



Skills Funding  
Agency

Official

# Minimum Standards

How the Skills Funding Agency will apply  
Minimum Standards for 2014 to 2015

March 2015

Of interest to colleges and training organisations

# How the Skills Funding Agency will apply Minimum Standards for 2014 to 2015

## Background

The Government is committed to:

- increased freedoms and flexibilities
- reduced bureaucracy
- reducing its intervention in the further education (FE) sector

We have continued to listen to feedback from the sector and have made further simplifications to how Minimum Standards are calculated in 2014 to 2015.

Work is continuing to develop a range of [Success Measures](#) to take a wider view of success and recognise whether individuals achieving qualifications also make progress into further learning or into sustained employment. In preparation for this we have renamed Qualification Success Rates. In 2014 to 2015 they will become Qualification Achievement Rates (QAR).

## The Minimum Standards Methodology

We will use the overall QAR methodology when calculating Minimum Standards.

When calculating if a provider falls below Minimum Standards and is in scope for intervention we will only use two categories in 2014 to 2015:

- Apprenticeships - all ages
- Classroom and Workplace Learning – adult learners only

In 2014 to 2015 we will report all functional skills (excluding IT) and maths and English qualifications at level 2 or below as a qualification type – with the exception of GCSE's which we will continue to report separately. This is a change from 2013 to 2014 when maths and English aims were reported within the functional skills sfl, unit, award and certificate qualification types.

Thresholds are applied to QAR at aim and for Apprenticeship at framework and programme level. If the QAR for an aim or framework is below the threshold for its qualification type as specified in Table 1, then we will classify that specific aim or framework as falling below the Minimum Standard.

**Table 1: Minimum Standards thresholds**

<b><i>Qualification Type</i></b>	<b><i>Threshold %</i></b>
Apprenticeship Framework	55
Access to HE	70
A-Levels	75
AS-Levels	63
Award	75
Certificate	70
Diploma	70
ESOL	63
Functional Skills / Maths and English	63
GCSE Maths and English	75
GCSE Other	75
Other non-Regulated	75
Other Regulated	65
QCF Unit	75

## **Tolerance level**

The tolerance level will remain at 40% for 2014 to 2015. We will calculate the number of leavers or frameworks below the Minimum Standard threshold for apprenticeships and the total number of classroom and workplace learning aims below Minimum Standards as a proportion of the total leavers in each category. If 40% or more are below the Minimum Standard in either category the provider is in-scope for intervention.

## **Failure to Meet Minimum Standards**

If a college or training organisation fails to meet Minimum Standards, the Agency's [approach to intervention](#) will apply. We may also use the results of Minimum Standards to inform business decisions. If we do this, we will specify how as part of those business processes.

## **Proportionality**

We will not intervene formally where the proportion of leavers in underperforming provision exceeds the tolerance level but there are fewer than 100 leavers in the cohort that is below the Minimum Standards threshold. We expect a provider in this position to set challenging quality improvement targets as a priority.

## **Future Developments**

We are planning to increase the thresholds used for Minimum Standards for 2015 to 2016. Following a review of the thresholds we used in 2013 to 2014 it is our intention to increase the threshold for apprenticeships to 62% and the thresholds for

Functional Skills / Maths and English, ESOL, Units, Awards and Certificates could also increase by up to 10%.

Increasing the thresholds will ensure that we continue to identify the poorest quality provision in a consistent and comparable way for all qualification types. To ensure this is robust and fair we will test the higher thresholds using 2014 to 2015 QAR before applying any changes.

There will be further work and consultation during 2014 to 2015 to develop a wider set of [Outcome Based Success Measures](#): including;

- learner destinations (into further learning or sustained employment), and
- learner progression (to a higher level qualification)