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Guidance

Review of end of year 16 to 19 study programmes data for 2016 to 2017

This contains important actions and clarifications for institutions delivering 16 to 19 provision.

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Introduction

For the fourth year, we have undertaken a comprehensive review of end year data supplied by providers funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to deliver study programmes to young people. Previous reviews were undertaken for the academic years [2013 to 2014](#), [2014 to 2015](#) and [2015 to 2016](#). This review now focuses on the 2016 to 2017 academic year.

The purpose of this factsheet is to present the main findings from the 2016 to 2017 review and to highlight important actions for institutions delivering 16 to 19 provision.

Purpose and findings

There are two main stages to this review.

1. Analysis of study programmes [delivery patterns](#) provided to 16 to 18 year olds

Purpose

This is to ensure public funding for provision meets the core principles of study programmes as detailed in the Department for Education (DfE) guidance, [16 to 19 study programmes](#). The analysis helps ensure students receive high quality education that meets their needs and aspirations.

Findings

Our findings this year again show that overall, the National Funding Formula is having the impact we expected on the delivery of study programmes for 16 to 18 year olds in the vast majority of institutions.

Our data review shows there was a rise in the proportion of students on a vocational substantial level 2 (SL2), vocational substantial level 3 (SL3) or work experience core aim. There was an increase in the number of students with a prior attainment in English and/or maths graded below C/4 who are now studying and achieving GCSE English and maths.

As expected, there was an increased proportion of students in full time bands and an increased proportion of non-qualification hours. There was also a decrease in the number of compressed delivery students and in the number of students undertaking short programmes.

2. Analysis of non-standard delivery

Purpose

This is to identify where delivery by some institutions is non-standard when compared to the delivery by the majority of institutions. As we have mentioned in previous years, this does not necessarily mean that institutions are not delivering valid study programmes. We expect institutions to be able to use the flexibilities within the principles of study programmes to deliver provision that meet the diverse needs of their students. We do however want to identify non-standard delivery and look further into these delivery patterns.

We have investigated four areas of delivery in particular and contacted institutions with:

- 10 or more students on compressed delivery who spent 40 hours per week or more on their study programme
- 10% or more of their students with a 2 weeks qualifying period who finished early: within 1 month after their qualifying period (within 44 days)
- 5 or more students on a short summer programme
- 5% or more of students with a core aim below level 2 and with a prior attainment in English and maths at

Grade C or above

We asked these institutions for an explanation why they are delivering this way.

Findings

Following a review of all comments we received from the institutions we contacted, the main reasons of non-standard delivery were:

- study programmes tailored and delivered to meet individual diverse student needs and characteristics
- misunderstanding guidance or inputting errors made whilst recording student data
- delivery patterns were allowed within the flexibilities of the study programmes but presented some concerns that will be addressed in the next funding guidance

We have identified some of the most common misunderstandings, referred to by the institutions we contacted for non-standard delivery, and have produced some [explanations](#). We have included within these explanations some notes on the future changes that we will make to the funding guidance as a result of some of the concerns identified.

Actions and clarifications

Action for providers

We advise all institutions/providers delivering study programmes (including traineeships) to 16 to 18 year olds to assess themselves against the [patterns we have reviewed](#) to ensure the study programmes they are delivering are in line with [study programme guidance](#).

We also advise that institutions/providers use the [explanations](#) we have prepared as they contain clarifications to the funding guidance and (for information) some of the future changes that have been agreed for the academic year 2019 to 2020. Institutions/providers must ensure they fully understand both the current [study programme guidance](#) and the [current funding guidance](#) and to conduct a thorough check of data returns to minimise the number of common errors.

Actions for ESFA

We will carry out a similar review of 2017 to 2018 academic year against the [core principles of study programmes](#), and will endeavour to publish the key findings by December 2019.

We will continue testing the areas of our guidance where there are apparent misunderstandings to ensure it meets customer needs. We will also ensure the guidance is aligned to changes in policy.

List of delivery patterns reviewed across all institutions

1. Number of students graded below C/4, a) studying and b) achieving GCSE English and maths

This is to monitor the Condition of Funding and determine the number of students without a GCSE or

equivalent in maths and/or English at grade A* to C that are continuing to study and achieve these qualifications within post 16 education and funding.

Guidance on the [maths and English condition of funding](#) is available.

2. Number of students graded below C/4 a) studying and b) achieving stepping stone qualifications in English and maths

This is to monitor the Condition of Funding and determine the number of students without a GCSE or equivalent in maths and/or English at grade A* to C) that are studying and achieving stepping stone qualifications.

3. Number of students with a Grade D/3 a) studying and b) achieving GCSE English and maths

This is to monitor the Condition of Funding and determine more specifically the number of students with prior attainment of GCSE grade D or equivalent in maths and/or English that are continuing to study and achieve these qualifications within post 16 education and training.

4. Number of students with prior attainment at grade C/4 or above in English and maths with a core aim below L2

This is linked to the [16 to 19 study programmes guidance](#) paragraph that states that substantial academic, applied or vocational qualifications should stretch students and prepare them for education at the next level or to employment (page 5). We have more specifically monitored the number of students with prior attainment at grade C or above in English and maths with a core aim below L2 in order to understand to understand the rationales behind the delivery of such patterns.

This review will lead to a [future change to the funding guidance](#).

5. Number of students a) studying and b) achieving substantial vocational qualifications at level 2 and level 3

This is to monitor the number of students that are studying and achieving substantial vocational level 2 and 3 qualifications.

Substantial vocational level 2 and 3 qualifications are those included in the DfE performance tables which are meeting the recommendation from the Review of Vocational Education (Wolf Review) recommended that study programmes should include more rigorous substantial qualifications that:

- provide progression to a level higher than that of their prior attainment
- include qualification(s) that are of sufficient size and rigour to stretch the student and that are clearly linked to suitable progression opportunities in training, employment or higher levels of education

We would therefore expect to see an increase in students studying and achieving vocational substantial level 2 and 3 qualifications within their study programmes.

All institutions should ensure their curriculum offer enables students to take qualifications and activities that prepare them for their next steps in line with the core principle of study programmes of enabling

progression to the next level of education or employment.

More information is available in our [guidance on the core principles of study programmes](#).

6. Shift in funding bands

This is to monitor the proportion of students being on full-time programme. The raise of the participation age and the increase in the number of substantial vocational qualifications being offered (as per one of the Wolf review recommendations) means that we expect to see a reduction in the number/proportion of students studying part-time programmes and an increase in the number/proportion of students studying full-time programmes.

7. Proportion of employability, enrichment and pastoral (EEP) planned hours in their study programme

All study programmes should include other activities unrelated to qualifications that develop the character, skills, attitudes and confidence that support progression.

We would expect that in the majority of cases, study programmes, (including academic study programmes) include other planned and organised enrichment activity, such as tutorials, work to develop study skills, leadership, teamwork or self-management skills and activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award or volunteering. However, we would not expect to see study programmes that did not include either work experience/placement or qualification hours.

More information on [non-qualification hours is available](#).

More information on [16 to 19 study programmes is available](#).

8. Number of external work experience (w/ex) hours

We expect work experience to usually take place with an external employer. This enables students to experience the real demands of the working environment, independent from their peers and their tutors, and put into practice the transferable and sector-specific skills they have learned. This has the greatest impact on students' employability. In addition, students can often get employer references for their performance which provides evidence for their CV, or the offer of a job on completion of their course.

We would expect to see a year on year increase in the number of external work experience hours and in the number of students offered an external work experience.

More information on [recording external work experience](#) is available.

9. Where students are recorded with a work experience aim in the 500+ hour band and work experience is not recorded as the core aim

The core aim is the principal or most important activity in the study programme and it will usually be the component with the largest number of planned hours. For study programmes where the work experience is greater than 500 hours in the academic year we would expect this to be recorded as the core aim.

Some vocational qualifications have work experience as an essential element. This activity should be recorded within qualification planned hours on the ILR/census and not duplicated as employability, enrichment and pastoral hours (EEP).

More information on [recording work experience](#) is available.

10. Number of students studying traineeships

Traineeship is a key government policy and we are looking to see if there is an increase in numbers of students enrolled on traineeships. Traineeships are an education and training programme for motivated young people aged 16 to 24 who do not have a level 3 qualification. They consist of work preparation training, a high quality work placement, and English and maths provision where appropriate, designed to equip young people with the skills and experience they need to progress onto an apprenticeship or other sustainable employment.

More information on [traineeships](#) is available.

11. Students on compressed study programme

A full-time study programme is defined as 540 planned hours or greater and we would expect that only in exceptional circumstances would a full-time study programme be delivered in less than an academic year. In some cases, where this best meets the assessed needs of the students and/or is strictly necessary to prepare them for their progression outcome, institutions will plan compressed programmes to allow students to complete a significant number of hours in a short period of time. These programmes will be funded at the standard funding rate based on the planned hours.

We would expect such compressed delivery to lead to excellent results, as demonstrated through qualification success rates and positive destinations. We would not expect this to lead to a student being funded for more than one full-time programme in an academic year.

We also expect compressed programmes to have manageable and realistic actual hours per week and we have also analysed compressed delivery for programmes that are greater than 40 hours per week. This review will lead to a [future change to the funding guidance](#).

More information on [planned hours](#) is available.

12. Students finishing their study programme one month after the end of the qualifying period

Institutions will only receive funding in subsequent years if students meet the qualifying period for their study programme (and the qualifying period for maths and/or English aims if this is to meet the Condition of Funding). The qualifying periods are 6 weeks for a programme with a planned length of 24 weeks or more, and 2 weeks for a programme with a planned length of less than 24 weeks. We therefore would not expect to see high numbers of students finishing within one month of their qualifying period.

For information, 'just after' is defined as students with an actual end date within 1 month after their qualifying period ends. For students with a 2 week qualifying period, this is within 44 days of their earliest start date (14 days + 30 days). For students with a 6 weeks qualifying period, this is within 72 days of their earliest start date (42 days + 30 days).

13. Number of retakes that exclude maths and English

Retakes are not generally eligible for funding as the activity has already been funded. Where there are exceptional circumstances outside the control of the student or institution, such as a period of long-term sickness, or good educational reasons, then the retake delivery hours for individual students may be included in the funded study programme hours. Institutions must not include any planned hours in funding returns for students merely retaking examinations.

Qualifications leading to a GCSE grade 4 to 9 or A-C in English and/or maths where the student has not yet achieved either a grade 4 to 9 or an A-C in these subjects are not treated as retakes for funding purposes.

14. Students progression

Institutions must be able to demonstrate educational progression for students recruited onto programmes funded by ESFA and be able to record evidence of good educational reasons for any individual students recruited to programmes which do not provide progression. All such students should only make up a small percentage of the total student cohort.

More information on [progression](#) is available.

15. Number of students undertaking short programmes delivered for under 6 weeks and for less 150hs and number of summer starts

This is to monitor the number of students undertaking short programmes. The raise of the participation age and the increase in the number of substantial vocational qualifications being offered (as per one of the Wolf review recommendations) means that we expect to see a reduction in the number of students studying very short programmes of less than 150 hours.

With regard to summer starts, we want to identify numbers as it is likely that students undertaking a summer programme have already been funded during the academic year and should therefore not be funded again.

For reference, please see the [16 to 19 funding guidance](#).

Important clarifications on the 16 to 19 study programmes following the review of end of year data up to 2016 to 2017 academic year

Following the review of end of year 16 to 19 study programmes data up to 2016 to 2017, we have identified that several areas need to be clarified to all institutions that are ESFA-funded to deliver study programmes to 16 to 18 year olds. These include 3 advance notifications of change to the funding guidance that will affect the 2019 to 2020 academic year.

Initial assessments

Timing

Initial assessments must take account of the students' prior attainment and abilities, this must be completed before the student enrolls on a study programme.

Progressions in courses offered

All study programmes should offer a programme that is at a higher level than the students' prior attainment. A study programme at the same level will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances, and if so, clear evidence and rationale should be recorded for audit purposes. Please see paragraph 19 of the [funding guidance](#).

Advance notification of change to the funding guidance: students with prior attainment in English and maths at grade 4 or above

We are aiming to include in the 2019 to 2020 Funding Guidance that students with prior attainment in English and maths at Grade 4 or above that are undertaking a vocational qualification are not expected to be on an Entry Level or Level 1 core aim, even if they have no previous experience in the vocational area – they should undertake a core aim at L2 or above, except in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances will not be on the basis of previous experience in the vocational area in question and should be fully documented for audit purposes.

Condition of funding

Institutions must take account of the student's prior attainment level before enrolling them onto an English and/or maths stepping stone or GCSE qualification and must record this correctly on the ILR.

Calculating planned hours

Apportionment of planned hours across 2 years

Planned hours for 2-year programmes must be apportioned over two funding periods. The hours entered must be realistic and deliverable to each individual student and for the academic year in question. Institutions must ensure that this can be evidenced if necessary to any funding auditor.

Dropouts

Some institutions may take into account historical dropouts in order to work out the planned end dates, if this is the case, dropouts must also be taken into account when calculating the planned hours.

Advance notification of change to the funding guidance: compressed delivery

We are aiming to include in the 2019 to 2020 Funding Guidance that the number of hours a student may study during a week should not be greater than the maximum number of hours a young person can legally work during a week. ESFA will therefore restrict funding to the first 40 hours per week and both the study

programme's planned hours and planned dates will need to reflect this.

Recording multiple core aims and/or high number of learning aims

Modular delivery:

All study programmes must be challenging to the young person with modular delivery only being offered if this supports the specific needs of the student. The [16 to 19 study programme guidance](#) mentions that 16 to 19 study programmes are designed to provide students with a structured and challenging learning programme that supports their development and progression in line with their career plans.

Please also note that the [funding guidance](#) states the following (paragraph 73, page 22):

“ Students who are only recruited to start short study programmes should only have the planned hours recorded on data returns for those associated planned short programmes. Institutions may plan programmes for students with the intention of starting the student on a small or nested qualification in a particular subject and progressing them onto a larger qualification only if they are successful in the smaller one. In such cases, the planned hours for the programme must only include the hours for the smaller or nested qualification. When the institution is sure that the student will progress onto the larger qualification, the planned hours may be updated to include the additional delivery. This advice applies equally whether or not there is any gap between a student initial short study programme and their longer study programme.

Summer taster session

Summer taster session: please note that taster sessions and summer courses should not be funded for year 11 completers and students who had just completed a full time study programme in that funded year. Please see paragraph 50 of the [funding guidance](#) for more information.

Advance notification of change to the funding guidance: students at more than one institution

We are aiming to include in the 2019 to 2020 funding guidance that delivery of short programmes whilst students are studying at another institution should be funded by the main institution delivering the study programme, whether the institution is publicly funded or not.

Recording EEP / work-experience hours

Work-experience hours that are an essential part of the qualification hours (for example when work-experience is a requirement to achieve a qualification) must be recorded within the qualification hours and not as EEP hours.

Please note that the [work placements guidance for the capacity and delivery fund \(CDF\)](#) states that the CDF funding is additional to the mainstream allocation and that as such, the work placement hours delivered through CDF must not be included in the planned hours recorded for the study programme.

Recording vocational core aims whilst on a predominantly academic programme

Where the student is studying both academic and vocational qualifications, their core aim is determined by the core purpose of the study programme, and this will normally reflect the majority of the planned hours.

Retakes

Retakes and resits hours should not be included in the funded study programme hours except:

- where students retake maths and English as part of the [condition of funding](#) (if students have not attained grade A* to C or 9 to 4 GCSE or equivalent)
- where there are exceptional circumstances outside the control of the student or institution, such as a period of long term sickness, or good educational reasons

ESFA enquiries

Contact form

<https://form.education...>

For all enquiries for the Education and Skills Funding Agency

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