



Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills

ADULT FURTHER EDUCATION

Q&A on Outcome based
success measures experimental
data and consultation

AUGUST 2014

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Introduction

We are consulting on measures of Further Education provider performance based on outcomes for adult (19+) learners. On 12 August we published experimental data on **Destinations** and **Progression** for 2010/11 adult learners and we are consulting on how this should be used alongside our existing measure of **Qualification Achievement** and data on **Earnings** (published in January) both to inform the choices that learners, employers and others make about colleges and other providers; and to inform formal Government performance management of the FE sector.

The experimental data can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-further-education-outcome-based-success-measures-experimental-data-2010-to-2011>

The consultation can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/adult-further-education-how-do-we-measure-success>

Questions and answers

FOR EVERYONE

The data

What data have you published?

We have published experimental data showing the **Destinations** and **Progression** of post-19 learners in further education who were in learning in the 2010/11 academic year at publicly funded further education colleges and independent training providers. This is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-further-education-outcome-based-success-measures-experimental-data-2010-to-2011>

Research into experimental data on learners' **Earnings**, originally published in January 2014, is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-further-education-learners-matched-data-earnings-analysis>

Qualification success rates for 2010/11 which are available [here](#)

How does this differ from the destinations data that DfE published at the end of June?

DfE's data shows the destinations of learners aged 16-19 completing Key Stage 5 (e.g. A Levels and equivalent vocational qualifications). This data covers learners aged 19 and above taking qualifications at any level. Both DfE's data and this data covers learners who completed their learning in the 2010/11 academic year and whether they were in sustained employment or further learning in the period October 2011 to March 2012. In addition we have published the outcomes specifically for learners on work-related benefits, which is not as relevant for 16-19 year olds as they are far less likely to be claiming benefits.

What does 'experimental' mean?

These measures are the first produced using these data sources. They are still being developed. We are releasing the data to get feedback on their future use while we continue development. In particular we want to further improve the source to include self-employment. Government often releases experimental data in such situations – for example DfE first published their learner destination measure for schools as experimental data.

What will this data be used for?

At the moment the data is experimental. We have published it alongside the consultation to inform input to that consultation. As a result, this data will not be used for performance management purposes and it will not be published on FE Choices. The consultation proposes ways in which the measures could be used for these purposes from 2016/17. Given its experimental data, we do not expect others to use it at this point and if they do they will want to take account of the context with which the data is provided. For example, the type of courses being offered, the local labour market and the fact that self-employment and ACL provision is not included.

How has the data been collected?

The measures are calculated using matched administrative data sources already held by the Government, placing no additional burden on individuals, employers or providers to collect new information.

How does the data matching process work?

Learner data is linked to other administrative data sets using learner characteristics such as post code, gender, date of birth and name. In addition, for linking to education datasets the Unique Learner Number is also used, and for linking to employment and benefits data the National Insurance number is also used. The data matching is carried out by specialist teams and identifiable information (e.g. names) is only used in the matching process; this level of identifiable data is not shared with analysts working with the matched data to produce these measures. The matching of education datasets is very similar to the exercise that already takes place to produce destinations data for FE Choices.

Is the data robust?

The matching exercises to link the datasets are robust and achieve very high match rates, and so provide representative coverage for FE learners. The measures are therefore robust estimates of the official PAYE information held on an individual's learning and employment activity. The data is a key source, with great potential and multiple applications and work is planned to develop it further. The key area is to add in self-assessment information to capture the outcomes of the self-employed and provide a more complete picture.

Why is the data not more recent?

The data shows the outcomes of learners completing study in 2010/11, including their destinations in the period October 2011 to March 2012. We have chosen this year for the first set of experimental data because providers should be familiar with the data already available on FE Choices. We are currently planning on the basis that the next set of data for 2011/12 learner destinations will be published as experimental data alongside our response to the consultation. Going forward, we would expect to be able to produce a time series of annual outcomes data with the aim of producing information on 2014/15 completers before the end of the 2016/17 academic year.

How could the measures be reported more promptly?

The timing of publishing further data is driven by a combination of the reference period being measured, the processing time to collect the data, and the time to analyse the data and produce the measures. The 'sustained' nature of the destination measures require a wide reference period, but if the reference period was shortened, brought forward, or other non-sustained measures were of interest, then it may be possible to produce more timely data. Additionally, some data is available more quickly than others, so partial information could be released earlier. This is the case for employment data, where if we measured employment at a single point in time three months after completion, then an employment measure could potentially be produced before the end of the 2015/16 academic year (for 2014/15 completers).

Can I compare provider numbers against each other?

At present the data is experimental and so it is not recommended to use the data to compare provider performance at this stage. The type of provision offered and the clientele that providers work with, along with the socio-economic prosperity of the area in which they operate will impact on the rates for a provider. Further, the data does not include self-employment outcomes, which will lead to lower rates for learners undertaking provision where this is more likely (it is planned to develop the data to include self-employed information in the future). Therefore this means that low rates do not necessarily equate to poor performance, and equivalently the highest rates do not necessarily mean the best performance, so the data should be used with caution.

Are all learners included?

The data covers all post-19 learners funded through the Adult Skills Budget or OLASS. It does not include younger learners or those funded through the Community Learning Budget or the Education Funding Agency. The measures may be expanded to include other learners in the future, but only on a case by case basis.

Destinations data

Why does the destinations data only show the period from October to March as a positive destination?

We want to provide data that shows sustained destinations rather than at a single point in time which might only capture short term work, and the representative measures chosen indicate the potential of how the data can be used. In the first instance the measures have been chosen to be consistent with the destinations measures used for accountability purposes for 16-19 provision, which use the October to March period.

How does the employment data take account of the different local labour markets in which colleges/providers will be operating?

We will consider what other data we can publish alongside this information to put it in the context of the labour market in which providers operate. The consultation asks this question, and we will use responses to that and continuing analytical work to determine what contextual information will be most useful.

How does the data take account of different outcomes for different types of learner e.g. by gender/age?

At present we have published data for all learners at national, local authority and provider level. The data is also broken down to show splits by gender, age, level of study, apprenticeships, disability and ethnicity (at national level only). We are aware that different types of learner may have different outcomes and we will consider this and its implications once we have a more detailed understanding of the data.

Do the measures show all learning and employment?

The learning measure only covers publicly funded learning so will not include, for example private training provided by an employer. The employment measure only covers paid employment; it does not cover self-employment or voluntary work. We propose to use alternative HMRC data to cover self-employed in the future which would further improve the measure and provide a complete picture of employment.

Does the further learning data show learners entering university as well as taking another college course?

Yes, the learning measure matches FE data with data from the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) to show entry into higher education as a positive outcome.

Progression data

Why does the progression data only cover younger ages?

The progression measure is an absolute measure of learner progression and our aim will be to cover 19-24 year olds as a first stage. At this point in development and because of limitations on the data, it has been restricted to 19 and 20 year olds to give an initial view of the measure to support the consultation. The measure may be less informative for older learners where there may have been significantly longer breaks between current and previous learning.

Technical

The breakdown by qualification is not what I was expecting?

Where a learner completes more than one aim in the academic year, outcomes are reported only once and against their highest level completed aim. For example, where a learner takes an English or Maths course alongside another course at a higher level, the learner will be recorded against that higher level only.

Who are the 28% not in a sustained positive destination?

Learners not identified as being in either sustained employment or sustained learning could be in employment or learning that does not count towards the measure. For example, including those in any learning between October and March increases the positive destination rate to 77%. Alternatively, learners could be in self-employment (which is not captured by the data) or non-paid employment, on benefits, in private learning not captured on the ILR/HESA, or 'inactive' (not in employment or learning).

Are those in sustained employment in a new job?

There is no requirement for employment post learning to be 'new', i.e. learners could have been employed prior to the start of and/or during their training. This is also true for benefit learners, the only requirement is that they were claiming JSA or ESA (WRAG) immediately before the start of their training. We do not attempt to identify learners who have changed jobs, and the data does not currently tell us whether their employment directly relates to their learning; instead the employment rate is a simple count of those who are employed.

Is there any difference between the benefit learners in this publication and the numbers reported in 'Further Education for Benefit Claimants'?

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/further-education-for-benefit-claimants>)

The definitions are very similar but there are some subtle differences.

To count benefit learners here, we look for any other completed aims taken by this individual that overlap with the highest aim completed during 2010/11 reported here, to create a learning 'spell'. We then look at the earliest start date of this spell (i.e. the highest aim will always be contained within that spell) and check to see if the learner was claiming JSA or ESA (WRAG) the day before learning started.

In 'Further Education for Benefit Claimants' Official Statistics publication, learners are counted as benefit claimants (and disaggregated further to identify just those claiming JSA or ESA (WRAG)) if they were claiming these benefits on the day learning started. One final difference is that this publication presents information in terms of completions, whilst 'Further Education for Benefit Claimants' presents information on the number of learning aim starts by benefit claimants (and additionally on the number of benefit claimants starting training, benefit spells with training and training spells) in each academic year.

How do you treat learners that are studying at two different providers?

If a learner completes two courses in the same academic year at different providers, then they will have an outcome at each provider...

How does the data take account of local labour markets?

The data are presented as simple rates, so have not been adjusted for local labour market conditions or any other factors. When looking at the data for a particular provider or Local Authority this should be taken into consideration, along with the mix of provision being offered and the personal characteristics of the people undertaking the learning.

The consultation

What are you consulting on?

Now we have published experimental data on learner outcomes, we are consulting on how the measures should best be calculated and presented to ensure they are most useful for both informing learner and employer choice and for Government accountability purposes.

Are there any digital or face to face opportunities to discuss Adult Education Outcome Based Success Measures?

Yes, there are already face to face events hosted by AoC, AELP, and FSB. BIS is also running events with HOLEX, Third Sector National Learning Alliance, British Chamber of Commerce (BCC) and The National Association of College & University Entrepreneurs (Nacue) in September, but if you would like to arrange a bespoke event, please email FESuccessmeasures@bis.gsi.gov.uk and we will contact you to discuss.

In addition we are using digital technology through Citizenspace which is a tool to assist a public consultation at:

https://bisgovuk.citizenspace.com/digital/further-education-how-do-we-measure-succes/start_preview?token=14d23616394f3e4e70a58312ca934849e982eb53

We also intend to run webinars which would give you the opportunity to participate in a live debate. Find out more by emailing FESuccessmeasures@bis.gsi.gov.uk to register for a debate and we will send you details.

How long does the consultation run for?

The consultation will run for 10 weeks from 12 August to 10 October.

How can I input to the consultation?

The consultation can be found on gov.uk here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/adult-further-education-how-do-we-measure-success>

and citizenspace here:

https://bisgovuk.citizenspace.com/digital/further-education-how-do-we-measure-succes/start_preview?token=14d23616394f3e4e70a58312ca934849e982eb53

FOR COLLEGES AND PROVIDERS

How is this data different from existing data collections e.g. the FE Choices Learner Destination survey?

FE Choices provides information on learner destinations using data collected through the Learner Destinations Survey and combined with data matching for learning outcomes. A key difference to FE Choices is the wider coverage of the administrative data used, and the ability to show outcomes for far more providers and at a greater level of detail. Other differences include the range of learners covered, the reference period used for observing outcomes, and rules over how learning and employment rates are counted. This means that whilst the headline positive destination rates are broadly similar for many providers, there are still some differences.

See the Technical Annex for further details.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-further-education-outcome-based-success-measures-experimental-data-2010-to-2011>

I already collect data on learner destinations, how will this data add value?

The data provides information which will be useful for colleges and providers in considering whether their learners move into sustained positive outcomes. We know that colleges and providers find collecting data on sustained outcomes difficult and expensive as it requires tracking learners over a longer period. Furthermore, matched data allows for collection of data that colleges would not be able to collect themselves, for example on earnings.

However, we would expect that there will be other purposes for which colleges and providers will want to collect their own data on learner destinations. We would encourage this as it will give a more rounded picture of outcomes.

Will you use these measures to replace the destination data currently published as part of FE Choices?

We are currently reviewing the service that FE Choices provides and how the site may develop between now and 2016.

Will this data be used to introduce a Payment by Results system?

As Government has said previously, we are interested in considering how certain specific types of provision can be paid on results. However, we are not considering using matched data for this, whether in an experimental or final form. Such a system requires data which can identify individual learners and matched data cannot be used in this way.

The recent Traineeship funding consultation proposes using provider data collection, why are you using a different approach here?

The proposals in the Traineeship consultation are designed in relation to the proposed reform of Traineeships funding. They include proposals to develop a system that rewards job, apprenticeship and further learning outcomes. As noted above, matched data cannot currently be used in a way that potentially identifies individual learners, therefore we will continue to collect outcomes using the ILR

Why is the definition of a positive destination different to the measures proposed in the Traineeship consultation?

Though they both reflect the Government's overall approach to measuring the success of FE provision on outcomes rather than based purely on learner achievement of qualification aims, the measures proposed here and those suggested in the Traineeship consultation are designed for different purposes. The FE outcome measures are intended to provide data at provider level (rather than course or individual level) across the range of FE learning in order to inform learner and employer choice, and for Government performance-management of providers. The Traineeships measures explored in the Traineeships funding consultation are intended to capture, for funding purposes, the direct progression of each learner from their Traineeship to a positive outcome.

Does this cover all learners, the numbers look much smaller than my learner numbers?

The data covers all 19+ learners funded through the Adult Skills Budget or OLASS. It does not include younger learners or those funded through the Community Learning Budget or by the Education Funding Authority. Further, outcomes are reported on a learner, rather than aim basis. Where a learner completes more than one aim in the academic year, outcomes are reported only once and against their highest level completed aim.

Will Ofsted use this data to arrive at Outcomes for Learners judgements?

Outcomes for Learners are one of Ofsted's headline inspection judgements. Ofsted's most recent guidance indicates that they would expect to use these measures to inform discussions during an inspection¹.

I'm a provider, why is there no data for my learners?

Data is only published for providers where outcome data is available for at least 100 eligible learners – i.e. 19+ learners funded through the Adult Skills Budget.

¹ www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120154

FOR LEARNERS

What does this data show me?

This data shows the outcomes for learners who undertook further education in 2010/11 – whether they moved into employment or further learning the following year; and whether they were taking a course at a higher level than their previous highest level of attainment.

We are consulting on how this data might be used to inform learners' choice of which college or training provider to study with. We have published this data to show what is possible and to allow informed contribution to the consultation.

Should I use this data to choose where to study/train?

At present the data is only experimental and should not be used to inform these decisions. The most appropriate Government source of comparable data on FE provider quality and outcomes is FE Choices

(<http://fechoices.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/Pages/home.aspx>)

Over the coming months we will refine the data and take account of responses to the consultation to decide where and how the data can best be presented to inform choice.

Will my data be shared with my former college?

No. Data sharing is subject to strict conditions, and safeguards are in place to prevent inappropriate use. If these safeguards were breached we would be liable to action from the Information Commissioner and potential prosecution. The legal gateway under which data is shared is rightly strict so there are limits to the data that we can provide in order to protect the possible identification of individuals. Therefore we only ever produce aggregated data and are cautious on the breakdowns that we provide to prevent it being unpicked by any other information held by a provider or individual.

FOR EMPLOYERS

How has the data been collected?

The measures are calculated using matched administrative data sources already held by the Government, placing no additional burden on individuals, employers or providers to collect new information.

What does this data show me?

This data shows the outcomes for adult learners over the age of 19 who undertook further education in 2010/11 – whether they moved into employment or further learning the following year; and whether they were taking a course at a higher level than their previous highest level of attainment.

We are consulting on how this data might be used to inform employer choice of where and how to engage with further education colleges and providers. We have published this data to show what is possible and to allow informed contribution to the consultation.

Should I use this data to choose where to train?

At present the data is only experimental and should not be used to inform these decisions. The most appropriate Government source of comparable data on FE provider quality and outcomes is FE Choices

(<http://fechoices.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/Pages/home.aspx>)

Over the coming months we will refine the data and take account of responses to the consultation to decide where and how the data can best be presented to inform choice.

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to:

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET
Tel: 020 7215 5000

If you require this publication in an alternative format, email enquiries@bis.gsi.gov.uk, or call 020 7215 5000.

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