



Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills

ADULT FURTHER EDUCATION

Government response: Outcome
based success measures – next
steps

APRIL 2016

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Contents

Government response: Outcome based success measures – next steps.....	4
Purpose	4
Headline.....	4
Background.....	4
Summary of responses	5
Progression.....	6
English and maths.....	6
Unemployed learners	6
Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities	7
Local outcome agreements	7
Contextual data.....	7
Widget.....	8
Performance table and scorecards.....	8
What happens next?	8
Annex A: Proportion of respondents agreeing to each question	9
Annex B: List of respondents	12

Government response: Outcome based success measures – next steps

Purpose

This paper provides a summary of responses to the second consultation on outcome based success measures, and provides an update on the next steps.

Headline

Overall the responses were largely supportive although support varied across the specific proposals, and was mixed regarding performance tables.

Background

In August 2014 we consulted on proposals for developing and using a new set of outcome based measures of performance for publicly funded post-19 education and skills, excluding higher education. The measures would be used alongside the existing measure of qualification achievement to give a more rounded picture of provider performance, to inform learner and employer choice, and ultimately as part of Government's performance management of the post-19 education and skills sector.

The new outcome measures focus on three areas:

- learner destinations (into further learning and into or within employment including apprenticeships),
- learner progression (to a higher level qualification), and
- earnings following completion of the course.

In December 2014 we published the Government response to the consultation. This confirmed the intention to proceed with the measures and promised a further consultation on more detailed proposals for using and publishing the measures.

This consultation:

- Confirmed that we will produce and publish outcome measures at both qualification and provider level routinely. The aim is that this information will help inform learner and employer choice and support local areas in agreeing local outcome agreements.
- Provided an update on the development of the measures since the last consultation, including a proposal for a new progression measure.
- Reported on work done to look at the impact of local economic indicators on outcomes.
- Set out detailed proposals for using outcome measures as part of central government's Minimum Standards framework for accountability and intervention purposes. It covers the principles for extending the framework, what it would look like, how it would be used and how unemployed and disadvantaged learners might be reflected. The aim is to extend the current Minimum Standard framework based on qualification achievement rates to include the new destination measures.
- Looked ahead to the place of outcome measures in a world of increased local accountability where LEPs/Local Authorities establish local area outcome agreements.
- Looked at how we can most usefully present and publish the outcomes data – for prospective learners, employers, LEPs, providers and others who may wish to use the data. It proposes developing a widget to display the data on providers' websites and FE performance tables focussed on apprenticeships and higher level learning. It also proposed greater transparency in the link between Minimum Standards and individual provider performance.

In addition to the request for written responses, we also reminded the sector of the consultation in the summer and autumn termly letters, offered the opportunity to contact the FE Success Measures mailbox with any queries, and a workshop in November 2015. The proposals were also discussed at the Association of Colleges and data conferences.

Summary of responses

The consultation closed on 2 December 2015 with 42 written responses submitted. A summary of the written responses and feedback received through the workshop and other events is provided below, drawing out some particular points of interest. Annex A details the numbers agreeing with each question and Annex B provides a full list of the respondents.

Overall the responses were largely positive although support varied across the specific proposals, and was mixed regarding performance tables.

Key points raised in the responses included:

- Specialist Designated Institutions were not in support of the destination measures, highlighting that their learners may have significantly different outcome aims and the measures will not capture progress in their learning.
- Destination measures for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities should be treated with caution in order to avoid FE providers with large cohorts or LLDD learners being penalised in the destination measure scores.
- Scepticism about the use of performance tables, cited as not being particularly useful for learners who typically have less geographical flexibility.

Progression

The majority of the respondents agreed with the new proposed progression measure. Respondents especially welcomed the introduction of a progression measure that is not tied to the academic year. The majority of respondents also agreed with the principles and features underpinning the extended Minimum Standards framework and how it will be used. Respondents were pleased to see that provision will be grouped into ‘type of learning’ rather than type of qualification and express that focussing on learner destinations will help inform providers to plan learning.

However, those who did not agree or were unsure with the proposed new progression measure raised significant concern that this measure will not capture learning at the same level but on a different course, which they suggest some learners and providers are likely to see as progression. Other concerns included that the progression measure and Minimum Standards framework will not be appropriate for Specialist Designated Institutions (SDIs) or provision of learning for adults returning to education in short bursts of study.

English and maths

Specifically concerning English and Maths, it was recommended that the proposed new progression measures should not focus on GCSE achievement alone, as many adults will have not achieved this level previously. It was further recommended that the measure should recognise a variety of provision in both subjects at various levels from Entry to level 2, and report the proportion of learners who enrolled without grade C GCSE and who made at least one level of progress.

Suggestions proposed that learner’s ‘desire to continue learning’ is taken into account and that there is a more flexible reference period which would capture the sustained employment sub measure. The time-lag between learning provision and intervention was frequently mentioned as a concern from respondents, most notably FE Colleges.

Unemployed learners

The proposal to treat learning for the unemployed as a separate type of learning was received positively. It was recognised that this will help to prevent penalising providers with large cohorts of unemployed learners and removes perverse incentives that would otherwise be created.

Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities

Responses suggested that providers should have accounted for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities whilst planning learning. Therefore, in theory, special allowances should not have to be made for this group in the destination measures and Minimum Standards framework. However, it was noted that this group might have significantly different outcome aims to other groups of learners. For instance a learner in this group may be seeking to improve their wellbeing, health or independence. The disaggregation of data for this group of learner was welcomed by respondents because significant variances can be examined and appropriate intervention taken. It was also mentioned that it would allow learners to make more informed choices, being able to compare 'like for like'.

Suggestions included; weighting this group of learner to take into account their disadvantages, publishing separate scores for the sustained employment measure as providers view future employment as to be likely affected to cultural barriers external from their control, and setting Minimum Standards for providers with large cohorts of disadvantaged learners initially lower until this can be reviewed. Respondents welcomed further exploration into this matter.

Local outcome agreements

The majority of respondents agreed that the outcome measures should form a core set of measures for local outcome agreements. The Local Authorities who have responded suggested that the outcome measures and Minimum Standards are in place for a period of time prior to a decision being made on whether they should form local outcome agreements and said that it is essential that local outcome agreements still have the flexibility to include additional measures appropriate to their localities. It was also raised that national providers who are delivering widely may have to adhere to numerous local outcome agreements and this could be complex. There was also another suggestion that the proposed new measures for English and Maths would be helpful to inform local outcome agreements.

Contextual data

Respondents mainly provide general suggestions of 'context' as useful information to inform local outcome agreements. However, some respondents state that information on the labour market, different employment sectors, socio economic indicators and population data would be useful. Specific to learners with learning difficulties and disabilities it is suggested that local data regarding this learner group would be useful to inform local decisions regarding FE provision for this learner group. It is specifically mentioned that drop-out rates would be useful. Local authorities who responded to the consultation highlighted that it would be useful to have data which details whether learners enter different employment sectors to the course that they have completed and comment that if Community Learning is to form part of local outcome agreements then it would be useful to look at additional measures such as wellbeing and health.

Widget

Most respondents support the idea of a widget sitting on a providers' own website and comment that this should be easy to make comparisons and to digest and are keen to understand what costs may be involved.

Performance table and scorecards

The respondents were mixed in their reaction to the idea of an FE performance table focused on apprenticeships and higher levels of learning. Those who oppose this idea are concerned that this would not be entirely useful for FE learners who typically have less flexibility than those entering HE and maybe more useful for providers to make comparisons. It was mentioned that data might be misleading as it removes wider context and the diverse nature of adult FE, including age ranges and the vast spectrum of courses studied, will make it difficult for meaningful tables to be produced.

The majority of respondents agreed that scorecards will provide a useful tool, commenting that this will increase transparency and enable accurate reporting to key stakeholders. Reservations on this idea included; they were not sure it will be an effective tool in informing decisions, it may be too complex and underlying data needs to be accessible. Further consultation and discussion on the use of scorecards is welcomed.

What happens next?

As previously planned, we intend to publish destinations data in Autumn 2016 for 2013/14 learners and start to use the measures for accountability purposes formally from Autumn 2017, with a period of shadow running from Autumn 2016. We are considering treating LLDD learners as a separate group as we do for benefit learners and will explore the best options for handling niche providers within the shadow run process. We will continue to encourage including these measures in local outcome agreements, and will provide more details about how we will use the measures later this year.

Annex A: Proportion of respondents agreeing to each question

Question 1: Do you agree with the proposed new progression measure?

Option	Total	Percentage of All
Yes	23	55%
No	7	17%
Unsure	10	24%
Unanswered	2	5%

Question 2: Do you agree with the principles and features underpinning the extended Minimum Standards framework?

Option	Total	Percentage of All
Yes	23	55%
No	3	7%
Unsure	12	29%
Unanswered	4	10%

Question 3: Do you agree with the proposals for how the new Minimum Standards framework would be used?

Option	Total	Percentage of All
Yes	24	57%
No	8	19%
Unsure	7	17%
Unanswered	3	7%

Question 4: Is the proposal for treating learning for the unemployed as a separate type of learning for the purpose of Minimum Standards a fair way of accounting for those learners?

Option	Total	Percentage of All
Yes	35	83%
No	1	2%
Unsure	2	5%
Unanswered	4	10%

(Note: Question 5 was an open text question; “What is your view on whether we need to make any special allowance for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities in the destination measures Minimum Standards framework?”. Therefore the responses have not been classed as agreeing/disagreeing but are instead described above).

Question 6: Do you agree that the outcome measures should form a core set of measures for local outcome agreements?

Option	Total	Percentage of All
Yes	26	62%
No	4	10%
Unsure	9	21%
Unanswered	3	7%

(Note: Question 7 was an open text question; “In order to inform local outcome agreements, what other information is needed alongside the outcome measures data?”. Therefore the responses have not been classed as agreeing/disagreeing but are instead described above).

Question 8: Do you support the idea of a widget sitting on providers’ own websites with a consistent set and presentation of data?

Option	Total	Percentage of All
Yes	24	57%
No	5	12%
Unsure	10	24%
Unanswered	3	7%

Question 9: Do you support the idea of an FE performance table focused on apprenticeships and higher levels of learning?

Option	Total	Percentage of All
Yes	17	40%
No	13	31%
Unsure	7	17%
Unanswered	5	12%

Question 10: Do you agree that individual scorecards will provide a useful tool for both providers and the key local stakeholders with whom they are working?

Option	Total	Percentage of All
Yes	27	64%
No	1	2%
Unsure	10	24%
Unanswered	4	10%

Annex B: List of respondents

AELP

AoC

ASCL

ATL

Bolton College

Brooklands

Buckingham County Council

CACHE

Chesterfield College

City & Guilds

Disability Rights UK

East Riding College

Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB)

Fircroft College

FSB

Furness College

GLA

Graham Phillips

Green Inc (eu) Ltd

JTL

LEAFEA

Learndirect

Leeds City Council

Leicester College

London Borough of Hounslow

London Councils

NCC Skills

NCFE

NECA

New College Durham

NIACE

North Shropshire College

Northern College

Ofsted

Pearson

Peterborough College

QAA

Tees Valley Unlimited

The Skills Company

TQ Training Organisation

UCU

WEA



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BIS/16/185