



Department  
for Education

# **Capping of Non-GCSE Qualifications**

**Guide for local authorities, maintained  
schools, academies and free schools**

**January 2015**

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## Introduction to capping

To ensure that all pupils are provided with access to a broad and balanced curriculum, the number of approved non-GCSE level 1, level 2 or level 1/2 qualifications counting towards secondary school performance measures has been capped at two qualifications per pupil in the tables. This affects both threshold and point score measures.

This follows the recommendations for reform of secondary school performance tables set out in Professor Wolf's 2011 review of vocational qualifications<sup>1</sup>.

For schools that have opted into the new Progress 8 measure, a maximum of three approved non-GCSE level 1, level 2 and level 1/2 qualifications count.

Further information about Progress 8 can be found at: [progress 8 information/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure).

## Expiry or review date

This guide will next be reviewed before October 2016.

## Who is this advice for?

This guidance is for:

- local authorities
- school leaders, school staff and governing bodies in all maintained schools, academies and free schools

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Alison Wolf published her review of vocational education in March 2011 and the report can be found here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-vocational-education-the-wolf-report](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-vocational-education-the-wolf-report)

## Qualifications that are subject to capping

Non-GCSE level 1, level 2 or level 1/level 2 qualifications that have been approved for use in the performance tables are subject to capping across performance measures. The list of these qualifications is available in a table on: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

## How capping works in the performance tables

In calculating performance measures, the department has applied capping so that the points and threshold contributions are maximised across the range of qualifications achieved by each pupil.

Where a pupil has taken more than two non-GCSE qualifications, this does not necessarily mean that the two with the highest points have been counted, as the capping process also takes into account the range of other qualifications the pupil has taken and whether or not any discounting has been applied. The capping process works in tandem with discounting as they both affect which qualifications count in performance measures.

As such, the two non-GCSE qualifications that count are those with the highest points contribution to performance measures, calculated relative to any other GCSE<sup>2</sup> qualifications a pupil has taken where:

- the GCSE and non-GCSE qualification are in the same subject area ie in the same discount code<sup>3</sup>
- the GCSE qualification can be counted in performance tables instead of the non-GCSE qualification ie it has not already been discounted through the early entry policy

The remaining non-GCSE qualifications are capped in performance measures. The worked example on pages 5 -7 provides further details of this process.

## GCSE qualifications counted in performance tables instead of a non-GCSE in the same subject area

For those non-GCSE qualifications that have been capped, any qualifications that are in the same subject area and can be counted instead of the non-GCSE qualification will have been considered and the GCSE with the highest point score 'restored' ie existing discounting will be have been reversed, allowing it to count in performance measures.

**Please note** that GCSE qualifications are only restored where they are **not** subject to early entry discounting ie they were previously discounted under best discounting rules. No early entry discounting has been reversed as part of the capping process.

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<sup>2</sup> Also includes established iGCSEs that have been approved for use in performance tables.

<sup>3</sup> Further guidance on discounting and the early entry policy are available on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

## Worked example

The steps below show how the capping process is applied to the key stage 4 results of an individual pupil.

### Step 1

Look at the qualifications a pupil has taken and identify whether they have more than two undiscounted non-GCSEs. This pupil has the following set of results:

Qualification	Grade	Points	Non-GCSE?	Discounted?
Cambridge National Certificate in ICT	L2 Pass	40	Yes	Counts
BTEC First Award in Principles of Applied Science	L2 Distinction*	58	Yes	Counts
BTEC Level 2 Diploma in Art and Design	Merit	46	Yes	Counts
BTEC Level 2 Diploma in Music	Distinction	52	Yes	Counts
Music GCSE	C	40	No	Does not count under best discounting rule
English GCSE	B	46	No	Counts
History GCSE	B	46	No	Counts
Mathematics GCSE	A	52	No	Counts
Religious Studies GCSE	C	40	No	Counts

They have taken a BTEC and a GCSE in music. The GCSE has been discounted under the best discounting rule because it has a lower point score. Of the qualifications that are undiscounted, there are four non-GCSEs and so capping will need to be applied.

## Step 2

The capping process begins. For each undiscounted non-GCSE, we calculate the additional points contribution between this result and any GCSEs that are in the same subject area and could be counted instead. The additional points contributions are then ranked and used to decide which non-GCSEs should be capped:

Qualification	Points	Non-GCSE?	Points difference between GCSE and non-GCSE in same subject	Rank of points difference
Cambridge National Certificate in ICT	40	Yes	40	3
BTEC First Award in Principles of Applied Science	58	Yes	58	1
BTEC Level 2 Diploma in Art and Design	46	Yes	46	2
BTEC Level 2 Diploma in Music	52	Yes	12	4
Music GCSE	40	No	-	-
English GCSE	46	No	-	-
History GCSE	46	No	-	-
Mathematics GCSE	52	No	-	-
Religious Studies GCSE	40	No	-	-

For this pupil, the non-GCSEs in ICT, applied science and art and design show their original points as there are no other GCSEs in the same subject area. For the non-GCSE in music, this shows the points for the BTEC minus the points for the GCSE [52 - 40 = 12].

The BTEC in science and the BTEC in art and design have the highest additional points contributions and so these results will be selected. The Cambridge National Certificate in ICT and the BTEC in music will be capped.

### Step 3

The final step of the capping process is to check whether there are any GCSE qualifications that can be 'restored' as a result of capping any non-GCSEs. This pupil has a GCSE in music which can be restored, as it is a qualification in the same subject area as the capped BTEC in music.

The table below shows the final results of the capping process:

Qualification	Points	Non-GCSE?	Points difference between GCSE and non-GCSE in same subject	Results of capping process
Cambridge National Certificate in ICT	40	Yes	40	Capped
BTEC First Award in Principles of Applied Science	58	Yes	58	Counted
BTEC Level 2 Diploma in Art and Design	46	Yes	46	Counted
BTEC Level 2 Diploma in Music	52	Yes	12	Capped
Music GCSE	40	No	-	Restored
English GCSE	46	No	-	Counted
History GCSE	46	No	-	Counted
Mathematics GCSE	52	No	-	Counted
Religious Studies GCSE	40	No	-	Counted

For this pupil, the BTECs in applied science and art and design will be counted in the relevant performance measures. The Cambridge National Certification in ICT and the BTEC in music will not be counted in performance measures, as they are non-GCSEs that have been capped. The GCSE in music - which was originally discounted under the best discounting rule – will now be counted in the relevant performance measures as it has been restored during the capping process.

Please see the Annex A for a reference table showing the full example for this pupil's results. The results CSV file that is available to schools on the performance tables website during the September checking exercise also contains information that allows schools to identify non-GCSE qualifications, the points difference between any GCSE and non-GCSEs in the same subject and flags any results that will be capped or restored in performance measures.

## Annex A: Full worked example for an individual pupil's results

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Qualification	Grade	Points	Multi-year discount flag (0=counts, 1=discounted)	Qualification category (1=non-GCSE, 2=GCSE and established iGCSEs)	Points difference between GCSE and non-GCSE in same subject	Rank of points difference	Non-GCSE discounted due to capping? (0=no, 1=yes)	Restored GCSE? (1=yes)	Final result of capping process
Cambridge National Certificate in ICT	L2 Pass	40	0	1	40	3	1	-	Capped
BTEC First Award in Principles of Applied Science	L2 Distinction *	58	0	1	58	1	0	-	Counted
BTEC Level 2 Diploma in Art and Design	Merit	46	0	1	46	2	0	-	Counted
BTEC Level 2 Diploma in Music	Distinction	52	0	1	12	4	1	-	Capped
Music GCSE	C	40	1	2	-	-	-	1	Restored
English GCSE	B	46	0	2	-	-	-	-	Counted
History GCSE	B	46	0	2	-	-	-	-	Counted
Mathematics GCSE	A	52	0	2	-	-	-	-	Counted
Religious Studies GCSE	C	40	0	2	-	-	-	-	Counted





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