures to support its implementation. The aim of these new measures is to assist providers in contributing appropriately to the delivery of the Skills Strategy and to improve their working relationship with employers. The main elements that are proposed are:

- improvement to the LSC's key performance measure of learner success rates. The developments proposed are outlined under Priorities 1 and 2. The aim of these is to ensure that the LSC and the inspectorates are better able to identify both poor performance and best practice. The achievement of these aims will have a positive effect on the workforce by improving the relevance and level of skills and educational attainments of existing and potential employees. The measures will reflect the drive for increased participation and improved learner success rates across the sector. Their influence is expected to be particularly strong in relation to work based learning, where new performance measures and benchmarks are proposed
- the development of targets for employer engagement for all providers. Those responding to the consultation recognise that employer engagement covers a range of activities and therefore that a range of targets is needed to reflect providers' missions and the different types of provision they offer. After consultation with stakeholders, we have decided that each provider's targets should be set in a wider context, rather than resulting from an isolated dialogue with their local LSC. It is proposed to continue to work with the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA),

the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) and Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to develop a framework of measures that reflects the contribution made by providers to meeting the local, regional and sectoral needs and priorities of employers, and which are appropriate to each provider's mission. A target for employer engagement will be a key part of each provider's three-year development plan and the annual allocation of 'block funding' will be linked to its successful delivery

- introduction of a measure that ensures that the guidance available to employers and individuals in respect of those qualifying for the Level 2 learning entitlement is appropriate and of a high standard
- continued development of the National Employer Skills Survey, including further development of the employer satisfaction questions within it, and greater use of its findings to inform the delivery of the Skills Strategy
- to complement locally agreed targets in provider three-year development plans, we will continue to explore the feasibility of a target for employer engagement which might form the basis for national comparison. We will report on the outcomes of this further feasibility study by December 2005.

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In addition, a significant improvement in the information available on learners' destinations is planned. As this information becomes available, it will help the Government and the LSC to understand better the impact of different learning routes on individuals' employability, career paths and rates of promotion. This information on longitudinal career development will also help learners to make informed choices about the learning routes they should follow. The research will:

- explore the feasibility of introducing a national survey of learners' destinations, including identification of priority learner groups to be surveyed
- explore with providers the feasibility of tracking their learners' destinations in priority areas identified with their local LSC.

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The impact of these measures on the delivery of the Skills Strategy will accumulate over a number of years. In addition, the new measures described under Priorities 1 and 2 will be introduced in 2005/06.

Priority 4

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Value for money (VFM) in the further education sector was historically driven by progressive reductions in unit funding levels. The feeling in the sector is that these reductions have increased efficiency by driving down costs but have had no positive impact on quality generally. What is required are VFM measures at both macro (LSC) and micro (provider) levels to take greater account of the value delivered by the sector, rather than just cost reduction, irrespective of whether the sector or provider is effective.

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In responding to the consultation, respondents recognised the many difficulties in developing a measure for VFM and the requirement to factor in numerous variables that could have an impact on the value given by a provider. Each of the three options proposed had supporters and opponents. However, the key message was that more research was needed to overcome the concerns expressed. We also recognise that the measure should work in harmony with current sector initiatives, such as three-year development plans, plan-led funding and widening participation. In response to these comments, we propose to use external consultants to continue the development work on VFM indicators. This project will be led by the DfES. The project aims to produce more detailed options for consideration towards the end of 2004.

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In addition to the outcomes identified against the four priorities, the following are planned for delivery in 2004/05 against the other new measures as follows.

- a Non-accredited learning. The outcomes of this work will be delivered by April 2005 and include:
- a national consultation on the proposed approach, including regional consultation events
 - published consultation results
 - identification of, and working with, implementation champions
 - production of materials and planned training to assist providers and local LSCs in rolling out the Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA) approach, including:

- 1 generic guidance on identifying the elements of the staged process in operation
 - 2 a good practice guide on implementing RARPA in different types of provision
 - 3 staff development materials
 - 4 quality criteria for the national validation system
- a final RARPA circular
- b Learner satisfaction. The outcomes of this area of work will be delivered by October 2004 and include:
- published revised core questions for use when gathering learners' views
 - a national standard for processes to collect information on learner satisfaction, including:
 - 1 key principles for local surveys
 - 2 key characteristics of running surveys that are consistent with the national methodology
 - a national learner survey methodology reference document
 - support materials and a good practice guide on using survey results and benchmarking against national results
- c Staff measures. Outcomes from work in this area will be:
- a review of the Staff Individualised Record (SIR) to establish whether it is still appropriate, whether changes are needed or whether other forms of data collection would better meet the needs of the LSC, DfES and the inspectorates without imposing an increased administrative burden
 - extension to all providers of the arrangements for agreeing professional qualifications targets in three-year development plans.

Evaluation

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Throughout the development period, we will involve providers and their representative bodies to ensure the new indicator commands the confidence of all user groups. We will consult further on the final suite of measures before implementing them.

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Evaluation of the initial implementation will be undertaken, and the measures and approach fine-tuned as appropriate, during 2005/06.

Annex A: Executive Summary of Responses to Measuring Success in the Learning and Skills sector

1

The consultation and discussion document *Measuring Success in the Learning and Skills Sector* outlined the LSC's commitment to putting in place a coherent set of success measures that can properly recognise and celebrate learners' achievements and evaluate the effectiveness of providers across the learning and skills sector. The proposals outlined improved ways of measuring the performance of individual providers in relation to:

- learners' success (retention and achievement of qualifications)
- value-added and distance travelled
- learners' satisfaction
- learners' destinations and the long-term benefits of learning
- measures concerning staff
- measures concerning employers
- value for money.

2

The aim is to develop a range of measures that can be used across the learning and skills sector, including colleges, work based learning providers, adult learning providers and school sixth forms. These measures will be consistently applied, while recognising that some measures may not apply to every setting. The development of these success measures for learners and providers will enable the LSC to report at national level on trends and improvements across the sector. Over time, it will also provide more extensive national benchmarking data so that providers can compare their performance with others in order to support continuous improvement.

3

The consultation on the document took place over the period November 2003 to February 2004. The LSC thanks the 150 organisations and individuals who responded. Responses demonstrated a high level of support for the general direction of the developments proposed and welcomed the initiative to improve the

measures of success used in the sector. Within the context of this support, a number of important concerns and helpful proposals were raised concerning the nature of some of the individual measures and their further development. The general tone and content of the responses underlined both the complexity of some of the measures proposed and the importance attached to them by providers across the sector.

4

Respondents welcomed the opportunity to comment on the proposed measures at an early stage of their development. Many, however, stated that they were unable to comment in detail at this stage of their design and requested the opportunity to consider the measures again when they were fully developed. Several also asked to participate in the trialling of the measures.

5

The most important concern expressed involved publication of the outcomes of the measures for individual providers. The generally expressed view was that any data which assisted providers to improve their support to learners was welcomed, providing that it was not used to produce 'league tables'. While a majority of respondents did not oppose publication of appropriate measures, they stressed the importance of careful design to avoid unfair comparisons which could produce perverse incentives for providers.

6

The quality of the responses will ensure that further development of the measures by the LSC, DfES, Ofsted and the ALI will be better informed and directed. It is intended that the individual measures will be appropriately consulted on and trialled before they are introduced.

Measuring Success in the Learning and Skills Sector: Responses to the invitation to comment on proposals for new measures of success contained in the consultation and discussion document 'Measuring Success in the Learning and Skills Sector', LSC, November 2003

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