

# Measuring Success

## newsletter

Welcome to the second edition of the Measuring Success Newsletter. It is produced by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) to keep you up to date with the development of New Measures of Success. These are key components of *Success for All* – Developing a Framework for Success.

The purpose of the new measures is to improve ways in which we make judgements about success in the sector and ensure that we focus on what really matters – which is to provide excellent teaching and learning for learners, local communities and employers. We will be testing the new measures extensively to make sure that they work and are seen as reasonable and appropriate. This will also ensure that they do not impose any unnecessary burdens on providers. We will issue newsletters every two months to keep you informed of developments leading up to the initial launch of the new measures in September 2005.

This newsletter will be sent with the *Success for All* newsletter to those organisations affected by the new measures. These include colleges, schools with sixth forms, adult, community and work based learning providers, and higher education institutions delivering further education. National

representative bodies with an interest in this sector will also receive a copy. An electronic version will be available at [www.successforall.gov.uk](http://www.successforall.gov.uk)

This edition of the newsletter contains the latest information about the Value Added and Distance Travelled measures. It also gives an update on the qualification level success measures, employer engagement (provider responsiveness) and value for money measures.

A consultation took place regarding the introduction of the New Measures of Success and the priorities for 2004/05. A summary of responses to this consultation was produced in June 2004 and can be found at [www.successforall.gov.uk](http://www.successforall.gov.uk)

Comments or enquiries relating to the measures are welcomed and should be sent to: [successforall@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:successforall@lsc.gov.uk)



## Priority One

### Measures of qualification success

We have already introduced a curriculum-adjusted success rate for FE colleges which reflects their performance more accurately and are considering expanding its use. Our main

priority now is to align the measures used to evaluate work based learning and FE success. We are also examining the possibility of including schools in a new measure of qualification level success. Further information is included in Issue 1 of the Measuring Success Newsletter, available via [www.successforall.gov.uk](http://www.successforall.gov.uk)

## Priority Two

### Value Added and Distance Travelled for Learners aged 16-19 years

The Value Added and Distance Travelled measures can help assess the performance of education providers. They will also enable providers to improve their performance and better motivate their learners. However, they will not need any extra data collection. As part of the pre-piloting phase, the LSC is consulting around 40 schools, LEAs, colleges and work based learning providers to ensure that the resulting data is relevant and useful.

A variety of Value Added and Distance Travelled information will be available for providers, including:

- Value Added and Distance Travelled scores for each institution
- Value Added and Distance Travelled reports for different groups of learners within each institution, categorised by subject and area of learning.

Those consulted have already made several recommendations.

- a **The information provided to motivate learners will be crucial to improving quality.**

Institutional level data will be useful, but providers are most concerned that the information used to motivate their learners is easily understandable and of high quality.

- b **The information must be clearly presented and available in a variety of formats. It should also take account of accessibility requirements.** Providers have asked for clear summaries showing the relative performance of their subjects and areas of learning. They also want to be able to analyse the data by other factors, such as gender and ethnicity. Data presentation must therefore be flexible and accessible. A number of formats have been suggested, including website, CD ROM, paper reports or a combination of these.
- c **The information should enable comparisons between similar institutions.** Providers have requested enough flexibility in the benchmarking to enable them to compare their results with institutions offering similar courses.

A paper giving more information about the outcomes of the first round of pre-pilot meetings will be available electronically via the Theme 4: Measuring Success area of [www.successforall.gov.uk](http://www.successforall.gov.uk)

## Priority Three

### Measures of provider responsiveness

The Skills Strategy (21st Century Skills), published in June 2003, outlined the importance of improving further education and skills training and tightening its relationship with employers. It emphasised the need to make provision more responsive to employers' needs and the importance of helping learners gain the necessary skills for sustainable, fulfilling employment.

While many colleges and providers are already working successfully with employers, strengthening this link and improving the responsiveness of the sector remain a key priority. Our new measures will help colleges and providers identify how they will respond to employer needs more effectively.

From spring 2005, colleges and providers will agree measures to improve the way they respond to employer needs. Our immediate priority is to develop a framework for these targets. This will build on the approach to employer engagement set out by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) in spring 2004.

The range of activities planned and conducted

by both providers and employers is too broad to develop a single, standard overall measure. This view was backed up by most responses to the consultation on New Measures of Success (November 2003).

The LSDA has identified three different ways in which providers work with employers:

- employers as **customers** when training their workforce
- employers as **strategic partners** in developing relevant education and training
- employers as **stakeholders** in the design, delivery and assessment of learning.

This analysis underpins our provider responsiveness framework, which will set out how all colleges and providers can engage with employers in one or more of these ways. We will develop a range of measures that reflects this activity, while also recognising its breadth, complexity and local context. This will enable the agreement of specific measures relevant to each college or provider in their new Three Year Development Plans drawn up in spring 2005. Further development will build on best practice and will be introduced in spring 2006.

We also plan to carry out further research and evaluation to help colleges and providers use the new measures to respond better to the skills needs of employers and employees.

### ***Do you want to know more about New Measures of Success?***

*Keep yourself up to date on the development and the future of the measures by reading the comments and responses document at [www.successforall.gov.uk](http://www.successforall.gov.uk) (choose Theme 4 and then New Measures of Success). This contains over 50 frequently asked questions about the New Measures programme. For example: are the timescales for development of the new measures unrealistic and will they involve a big burden for providers? Find out the responses on the website.*

# Priority Four

## Value for money measures

The Spending Review 2002 resulted in a number of Public Service Agreement targets for each government department. One such objective for the DfES was to establish performance and value for money (vfm) targets for colleges and providers. We now have minimum targets for qualification success rates and work on vfm is being developed through our activities on other measures of success.

Three broad options are being considered as measures of vfm.

- a **A pricing ratio:** for example, the cost of funding each successful learner.
- b **Performance over a range of indices** covering quality, quantity and costs of delivery. This could enable comparison of performance between organisations and therefore assess relative vfm. It is possible that the new measures of success could be used for this.
- c **Performance against plan:** if an institution met its objectives within the agreed financial targets, then it would be regarded as providing good vfm. This approach relies on effective planning and the existence of effective review processes to measure value as well as monetary performance.

While these are very different types of measures, they could be combined to form a headline vfm assessment. For example, in assessing performance against plan, several indices (including some form of price measure) could be used to set targets for performance.

Using a combination of measures may seem complex, but overly simple measures often result in inappropriate trade-offs and perverse incentives. Since consultation, we have analysed historic data to develop appropriate measures around the three themes of quality, quantity and cost/funding.

- a **Quantity:** a number of measures of quantity exist: for example, learner numbers, guided learning hours and qualification aim numbers.
- b **Quality:** ways to assess quality over the short and medium term include trends in qualification success rates, attainment levels, retention rates and value added/distance travelled, as well as inspection grades and learner satisfaction.
- c **Cost/funding:** the Government is increasingly focusing on Skills Strategy priorities, plus income targets for colleges to encourage them to broaden their resource base.

Therefore, a range of different measures already exist that could be combined within a weighted basket or a balanced scorecard approach to vfm.

We are now looking at real data at institution and local LSC level to consider which elements to include in a basket approach to vfm. We must also consider how to minimise bureaucracy, use existing data sources and fit in with both the LSC's business cycle and targets within agreed local plans.

Once these tests have been completed, we will again consult on the details and outline a possible way forward as part of our continuing dialogue with the sector.

© LSC November 2004

Published by the Learning and Skills Council. Extracts from this publication may be reproduced for non-commercial, educational or training purposes on condition that the source is acknowledged and the findings are not misrepresented.

Publication enquiries: 0870 900 6800 Reference LSC/AA000/1168/04

Learning and Skills Council, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

department for  
education and skills



Learning+Skills Council