



Qualification success rates

School sixth forms

This is a briefing document providing an overview of the development of a new measure of qualification success rates for school sixth forms.

The aim of the new measure for qualification success

1 At present, different methods are used to calculate success rates of students in further education (FE), work based learning (WBL), and school sixth forms. The development of similar methods of calculation will enable a fairer and more accurate comparison of effectiveness of different providers across the post-16 sector.

2 Currently post-16 performance tables report the achievements of 16 -18 year olds in schools using the average point scores achieved by students when they sit examinations. Although this provides a common measure, it does so only for a limited range of qualifications (GCSE, A/AS, AVCE and Level 3 Key Skills). Furthermore, the way that learner achievement and success rates are calculated for FE and sixth form colleges (measuring the number of qualifications gained as a percentage of the number of learners who started the course) is different from that applies to school sixth forms.

3 A feasibility study has now been completed, looking at the proposed extension of success rates to post-16 provision in schools. This study has shown that new ways of calculating success rates can be extended to schools, but that there are some key technical issues that need to be resolved before this can happen.

The importance of the new measure for local LSCs and learning providers

4 For local LSCs the new measures of success rates will play an important role in planning, enabling them to make comparisons of education quality across a range of different providers. For learning providers themselves, the new measures will help to create a level playing field, in which their performance relative to other providers can be assessed objectively. Publication of the new rates will help improve teaching and institutional management, and enable potential learners and parents to be better informed about the choices that are available to them. This has been signalled in the 14-19 white paper as a key element in the new accountability framework.

The likely impact on learning providers

5 There are two steps to achieving harmonised success rates:

- collection of information from schools, which is not the case at present
- collection of information on the same basis from different types of providers.

6 To achieve the former we are developing systems to collect the information in the School Census (which from 2006 replaces the Pupil Level Annual School Census). To achieve the latter, we need to ensure that the same data definitions are used throughout. We would do this by extending the 'Common Basic Data Set' to include much more data about qualifications, including in particular GCSE and post-16 qualifications. Our aim in both these areas is to minimise the administrative burden on schools.

What local LSCs and learning providers need to do now

7 Lead times for changes in data collection from schools are long, because of the need for school management information system software to be updated and to give schools and LEAs time to get ready. While local LSCs and learning providers should be aware of the forthcoming changes, the impact of the new measures of success rates is not likely to be felt immediately in schools.

Next steps

8 School software suppliers are unable to develop their systems in time to enable the collection of the post-16 learning aims for individual students for the 2006/07 academic year. It has been agreed that an interim solution will be developed for the 2006/07 year to run concurrently with Schools' existing systems. It is expected that the required data will be collected via this interim solution in the autumn term 2006.

9 A communication plan will be established to disseminate information to schools, local authorities and LSC colleagues.

Further information on the new measures of success for the post-16 sector can be found in the dedicated new measures area of the LSC website at <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/nms>.

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