



Department
for Education

Reforming the accountability system for 16-19 providers

**Government response to the
consultation on 16-19 accountability**

27 March 2014

Contents

Introduction	3
Our reforms	3
Context	4
The consultation	5
Performance measures	6
Headline performance measures	6
Minimum standards	11
Substantial vocational qualifications at level 2	13
Recognising all student achievement	15
Work-based learning	16
MOOCs	17
Annex A: Additional performance measures	18
Annex B: Consultation summary	21
Respondent information	21
Consultation questions	21
Annex C: Implementation timetable	32
Annex D: Revised point score system	33
Annex E: Progress measures	35
Level 3 value added progress measure	35
Combined completion and attainment measure	36
Annex F: Definition of new qualification categories	37
Academic qualifications	37
Applied General qualifications	37
Tech Level qualifications	37
Substantial vocational qualifications at level 2	37

Introduction

Effective education systems around the world have high levels of autonomy with clear and robust accountability. OECD evidence shows that strong accountability is an important part of improving students' achievement.

The government recently published its plans for reformed accountability systems for primary and secondary schools.¹ We are now setting out the details of our plans for 16-19 to complete the picture for a sharper accountability system for all phases of education, from age 5 to 19. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is also bringing more rigour to how adult and Apprenticeship provision is held to account.²

Our reforms

Good schools and colleges support young people to gain the knowledge, skills and qualifications that will enable them to progress to further study or training, Apprenticeships or sustainable employment. We want to improve levels of achievement for all in 16-19 education, to maximise the chance of all young people reaching their potential.

This document sets out our reforms to 16-19 accountability, which will start to come into effect from 2016. We will:

- **Introduce more rigorous minimum standards** to recognise the efforts schools and colleges make in helping their students' to progress and to identify when a provider is underperforming, so that action can be taken.
- **Publish clearer and more comprehensive performance information about schools and colleges** to increase transparency and show how they are performing against expectations. Our ambition is to include information on performance in qualifications below level 3 for the first time. Students will have reliable and consistent information, so that they can choose the providers that offer the best chance of helping them to achieve their ambitions. Performance measures include:
 - **a set of headline measures** giving a clear overview of the performance of a school or college in academic and vocational programmes compared with other institutions nationally. The headline measures are **progress, attainment,**

¹ [Government response to secondary school accountability consultation](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/secondary-school-accountability-consultation)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/secondary-school-accountability-consultation>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rigour-and-responsiveness-in-skills>

retention, destinations and progress in English and maths (for students without a GCSE pass at A*-C in these subjects).

We will require schools and colleges to make these headline indicators available in a standard format so that they are easy to interpret. So that parents can make comparisons between schools and colleges, we would like to show each school and college's position in the country on these measures and present these results in a manner that is clear for all audiences to understand. We will discuss how best to do so with stakeholders, to ensure that the presentation of the data is clear, fair and statistically robust.

- **a broader set of additional measures (Annex A)**, which will provide other important information on performance to give a fuller picture of an institution. We will continue to give access to the underlying data that supports performance measures for those who want to look at information at a finer level of detail.

The 16-19 landscape is complex. Students can learn in a wide range of settings, such as school sixth forms, sixth form colleges, 16-19 Academies, general FE colleges, University Technical Colleges, Studio Schools work-based and independent learning providers. At 16, students choose from a variety of academic and vocational qualifications or apprenticeships at different levels. In developing new accountability measures, we have balanced the desire for data that is straight-forward to understand, with measures that are fair and comparable across different providers.

Context

Clearer and more comprehensive performance tables³ will allow parents and the public to hold schools and colleges to account. We will also intervene quickly to address underperformance, whether it is identified through providers not meeting minimum standards, or being judged inadequate by Ofsted.

Ofsted has introduced new inspection frameworks⁴ for both schools and the further education and skills sector, with a greater focus on students making expected levels of progress. Our reforms to accountability measures will provide Ofsted with better information to help inform their risk assessments and judgements.

Our changes to 16-19 accountability are designed to support the reforms we have already made to improve the quality of 16-19 education and training. Professor Alison Wolf's Review of vocational education⁵ recommended that study programmes be introduced to offer students breadth and depth, without limiting their options for future

³ Data will be published under an Open Government Licence and published on data.gov.uk.

⁴ <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/how-ofsted-inspects>

⁵ [Review of vocational education: the Wolf Report - Publications - GOV.UK](#)

study or work. To support this, funding is now allocated per student rather than per qualification. From August 2013 all students have followed a study programme with clear study and/or employment goals reflecting their prior attainment. This includes substantial qualifications (which can be A levels or larger vocational qualifications) or, where appropriate, a traineeship, or extended period of work experience and employability preparation. Students who have not achieved at least a grade C in GCSE maths and English by age 16 will continue to work towards achieving these qualifications as part of their study programme.

We have taken action to reform vocational qualifications and ensure that young people know which qualifications are valued by employers and promote progression. These are the qualifications that we recognise in performance tables. A levels are also being reformed so that they are more rigorous and keep pace with the demands of universities and employers.

The consultation

On 12 September 2013 we published proposals to reform accountability arrangements for providers of 16-19 education and training in England. The consultation closed on 20 November. We received 247 written responses to the consultation, and held discussions with a number of interested parties. A summary of the consultation responses, including the percentage of respondents who raised particular themes in their discussion of the issues, is at **Annex B**.

Respondents to the consultation were generally pleased that we are strengthening 16-19 accountability. While most of the proposed measures were seen as comprehensive and useful to educators and other professionals, they were thought too numerous and complex for parents and students to understand easily. We have considered views made during the consultation and have developed a simpler set of performance measures for 16-19 accountability.

Performance measures

We intend to publish information on performance of schools and colleges at three levels:

- **Headline measures** – the main measures published in performance tables. They offer a ‘snapshot’ of provider performance to help students and parents make informed decisions about which schools or colleges to attend.
- **Additional measures** – these will give students, parents, teachers and others a broader range of information about school and college performance. Additional performance measures are set out at **Annex A**.
- **Underlying data** – more detailed data will be available below the headline and additional measures. This will enable education professionals, Ofsted, governors, and interested parents and students to explore the performance of providers in more detail, for example, looking at attainment in specific subjects. We will improve access to this information through the development of an interactive online portal, which will allow users to select and interrogate information that interests them. The new portal will be in place in 2015.

A summary of all the measures and a timetable for implementation is in **Annex C**. We have simplified and improved the point scores that will underpin the calculation of the reformed measures. The new point score system is outlined in more detail in **Annex D**.

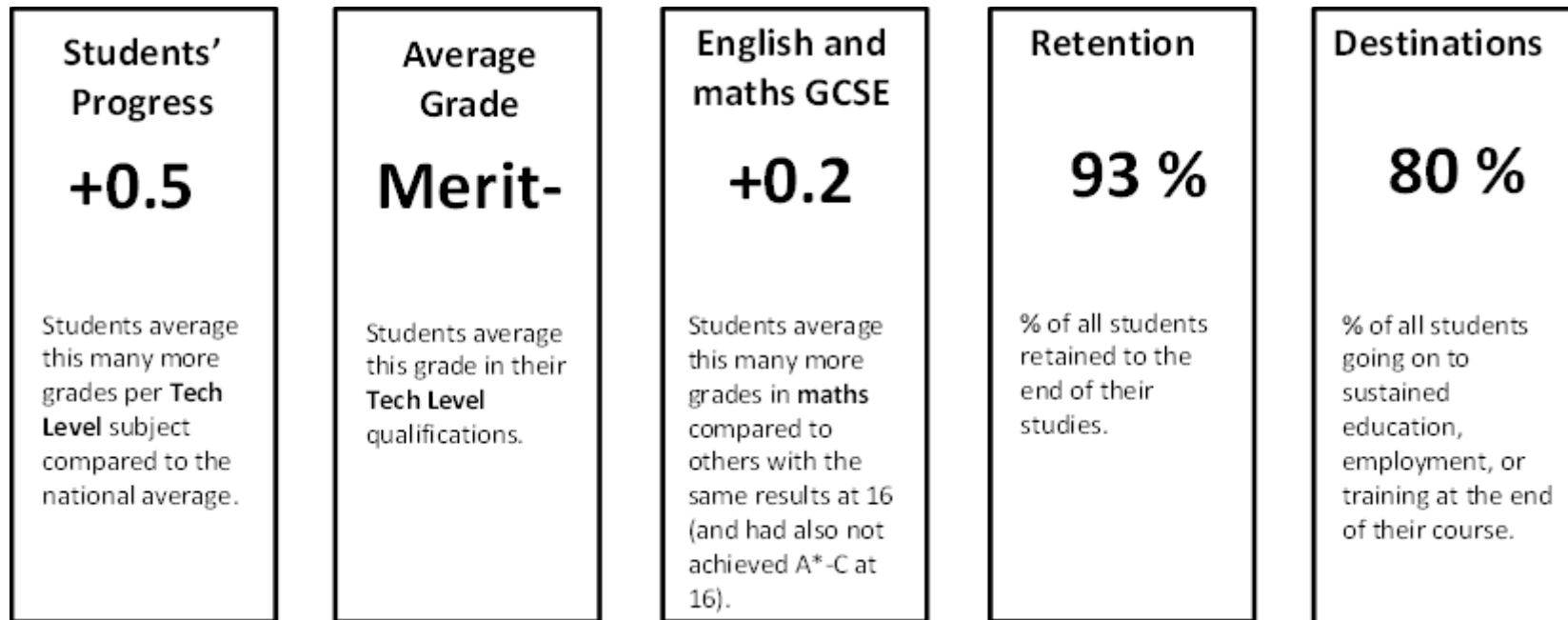
Headline performance measures

We will publish a set of clear, headline measures to give a snapshot of the performance of schools and colleges. It is our ambition to introduce these measures in 2016 performance tables (published in January 2017) and they will apply to both schools and colleges. They include:

- progress (and a combined attainment/completion measure)
- attainment
- English and maths GCSE (for students without at least a grade C at age 16)
- retention
- destinations.

We aim to include information on qualifications below level 3 in performance tables, starting with English and maths in 2016 and substantial vocational qualifications at level 2 in 2017. This is subject to completing extensive work to ensure we have fit-for-purpose data (see Annex A). The English and maths measure is new and the destinations measure is currently produced as experimental statistics, so these measures will only be included in performance tables once we are confident of their rigour and reliability.

Headline Measures



This diagram gives an **indication** of how the headline measures could look on a school or college's website. It shows progress and attainment for Tech Level qualifications, but **users would be able to switch from the default view** to show results for academic qualifications, Applied General and level 2 substantial vocational qualifications. The default view would be the largest curriculum offer for 16-19 year-olds in that provider, e.g. the default view for a general FE college primarily offering Tech Levels would initially display Tech Level results. Users would also be able to **change the view from maths to English GCSE**. We are considering how to present national averages alongside the data for the school or college.

*Progress	Attainment	English/maths	Retention	Destinations
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We believe that our headline measures should shine a light on the progress that students make while at a school or college. This is a fairer reflection of how the school or college is performing than looking only at the grades that students achieve. It encourages schools and colleges to focus on achieving the best outcomes for all students, irrespective of their starting points. This aligns with the approach we have taken in our reforms to secondary and primary accountability.

We will use progress measures, where possible, as the basis for setting new minimum standards to hold schools and colleges to account (see ‘Minimum standards’ below).

For academic qualifications we will use a value added⁶ progress measure in 2016 performance tables to show whether students have improved more than the national average given their prior attainment. We aim to use the same measure for Applied General qualifications (see **Annex F** for definitions), but we are seeking views on the statistical robustness of our approach first.

The level 3⁷ value added measure looks at the progress each student at that institution makes between key stage 4 and graded level 3 qualifications (excluding Tech Levels) and compares that with the actual progress made by students nationally who had the same level of attainment at key stage 4. Students are compared with other students studying the same subject and qualification nationally. This means comparisons are made on a like-for-like basis, before being aggregated to give an overall score for a provider, expressed as a proportion of a grade above or below the national average level.

We cannot use a value added progress measure for level 3 Tech Levels and substantial vocational qualifications at level 2.⁸ This is because there is a weak relationship between how well students do in academic subjects at key stage 4 and their scores in level 3 Tech Levels. Instead we will use a combined attainment and completion measure. We believe that this is the most suitable alternative measure for these qualification types. The measure will compare the attainment of students taking the same subject and qualification against the national average. Where a student fails to complete the course, zero points will be awarded, to reduce incentives to withdraw weaker students from examinations. The scores for each qualification are then aggregated to give an overall provider score expressed as a proportion of a grade above or below the national average.

⁶ This measures the difference between a student’s attainment at 18 and their prior attainment at 16.

⁷ Level 3 is the same level of difficulty as A levels.

⁸ Level 2 is the same level of difficulty as GCSE qualifications at grades A*-C.

We will re-examine the feasibility of developing a meaningful value added progress measure for vocational qualifications, once we have the data from the outcomes of graded (not just pass/fail) Tech Levels in 2018. **Annex E** sets out further details of the progress and combined attainment and completion measures.

Progress	*Attainment	English/maths	Retention	Destinations
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It is important to provide an indicator of schools' and colleges' overall attainment in different types of qualifications, which parents and students can easily understand and use to compare providers.

We will present headline attainment data separately for academic, Applied General, Tech Level and substantial vocational qualifications at level 2, publishing an average grade for each type of qualification.

- For level 3 academic qualifications, the headline attainment measure will show the average point score across all entries expressed as an A level style grade, e.g. C- or B+.
- For each of Applied General qualifications⁹, Tech Levels and substantial vocational qualifications at level 2 the headline attainment measure will show the average point score attained across all entries expressed as a vocational grade,¹⁰ e.g. D- or M+.

Progress	Attainment	*English/maths	Retention	Destinations
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English and maths provide a vital foundation to enable students to progress to employment and further study. This measure will support the requirement for students who did not achieve at least a grade C at GCSE by the end of key stage 4 to continue the study of these important subjects.

We recognise concerns raised in the consultation that a simple attainment measure, recording students aged 16-19 who achieve at least a grade C in these subjects, may encourage providers to focus on students on the C/D borderline to the detriment of others. Therefore, we will develop a progress measure to better reflect the contribution of providers in supporting students without a good pass at 16 to improve their performance in GCSE English and maths. Progress in each subject will be reported separately. Information on attainment will still be available in underlying data.

⁹ Details of the qualifications that count for this measure can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vocational-qualifications-for-14-to-19-year-olds>

¹⁰ This is likely to be based on the BTEC Subsidiary Diploma grades: Distinction*/Distinction/Merit/Pass/Fail.

The government has set the ambition that by 2020 the vast majority of young people continue to study maths to age 18. For students who have already gained a good pass at GCSE, we will introduce an additional measure (in 2017) showing the percentage who achieve an approved level 3 maths qualification, which includes new Core Maths qualifications to be introduced for first teaching in September 2015 (see Annex A).

Progress	Attainment	English/maths	*Retention	Destinations
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We want providers to ensure that students study courses that match their ability and ambition; and that they remain motivated and engaged to complete their studies. This measure will show the proportion of students who are retained by a provider and complete the ‘core aim’¹¹ of their study programme. We have renamed this measure ‘retention’ (rather than ‘completion’ as proposed in the consultation) to better distinguish it from other measures. Students will still have a 6-week period at the start of their course in which to change their minds about their core aim without this affecting the measure.

Progress	Attainment	English/maths	Retention	*Destinations
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We want young people to take qualifications that offer them the best opportunity to progress. We therefore aim to include destinations as a fifth headline measure showing the percentage of students progressing to sustained education, employment or training.

We acknowledge the concerns raised in the consultation about whether the current data on destinations, particularly employment destinations, is comprehensive. We are working to improve the quality of the data and will not publish destinations in performance tables until it is robust enough.

A more detailed breakdown of destinations data, such as entry to particular groups of universities, will continue to be published below the headline. This will include data at local authority level, so that destinations for students in the same area can be compared.

We are working with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to help align 16-19 performance measures with the new outcome focused success measures being developed for post-19 learners which measure destination into jobs or further learning, progression within learning, and earnings change. BIS plan to consult on these measures and how they might be used later this year.

¹¹ For students on academic programmes this typically means at least one A level (or equivalent); for students on vocational programmes this means the substantive vocational qualification representing at least half of their timetable.

Minimum standards

We want to set clear expectations of performance at 16-19 in order to hold schools and colleges to account. Appropriate minimum standards will help to raise standards and ensure a focus on achieving the best outcomes for all. They will also help to identify where there needs to be improvement. These new, more rigorous minimum standards will replace the current interim standards¹² from 2016.

We will expect all schools and colleges to strive to exceed the standards set. We will consider whether action is required if a school or college's performance falls below this minimum standard. If intervention is necessary, or if an institution is judged inadequate by Ofsted, they will be required to improve.¹³ They will come under additional scrutiny, until the Department for Education (or FE commissioner in the case of FE colleges) considers that they have sufficiently improved. If the provider does not improve, further intervention may be required. This could ultimately result in withdrawal of funding, closure, changes in leadership, a school becoming a sponsored Academy, or the FE commissioner taking further action in the case of an FE college.

Minimum standards will be set separately for academic, Applied General, Tech Level and substantial vocational qualifications at level 2. Not meeting the minimum standard in any one of these categories would identify the provider as underperforming.

For level 3 academic and Applied General qualifications,¹⁴ minimum standards will be based on the Value Added progress measure. For level 3 Tech Levels and substantial vocational qualifications at level 2, minimum standards will be based on a combined attainment and completion measure.

We believe that the combined attainment and completion measure provides a fairer basis for setting minimum standards than absolute attainment, as it compares performance subject by subject relative to the national average for that year, before an aggregated score is produced. This helps to take account of any variation in the performance of students across different subjects and between years. Further details of these measures are at **Annex E**.

We will exclude students from the completion part of the completion and attainment minimum standard if they leave early to take up an Apprenticeship, traineeship or supported internship. Providers will also continue to have a grace period at the start of the course (typically six weeks) in which students can leave a course without being penalised for non-completion.

¹² [Interim minimum standards for 2012 to 2013 - Children and young people](#)

¹³ Government assessments about the financial health of institutions may also trigger action.

¹⁴ Subject to further views on the robustness of the measure when used for Applied General qualifications.

New minimum standards will apply to level 3 outcomes from the 2015/16 academic year and to level 2 substantial vocational qualifications outcomes from the 2016/17 academic year. Details of the levels at which the level 3 standards will be set will be provided to schools and colleges in 2015.

To help schools and colleges understand how their students perform against the new minimum standard measures, we aim to provide them with provisional level 3 value added progress data in 2014 and provisional level 3 attainment/completion data in 2015.

Substantial vocational qualifications at level 2

Professor Wolf's review of vocational education found that too many students were taking qualifications that were not of value in securing skilled employment. We want to encourage take-up of level 2 vocational qualifications that support student progression into a recognised occupation.¹⁵

We will publish a list of substantial vocational qualifications at level 2 judged to meet pre-defined characteristics. This will enable students to identify which qualifications can provide them with access to a recognised occupation, just as we have done at level 3 with Tech Levels. These qualifications, alongside English and maths GCSE, will be the only level 2 qualifications recognised in headline measures for 16-19 year-olds, underlining their importance in providing progression to employment as well as further study at 17 or 18.

Some respondents were concerned that not recognising all level 2 qualifications may reduce opportunities for lower attaining students to use smaller level 2 qualifications as a stepping stone to level 3. We enable providers to demonstrate student progression by allowing them to defer the inclusion of student results in performance tables for one year. This means, for example, a student can achieve a level 2 qualification in one year and then go on to complete a level 3 qualification in the subsequent two years. This level 3 qualification would then be included in the headline performance table measure. We are also developing an inclusive measure to recognise students who achieve qualifications at a higher level than at key stage 4. Moving from a level 2 academic qualification at 16 to a substantial vocational qualification at level 2 will be counted as progress (see Annex A).

There was broad support for employer recognition, grading and external assessment or moderation to be required characteristics for substantial vocational qualifications, in the same way as they are for Tech Levels. We propose to align the characteristics of substantial vocational qualifications at level 2 with those of Tech Levels, although we will consider where it might be appropriate to set different requirements. As at level 3, an interim requirement will be set to give awarding organisations sufficient time to re-design qualifications to meet the requirements in full.

We will shortly publish technical guidance that specifies the requirements that must be met for a substantial vocational qualification at level 2 to be recognised in the headline performance measures for 16-19 year olds. Awarding organisations will be invited to submit qualifications for consideration for the list of approved qualifications.

¹⁵ A recognised occupation such as engineering, accountancy, veterinary nursing, vehicle maintenance etc.

We will publish the first list of substantial vocational qualifications at level 2 which meet the interim requirement in the autumn of 2014, for teaching from September 2015. These will be reported in the 2017 performance tables (published in January 2018). Awarding organisations will then have until July 2016 to develop qualifications to meet the full requirement.

Recognising all student achievement

We want all young people to be included in accountability measures, including those who are not taking level 3 or substantial level 2 qualifications. Many students for whom level 3 qualifications or substantial level 2 vocational qualifications are not appropriate will be included in the additional measure which shows the percentage of students who have progressed and achieved at a higher level of learning than their attainment at the end of key stage 4¹⁶ and/or in our additional attainment data for qualifications below level 3.

We are no longer planning to develop a measure showing the performance of low, middle, and high attainers. It is a less effective measure than our proposed progress measures. Our initial analysis also shows it would be difficult to define the parameters of the 'low' cohort at provider level in a way that allows a fair comparison across all types of schools and colleges.

A significant proportion of 16-19 year-olds studying below level 2 have learning difficulties and disabilities. Schools and colleges should enable these young people to achieve the best outcomes in adult life, including employment when possible. This is an important feature of the Department's special educational needs (SEN) reforms. We recognise that some students may not be able to gain any qualifications, but the priority still remains a successful transition to adult life. For example, some of these young people will be able to participate in work experience programmes, such as Supported Internships. This will enable them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and increase their readiness for paid employment, so that they can successfully find work.

The key stage 4 (ages 14-16) and key stage 5 (16-19) destination measures need to reflect these different destinations. We will extend destination statistics to include special schools from 2014. This will show the 2011/12 destinations of students against the existing destination categories of education, training or employment. Our aim is to include independent specialist providers as soon as the data is more robust.

The consultation sought views on what other categories of destination or other measures should be included for students for whom the existing categories are not a realistic option. There were mixed views on this question in the consultation, including whether performance measures were appropriate for such a diverse group of students. There was, however, sufficient interest for us to commit to exploring additional destination categories, such as independent living. We will also look at the feasibility, appropriateness and reliability of different approaches to capturing and reporting other outcomes data for these students, working closely with interested parties.

¹⁶ See Annex A – Additional performance measures.

Work-based learning

Currently, we only publish data in performance tables for those taking qualifications in schools and colleges. There was strong support in responses to the consultation for the Department to explore how to report the achievement of level 2 and level 3 students taking work-based learning, including Apprenticeships, at work-based learning providers. There was also recognition of the difficulty of developing appropriate and comparable measures across such a diverse range of providers and employers.

In principle, we would like to publish data on all 16-19 provision, including independent training providers, but we are aware of the challenges in collecting this data and reporting it in a useful and fair way. We are also mindful of the need to align with reforms to Apprenticeships over the coming years following the Richard Review of Apprenticeships.¹⁷

We intend to look at options for reporting data and setting standards on achievement in work-based learning at work-based learning providers, working closely with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

¹⁷ [Future of apprenticeships in England: Richard Review next steps - Consultations - GOV.UK](#)

MOOCs

MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) are a new way of delivering courses over the web. A number of universities now offer courses and modules that can be studied online in this way and the technology is beginning to emerge in further education.

The consultation asked whether MOOCs could play a role in 16-19 education and how courses delivered online should be recognised in the accountability system. The responses to the consultation on the use of MOOCs in 16-19 were mixed. Many thought that MOOCs could provide a complementary method of delivering courses, alongside face-to-face tuition, but that further research was needed. Typically, respondents thought that courses with robust assessments should be recognised in the same way as other qualifications.

We have commissioned work to further inform our thinking on MOOCs. This will look at the potential of MOOCs for supporting students in secondary and 16-19 education. It will cover current and future models of provision, the potential for MOOCs to add value to this phase of learning, and the barriers and issues to their use, including the accreditation and recognition of courses.

Annex A: Additional performance measures

The additional measures for 16-19 performance tables are set out below.

Attainment in qualifications below level 3 – Our ambition is to expand performance tables to include data on attainment in qualifications below level 3, to give a more complete picture of performance in 16-19 education. We are aware that this proposal has strong support, but we also have a number of challenges to overcome before we can implement our ambition in full.

We currently do not hold attainment data at every level, and will also need to do a substantial amount of work to develop fit-for-purpose datasets and revise performance tables to report this information. We are likely to take a phased approach and aim to publish level 2 qualifications as a first step. This will support our plans to publish headline measures on GCSE English and maths in 2016 tables and substantial vocational qualifications at level 2 in 2017 tables.

Achieving at a higher level of learning – We want to encourage schools and colleges to support students of all abilities to achieve at a higher level than their previous attainment. We also see benefits in an inclusive measure that includes students for whom level 3 qualifications (or substantial vocational qualifications at level 2) may not be appropriate.

As part of our ambition to include data on qualifications below level 3, this measure will show the percentage of students who achieve a qualification at a higher level than they achieved at key stage 4. Moving from academic level 2 qualifications at age 16 to a substantial vocational qualification at level 2 would also be counted as progress, as the knowledge and skills required are very different.

A level attainment – We have simplified the headline measures to show average attainment in all academic qualifications, but parents and others will be interested in a provider's performance in A levels.

This measure will show the average grade of students taking A level only programmes. It will not include AS levels or students taking A levels as part of a mixed programme. These will be reported in the headline academic attainment measure. The measure will be based on the points from a student's 'best 3' A levels divided by three.

We note concerns raised in the consultation about the 'best 3' methodology potentially leading to a narrower curriculum. We believe it is important to maintain the 'best 3' approach in order to encourage a focus on substantial A level programmes that enable students to apply to top universities.

AAB in facilitating subjects¹⁸ at A level – There were concerns expressed in the consultation about the use of a measure showing students attaining AAB grades in facilitating subjects at A level. Respondents were particularly concerned that this measure could narrow the curriculum, limit choice and devalue arts subjects.

Studying facilitating subjects allows students to keep their university options open, as they allow access to a wide range of courses at top universities. We intend to maintain this measure as a standard of academic rigour, but to address the concerns raised, will only require two of the subjects to be in facilitating subjects.

Attainment of an approved level 3 maths qualification – Our ambition is for the overwhelming majority of young people in England to study maths to age 18 by 2020. New, high-quality ‘Core Maths’ qualifications¹⁹ will provide an option to continue the study of maths for those students with at least a grade C at GCSE, but who do not wish to take A level or AS level maths.

This measure is designed to reward providers for supporting students to develop the advanced mathematical skills that are valued by universities and employers. The measure will show the percentage of students who achieved GCSE maths (at A*-C) at the end of key stage 4, who have gone on to achieve an approved level 3 Core Maths qualification, maths AS or A Level, or an International Baccalaureate level 3 maths certificate. We will publish technical guidance later in the spring on the requirements that maths qualifications will need to meet in order to count in performance tables.

Some concerns were raised in responses to the consultation about whether this measure could incentivise the take-up of Core Maths qualifications at the expense of AS or A level maths and further maths. We discussed this issue with school and college leaders. Given the high status and perceived value of A/AS level maths, we do not consider that this represents a significant risk. New qualifications will be designed for the group of students for whom AS or A level is not suitable, whereas AS and A level will continue to attract those students who are studying and/or will progress into courses with a significant mathematical focus, such as mathematics, engineering, economics and the sciences.

TechBacc – We have already announced²⁰ our plans for a new performance measure to recognise the highest level of technical training by students in 16-19 education. We will publish a measure showing the number of students at a provider who achieve the Technical Baccalaureate (TechBacc). The TechBacc is made up of an approved level 3

¹⁸ ‘Facilitating’ A level subjects reported in the AAB measure are: mathematics and further mathematics, English (literature), physics, biology, chemistry, geography, history, languages (classical and modern).

¹⁹ [16 to 18 core maths qualifications - Publications - GOV.UK](#)

²⁰ [Technical Baccalaureate measure for 16- to 19-year-olds - Publications - GOV.UK](#)

Tech Level qualification, an approved level 3 maths qualification and the Extended Project Qualification.

Substantial vocational qualifications at level 2 – We want to encourage the take-up of substantial qualifications most likely to help students progress to skilled employment, further study or training. This measure will show the proportion of students whose highest study aim is a level 2 qualification and are studying for a DfE- approved substantial vocational qualification at level 2.

Traineeships - We want to see a continuing expansion of traineeships²¹ in future years whilst ensuring we maintain quality. Looking towards 2015/16 we are considering how to better incentivise positive outcomes from traineeships, in particular around Apprenticeships and other jobs. We will continue to consider how these developments will be reflected in future reporting.

Supported Internships – A completion measure will show how effectively providers support their students to complete supported internships,²² which are designed to aid progression to sustainable employment for those who need extra support.

Closing the gap measures – We want to ensure that all schools and colleges are held to account for the achievement of their disadvantaged students, so that background or family circumstances become less of a barrier to success.

To help ensure a focus on the progress, attainment and destinations of disadvantaged students, we intend to develop measures covering all five headline indicators for students in 16-19 education who were in receipt of pupil premium funding in year 11.

²¹ [Traineeships - Children and young people](#)

²² [Supported internships for young people with special educational needs \(SEN\) - Increasing options and improving provision for children with special educational needs \(SEN\) - Policies - GOV.UK](#)

Annex B: Consultation summary

Respondent information

Please mark the box that best describes you as a respondent.

There were 247 answers to this question.

Options	Responses	
University/University lecturer	71	29%
Other	45	18%
College	37	15%
Local Authority	21	9%
Representative bodies	18	7%
School	17	7%
Parent/Carer	13	5%
Awarding Organisation	10	4%
Head teacher/Principal	7	3%
Union	4	2%
Governor/Governing Body	2	1%
Young person	2	1%

Consultation questions

Question 1: Do you agree that in future only high value level 2 substantial vocational qualifications which meet pre-defined characteristics should be recognised in the Top Line performance measures for 16-19 year-olds?

There were 175 responses to this question.

Options	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
No:	76	43%	31%
Yes:	64	37%	26%
Not sure:	35	20%	14%
Key indicators			

Need clarity on definition and scope of 'high value' and 'substantial'	34	19%	14%
Agee as it supports high value qualifications in performance tables	16	9%	7%
Need to recognise that level 2 qualifications may enable progression to level 3	20	11%	8%
Need to ensure a broad range of qualifications/sectors are reflected	57	32%	23%

Question 2: Should employer recognition, grading and external assessment or moderation be required characteristics for substantial level 2 vocational qualifications in the same way as they are for Technical Level qualifications at level 3?

There were 174 responses to this question.

Options	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
Yes:	74	43%	30%
No:	58	33%	23%
Not sure:	42	24%	17%
Key indicators			
Agree with external assessment/moderation	32	18%	13%
Employer recognition not required at level 2	13	7%	5%
Agree with employer recognition (at least in some cases)	35	20%	14%
Grading not appropriate for all qualifications	10	6%	4%
Grading is appropriate	16	9%	7%
This could be onerous to implement at level 2	13	8%	5%
Some courses/elements not suitable for external assessment	19	11%	8%

Question 3: Do you agree that awarding organisations need a two-year grace period to redevelop current qualifications to meet the characteristics required? This is the same time period that was given for the redevelopment of Technical Level qualifications at level 3.

There were 162 responses to this question.

Options	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
	Count	Percentage	
Yes:	130	80%	53%
No:	16	10%	6%
Not sure:	16	10%	6%
Key indicators			
Two years needed for planning/delivery/development/learning	38	24%	15%
Longer period needed/two years are the absolute minimum	12	7%	5%
Two years is too long	6	4%	2%
Teachers need time to plan/develop too	9	6%	4%

Question 4: What do you think this category of vocational qualifications should be called and how do you think it should be defined?

There were 62 responses to this question.

Key indicators	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
	Count	Percentage	
Level 2 vocational certificates or qualifications	11	18%	5%
Must be clear, simple and unambiguous	19	31%	8%
These qualifications do not need a name	11	18%	5%
Need consistency between level 2 and level 3	24	39%	10%

Question 5: What are your views on the necessity, benefits and implications for students and providers of a ‘best 3’ A levels measure?

There were 136 responses to this question.

Key indicators	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
Agree with best 3 A level measure/good idea	37	27%	15%
Narrows curriculum/discourages broader provision	88	64%	36%
Negative effect on take up of AS and further maths	12	9%	5%
Gives impression A levels are more important than other level 3 courses	24	18%	10%
Could disadvantage mixed programmes	36	27%	15%
Could increase entry criteria for A level courses	7	5%	3%

Question 6: Do you agree that the measures set out in annexes A and B should be the top line and additional data published for students studying at levels 1, 2 and 3?

There were 231 responses to this question.

Options	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
No:	145	63%	59%
Not sure:	48	21%	19%
Yes:	38	16%	15%
Key indicators			
Measures/data too complex	34	15%	14%
Disagree with facilitating subjects as performance measures	116	50%	47%
Continued use of facilitating subjects measures has implications for future of arts/humanities/music courses in schools	78	34%	32%

Need more clarity on how measures will be calculated	25	11%	10%
Progress measures should be included for all qualifications/levels	14	6%	6%
English and maths should be a top line measure	13	6%	5%
Agree with progress measure as a top line measure	13	6%	5%
Core maths measure must not disincentivise take up of AS or A level maths	11	5%	5%
Need robust destination data	12	5%	5%
Disagree with methodology of progress measure	13	6%	5%
Agree with completion measure	7	3%	3%
Agree with destination measure	9	4%	4%
Providers need access to pupil premium data	4	2%	2%
Could lead to increased entry criteria for courses	21	10%	9%
Need to ensure parity between academic and vocational qualifications in measures	29	13%	12%
Progress measures need to reflect 'full journey' of students	34	15%	14%

Question 7: Do you agree that we should explore how to report the achievement of students at level 2 and 3 taking work-based training (including Apprenticeships) with independent training providers in performance tables?

There were 165 responses to this question.

Options	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
	Count	Percentage	
Yes:	117	71%	47%
No:	32	19%	13%
Not sure:	16	10%	6%
Key indicators			
Need to carefully consider how to capture data and report in performance tables	20	12%	8%
Agree/would increase scrutiny on quality of apprenticeships/work based training	10	6%	4%
Agree all student achievement should be included	39	24%	16%
Need to consider diversity of providers/comparability	10	6%	4%
Risk driving providers away from working with certain groups of students	7	4%	3%

Question 8: What are the issues to consider in reporting the achievement of students in work-based training and in setting minimum standards for these providers?

There were 80 responses to this question.

Key indicators	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
	Count	Percentage	
Should be reported in the same way as other providers	22	28%	9%
Need to consider carefully how the data will be collected/reported	35	44%	14%
Need to consider how to handle providers with large proportion of students with poor prior attainment	12	15%	5%
Differentiation will be required for different sector subject areas	15	19%	6%
Comparability and differences between programmes and providers	36	45%	15%
Consider local factors	15	19%	6%

Consider quality of provision	9	11%	4%
Take account of prior achievement/disadvantage	15	19%	6%

Question 9: Do you agree that minimum standards at level 2 should be based on an attainment and completion measure for those taking substantial vocational qualifications?

There were 150 responses to this question.

Options	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
Yes:	83	55%	34%
Not sure:	34	23%	14%
No:	33	22%	13%
Key indicators			
Disagree. There should be a progress measure	7	5%	3%
Standards must be set appropriately	15	10%	6%
Recognise difficulty of progress measures for substantial vocational qualifications at level 2	12	8%	5%
Standards should be based on a broader set of measures	17	11%	7%

Question 10: Do you agree that we should not penalise providers if students leave their course to take up an Apprenticeship, supported internship or traineeship?

There were 166 responses to this question.

Options	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
Yes:	146	88%	59%
Not sure:	12	7%	5%
No:	8	5%	3%
Key indicators			
Depends if destination is of greater benefit	9	5%	4%
Should not penalise any appropriate destination including employment and further study	34	21%	14%
Students must remain in the new setting for at least two terms	4	2%	2%

Question 11: Do you agree that the level 3 minimum standards at 16-19 should be based on progress for academic and Applied General qualifications and on attainment and completion for Technical Level qualifications?

There were 155 responses to this question.

Options	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
Yes:	64	41%	26%
No:	46	30%	19%
Not sure:	45	29%	18%
Key indicators			
All should be measured on progress	34	22%	14%
All the standards should include completion	5	3%	2%
Progression methodology must take account of full student journey	17	11%	7%
Minimum standards may lead to negative provider behaviour	11	7%	5%
Need to recognise diversity of providers	7	5%	3%
Need to exclude students who move to positive destinations	6	4%	2%

Question 12: Do you agree that we should extend the reporting of the attainment of low, middle and high attainers to the 16-19 performance tables?

There were 153 responses to this question.

Options	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
	Count	Percentage	
Yes:	82	54%	33%
No:	36	24%	15%
Not sure:	35	23%	14%
Key indicators			
Must measure things other than qualifications	6	4%	3%
Need to consider how this will work for small numbers of students	5	3%	2%
Need clarity on definitions	16	11%	7%

Question 13: What categories of destination should we include when reporting the destination of students with learning difficulties and disabilities?

There were 68 responses to this question.

Key indicators	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
	Count	Percentage	
Community placement	8	12%	3%
Supported living/employment	34	50%	14%
Independent living/employment	44	64%	18%
Voluntary work/work experience	29	43%	12%
Further study or training	31	46%	13%
Not appropriate for such a diverse group of students	16	24%	7%
This needs further consultation	7	10%	3%

Question 14: What other data could be published to create the right incentives for post-16 providers to ensure the best progress and attainment for all their students, including enabling those with learning difficulties and disabilities to prepare for adult life?

There were 42 responses to this question.

Key indicators	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
	Count	Percentage	
Progression/distance travelled	21	50%	9%
Not appropriate to publish in this way for these students	14	33%	6%
Need better measurement of cohort profile for each provider	7	17%	3%
Measures to reflect levels of social skills, emotional awareness, self-reflection and self-evaluation	7	17%	3%

Question 15: Do you think the HE model of 'MOOCs' could work in a 16-19 environment?

There were 165 responses to this question.

Options	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
	Count	Percentage	
Not sure:	68	41%	28%
No:	57	35%	23%
Yes:	40	24%	16%
Key indicators			
Could have a place within a wider programme of study, but cannot replace classroom learning/face to face support	48	29%	19%
Need evidence of it working/not sufficiently tested – the effectiveness of MOOCs in HE is not proven	39	24%	16%
Suitable for some (e.g. motivated) but not all students – many students at this age will not have developed independent learning skills	36	22%	15%

Could benefit those educated at home or who are absent for extended periods	10	6%	4%
MOOCs are not suitable for developing and assessing practical skills	10	6%	4%

Question 16: If the assessments could be proven to be robust and to meet other key quality criteria, how do you think we could recognise accredited online courses in the accountability system?

There were 54 responses to this question.

Key indicators	Responses to this question		Of all respondents
Robustness of assessment needs to be assured	21	39%	9%
There will be infrastructure challenges that need to be addressed	6	11%	2%
Need to think about learning and assessment separately	4	7%	2%
Comparability with other academic/vocational qualifications – should be measured in the same way as other 16-19 qualifications/courses	29	54%	12%

Annex C: Implementation timetable

Note: Performance tables are published in the January following the end of the academic year to which they apply. For example, 2016 performance tables will be published in January 2017, based on data from the 2015/16 academic year. * We are seeking views on the robustness of our approach for Applied General qualifications

Academic year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Minimum standards	Interim standards		New minimum standards (Academic, Applied General,* Tech Level)	New minimum standards (Academic, Applied General, Tech Level, substantial vocational qualifications at level 2)	
Progress (value added)	N/A		Progress measure (Academic and Applied General qualifications)		
Progress (attainment and completion)	N/A		Attainment/completion (Tech Levels)	Attainment/completion (Tech Levels and substantial vocational qualifications at level 2)	
Attainment	Current measures		New attainment measure (level 3 Academic, Tech Levels, Applied General)	New attainment measure (level 3 Academic, Tech Levels, Applied General and substantial vocational qualifications at level 2)	
English and maths	N/A		Progress in English and maths GCSE		
Retention	N/A		Retention measure		
Destinations	Experimental statistics		Destinations (level 3 cohort)	Destinations (level 3 cohort and below)	
A level attainment	Current measures		A level attainment 'best 3' measure, AAB measure in 2 facilitating subjects		
Level 3 maths	N/A		N/A	Level 3 maths measure	
Other measures	N/A		N/A	Other additional measures (achievement at a higher level; attainment below level 3; TechBacc)	

Annex D: Revised point score system

We will be simplifying the point scores that underpin the calculation of many of the measures in the performance tables. Point scores assign numerical values to grades for each qualification. The changes we are making to performance tables mean that there is no longer the same focus on comparing students who are taking programmes at different notional levels. This allows us to simplify the points score system and to better reflect the difference in value between high and low grades.

The current system has a sharp jump between a fail and a basic pass. This means, for example, that currently two E grades at A level are given the same value as a single A* grade. The new point score system has equal increments between each grade and a greater variation between high and low grades.

The new system creates greater incentive for providers to achieve the highest grade possible for a learner; and greater rewards in performance table terms to those who outperform expected levels of attainment.

		Grades								
		Fail	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	A*
GCSE	Current Points	0	16	22	28	34	40	46	52	58
	New Points	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A level	Current Points	0	-	-	150	180	210	240	270	300
	New Points	0	-	-	10	20	30	40	50	60

The new point scores also remove the cliff edge at the pass/fail boundary. This helps avoid the issue of a single learner failing having a disproportionate impact on a provider's score. This also supports the presentation of point scores as grades in performance measures.

The underlying 'size' multiplied by 'challenge' methodology and the relative sizes of qualifications are being maintained from the existing system.²³ This means that an 18 unit BTEC National Diploma will still have equal weight to three A levels. The relative values of different types of qualifications at the same notional level are also being maintained. For example, a level 3 qualification with a Pass/Merit/Distinction grading structure will receive the same points for a Distinction grade as an A grade at A level.

The revised 'challenge' points are outlined in the following table for all the main grading structures. Their size values are unchanged from the existing system.

²³ [Performance points: a practical guide to key stage 4 and 5 points - Publications - GOV.UK](#). The changes outlined in this annex only affect the 'challenge' element of the point scores.

Grade structure	Level 3		Level 2		Level 1	
	Example grade	Points	Example grade	Points	Example grade	Points
Pass only General	Pass	30	Pass	6	Pass	2.5
Pass only NVQ	Pass	40	Pass	6.5	Pass	3
2 grade scheme	Pass	25	Pass	5.5	Pass	2
	Credit	40	Credit	7	Credit	3.5
3 grade scheme	Pass	15	Pass	5	Pass	1.5
	Merit	35	Merit	6.5	Merit	3
	Distinction	50	Distinction	7.5	Distinction	4
4 grade scheme (includes GCSEs at level 1 and 2)	Pass	15	C	5	G	1
	Merit	25	B	6	F	2
	Distinction	35	A	7	E	3
	Distinction*	50	A*	8	D	4
5 grade scheme (includes A levels and AS levels)	E	10	E	5	E	1
	D	20	D	5.5	D	1.75
	C	30	C	6	C	2.5
	B	40	B	6.5	B	3.25
	A	50	A	7	A	4
	A*	60				

We do not expect that the new point score will create wholesale changes in how schools and colleges perform on attainment measures in performance tables. The impact is expected to be smaller than the year-on-year variation in institution performance that is typically demonstrated in performance tables.

Ofqual are currently reforming GCSEs. This will result in a change to their grading structure and the relative value of each grade. The new point score system outlined here will be reviewed ahead of the first examinations in the new GCSEs in 2017.

In the new system, there is a difference between the relative size of points awarded to level 3 qualifications in comparison to qualifications below level 3. This is an inevitable consequence of removing the pass/fail boundary effect for A levels and GCSEs. The main impact of this will relate to a small number of level 3 qualifications such as AS levels that are included in the key stage 4 performance tables. We are currently finalising exactly how these qualifications will be treated as part of the wider changes to the key stage 4 tables.

Annex E: Progress measures

Level 3 value added progress measure

The level 3 value added measure compares the achievement of students in a particular subject with others of similar prior attainment. This is a better way of comparing a provider's effectiveness for academic and applied general qualifications, as it takes account of differences in intakes, and focuses on the contribution to outcomes made by the provider.

A statistical model is used to estimate the expected attainment (point scores) for each student in each subject and qualification type at level 3 (e.g. in A level History). This is based on that year's national average attainment for students in that subject and qualification with similar prior attainment at key stage 4. A student's value added score is then calculated by comparing their actual attainment at level 3 with their estimated attainment. This value added score is expressed as a proportion of a grade above or below the national average of zero. For example, if a student achieved a full grade higher than expected they would have a value added score of +1.0.

The value added scores for all students taking a subject in a qualification type at a provider are then aggregated into single score for that subject, which is then aggregated with the other subjects to create an overall academic or Applied General value added score for the provider. This identifies providers where students are making more or less progress than average.

The minimum standards will take the form of a number of grades (or a proportion of one grade) below the national average level of progress of zero.

We will explore including completion data in the value added progress measure to align it more closely with the combined completion and attainment measure used for other qualifications.

Confidence intervals

For academic and Applied General qualifications, minimum standard measures will be based on confidence intervals as well as a school or college's absolute value added score. The use of confidence intervals for level 3 minimum standards increases the robustness and fairness of the measure and is consistent with the approach used for key stage 4 floor standards.

Confidence intervals show the range of scores within which each provider's true performance can be confidently said to sit. The results of providers with a small cohort tend to have wider confidence intervals; this reflects the fact that the performance of a small number of students can have a disproportionate effect on overall results. We will

publish confidence intervals for the level 3 value added measure and use them for minimum standards. A provider will not be judged to be below minimum standards if their confidence interval suggests that the true performance may lie above the national average.

Combined completion and attainment measure

A combined completion and attainment measure will be developed for Tech Levels and substantial vocational qualifications at level 2. This measure will generate a relative attainment score for a provider compared to the national average.

Attainment in each subject is first calculated by adding up all the point scores for a subject and dividing them by the number of students taking that subject. Non-completion is treated as a fail and given a score of zero. A provider's attainment in a subject is then subtracted from the national average attainment in that subject to generate a score expressed as a proportion of a grade above or below the national average. Scores for each subject are finally aggregated to produce an overall provider score relative to the national average. For example, a provider may have a relative score of +0.5, meaning that on average students achieve half a grade higher than the national average.

A separate completion and attainment score will be calculated for level 3 Tech Levels and substantial vocational qualifications at level 2. The minimum standards will take the form of a number of grades (or a proportion of one grade) below the national average combined completion and attainment score of zero.

Subjects being studied by small cohorts will not be counted in either of the measures to avoid small numbers of students distorting results. We will do further work to establish the appropriate definition of a small cohort under these new measures.

Annex F: Definition of new qualification categories

Academic qualifications

The term 'academic' qualifications covers A levels and a range of other academic qualifications taken at level 3, including AS levels, the International Baccalaureate, Applied GCE A levels, Pre Us, Free Standing Maths and Extended project qualifications.

Applied General qualifications

Applied General qualifications are for students wishing to continue their general education at advanced level through applied learning. They equip a student with transferable knowledge and skills. They will fulfil entry requirements for a range of higher education courses, either by meeting entry requirements in their own right or being accepted alongside other qualifications at the same level. They may also enable entry to employment or an Apprenticeship.²⁴

Tech Level qualifications

Tech Level qualifications are for students wishing to specialise in a technical occupation or occupational group. They will equip a student with specialist knowledge and skills, enabling entry to employment or an Apprenticeship in that occupational group or progression to a related further or higher education course. In some cases they can provide a 'licence to practise' or exemption from professional exams. The term 'technical occupation or occupational group' refers to 4-digit and 3-digit Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) coding, where 4-digit SOC codes relate to specific job titles, e.g. laboratory technician and 3-digit SOC codes relate to the host 'minor group', e.g. Science, Engineering and Production Technicians. Tech Level qualifications will feature as one of three components of the new Technical Baccalaureate (TechBacc) performance table measure, which will be introduced for courses beginning in September 2014 and reported in performance tables from 2016.

Substantial vocational qualifications at level 2

Technical guidance confirming the category name and definition of substantial vocational qualifications at level 2 will be published shortly. The guidance will set out requirements of substantial vocational qualifications at level 2 that support students in progressing to a particular trade or occupation.

²⁴ [Level 3 vocational qualifications for 16- to 19-year-olds: technical guidance for awarding organisations - Publications - GOV.UK](#)



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Reference: DFE-00220-2013