



Department
for Education

Discounting and Early Entry Guidance

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

January 2015

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Summary

Changes applied from 2014

Since 2014 the secondary school performance measures have been calculated significantly differently from previous years following the implementation of the Wolf review recommendations and early entry policy.

Due to the [Wolf review](#), a restricted list of qualifications count in secondary school performance tables, and each qualification counts for no more than one. For example, a BTEC previously counting for four GCSEs is now capped at one. There is also a restriction on the number of non-GCSEs that count. Details of the capping methodology of non-GCSEs can be found on www.gov.uk.

Due to the introduction of the early entry policy (which came into effect on 29 September 2013), credit is given to the first qualification taken where a pupil has more than one qualification in the same subject. This applies to all subjects in the 2015 performance tables but was restricted just to English Baccalaureate subjects in the 2014 performance tables.

Discounting ensures that, where a pupil has taken two or more qualifications with an overlap in curriculum, the performance tables only give credit once for teaching a single course of study.

Discounting is an important part of the Department for Education's secondary school performance measures, defining when the performance points of a qualification are discounted against another so that only one qualification counts.

The discounting system affects the calculation of performance measures for a school in the performance tables and on RAISEonline. It does not alter the awards an individual pupil has achieved or limit the qualifications they can take.

Discounting may be required in a number of situations, for example:

- a pupil resits a qualification before the end of key stage 4, possibly with a different awarding organisation. Discounting then ensures that only one result is counted in the secondary school performance tables calculations and measures
- the school provides a single course of study but then enters the pupil for two or more very similar qualifications. Discounting ensures that the achievement from this single set of teaching hours is counted only once

Discounting is governed by the allocation of discount codes to qualifications with similar curriculum content. Two qualifications will discount if they have the same discount code. Codes may be updated at any time during the year to improve the accuracy of discounting. This can affect the current cycle without prior notice.

Expiry or review date

This advice 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

Principles of discounting

Once two or more qualifications are known to have the same discount code the following principles are applied to determine which one is discounted:

- if a level 3 qualification is taken in the same subject with the same discount code as a level 1 or level 2 qualification, the lower level qualification is discounted. For example an AS discounts a GCSE¹
- where a pupil has more than one qualification in the same subject with the same discount code, only the first one counts (this even applies where the first qualification is level 1 and the second qualification is level 2)
- for those who had already completed a qualification before 29 September 2013, the performance tables record their best result from either their previous attempt(s) or from the next time they sat the qualification after 29 September 2013
- for qualifications which discount and are taken on the same day, the best result counts
- where a pupil moves schools in year 9, 10 or 11 and has previously certificated a qualification whilst enrolled at another school this grade is not counted in performance measures *unless* the school chooses not to re-enter the pupil. If the school re-entered the pupil, the grade from that attempt is counted, regardless of whether it is higher or lower than the previous attempt
- where a pupil has certificated a qualification more than three years before the end of key stage 4, the first entry rule does not apply. In most cases this will apply to pupils in years 8 and below. In these cases performance measures count the best grade achieved, either from before the three year cut-off point or the first entry after the cut-off point

Discount codes

A qualification is assigned a discount code on the basis of the subject area it covers. The purpose of a discount code is to group qualifications with similar content together and compare them to the other qualifications with that code.

A list of qualifications that count in the 2015 secondary school performance tables, together with discount codes, can be found on www.gov.uk.

Using this, schools can see where two qualifications discount. The list provides descriptions of the discount codes and also covers 2016 and 2017.

¹ See section on AS level exception discounting for further information

Can a pupil take multiple qualifications which discount?

Discounting only applies to the results of a school in the performance tables, not to the qualifications awarded to pupils. There are a number of educational reasons why a pupil might undertake qualifications which discount each other. A common one would be to recognise their progression through a course of study, for example, by taking a GCSE qualification before progressing to an AS level qualification.

In this scenario the AS level would discount the GCSE in the performance tables but the pupil would still get recognition for both.

How is the first entry date defined?

The date of the first (or only) examination for a qualification is taken as the entry date. These dates are used to decide which qualification counts as the first entry. Examination dates are available from the respective exam boards. In cases where exams in the same subject are scheduled for different days in the same series, only the qualification with the earlier exam counts in performance measures.

In cases where qualifications have no formal examination date, the certification date or coursework deadline date is used as the examination date. Further information on these dates can be obtained from the respective exam boards.

Exception discounting

There are occasional situations where discount codes alone are not sufficient to achieve accurate discounting. In these circumstances rules about specific qualifications are applied.

Exception discounting applies in the following circumstances:

- use of mathematics and free standing mathematics qualifications
- mathematics and mathematics linked pair
- English and English language/English literature
- science

Qualifications which count as English, mathematics and science in performance measures are detailed on the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) list which is available on www.gov.uk.

The information below provides an overview of the exception discounting process. Examples have been provided to explain how exception discounting is applied.

Timetabling of exams means some of these examples may not occur in practice, but are for illustrative purposes. Qualifications in bold in the tables are ones that count in the performance tables.

Use of mathematics and free standing mathematics qualifications

The AS level use of mathematics is made up of a combination of core units that are not qualifications in their own right and level 3 free standing mathematics qualifications (FSMQs). The FSMQs only count in the performance tables if the AS level use of mathematics qualification result is unclassified.

Please note that the level 1/level 2 free standing mathematics qualifications that contribute to the level 1/level 2 use of mathematics certificate are not on the 2015 list of qualifications that count in the secondary school performance tables. If the level 1/level 2 use of mathematics result is unclassified, these FSMQs do not count in their own right.

Mathematics and mathematics linked pair

Pupils can either take mathematics or the linked pair in methods in mathematics and applications of mathematics. These two 'pathways' discount against each other, and the first qualification that is entered in the mathematics suite of qualifications determines the pathway a pupil is following.

If a pupil's first entry is in mathematics, they would be on the mathematics pathway, and subsequent qualifications taken in methods in mathematics and/or applications of mathematics would be discounted, and would not count in performance tables. If a pupil takes one of the linked pair qualifications first, a later qualification in mathematics would be discounted.

To meet the criteria for the mathematics component in headline attainment measures in the performance tables, a C grade needs to be achieved. If the linked pair is taken, the higher grade from either the methods in mathematics or applications of mathematics counts towards the mathematics component. A C grade or above needs to be achieved in at least one of the linked pair. If a pupil only enters for one of the linked pair, no grade is entered for the mathematics component.

A pupil takes the following:

June 2014 (04/06/2014)	June 2014 (06/06/2014)	June 2015
Mathematics (D)	Methods in mathematics (B)	Applications of mathematics (A)

Table 1: Table example

The first mathematics qualification taken in June 2014 counts in the performance tables as the pupil is on the mathematics pathway, and subsequent qualifications in the linked pairs pathway do not count. Therefore, the pupil does not meet the mathematics component in performance measures as they failed to achieve a C grade.

A pupil takes the following:

November 2014	January 2015	June 2015
-	Methods in mathematics (C)	Mathematics (A*)

Table 2: Table example

The methods in mathematics qualification taken in January 2015 counts in the performance tables, as the pupil is on the linked pairs pathway, and subsequent qualifications in mathematics do not count. As the pupil has only taken one of the linked pair, the pupil does not meet the criteria for specific mathematics elements in performance measures eg 5+ A* to C including English and mathematics GCSEs, A* to C in English and mathematics GCSEs and the mathematics element of the EBacc. However the C grade still counts in other performance measures, eg average point score.

English and English language/English literature

Pupils can either take English or two qualifications in English language and English literature. The discounting principles work in the same way as mathematics and the linked pair, ie if a pupil's first entry is in English, they would be on the English pathway, and subsequent qualifications taken in English language/English literature would be discounted, and would not count in the performance tables. If a pupil takes English language/English literature first, a later qualification in English would be discounted.

As with mathematics, to meet the criteria for the English component in headline attainment measures in performance tables, a C grade needs to be achieved. If English language/English literature is taken, a pupil must obtain an A* to C grade in English language and also obtain an A* to G grade or U grade in English literature for the English language grade to count in the English component.

A pupil takes the following:

June 2014	January 2015	June 2015
English (C)	English language (A)	English literature (A)

Table 3: Table example

The English qualification taken in June 2014 counts in the performance tables as the pupil is on the English pathway, and subsequent qualifications in the English language/English literature pathway do not count.

A pupil takes the following:

June 2014	May 2015	June 2015
-	English literature (B)	English (A)

Table 4: Table example

The English literature qualification taken in May 2015 counts in the performance tables as the pupil is on the English language/English literature pathway, and subsequent qualifications in English do not count. As the pupil has not taken English language the pupil does not meet the criteria for specific English elements in performance measures eg 5+ A* to C including English and mathematics GCSEs, A* to C in English and mathematics GCSEs and the English element of the EBacc. However the English literature grade still counts in other performance measures, eg average point score.

Science

There are three science pathways (shown in Annex A):

- core science, additional science, further additional science
- individual sciences (biology, chemistry, physics²)
- double/combined science

To meet the criteria for science in headline attainment measures in the performance tables, a pupil must either take:

- core and additional science, and A* to C grades achieved in both
- three individual sciences, and A* to C grades achieved in two
- double science, and A*A* to CC grades achieved

The first qualification a pupil enters determines the pathway they are on, and subsequent entries to qualifications from a different pathway do not count in performance tables. For example, if a pupil takes core science, the only science qualifications that can count alongside in performance tables are additional science and/or further additional science. Therefore if a pupil takes core science and then biology subsequently, the biology grade would not count in the performance tables.

A pupil takes the following:

² Since 2014 computer science has counted as an individual science in the performance tables. However it can also count alongside core/additional science and double science so it is not involved in science pathway discounting.

November 2014	January 2015	June 2015
Biology (C)	Core science (A)	Double science (AA)

Table 5: Table example

Only the biology qualification taken in November 2014 counts in the performance tables as the pupil is on the individual sciences pathway, and subsequent qualifications in the core science/additional science pathway or the double science pathway do not count. As this pupil has not taken any other individual sciences, they do not meet the science element of the EBacc.

A pupil takes the following:

June 2014	January 2015	June 2015
Core science (A)	Double science (AA)	Additional science (C)

Table 6: Table example

The core science qualification taken in June 2014 determines that the pupil is on the core science/additional science pathway. Therefore the additional science taken in June 2015 also counts, but the double science taken in January 2015 is discounted. As this pupil has achieved at least a C in both core science and additional science they meet the criteria for science in the EBacc.

The Pearson BTEC Principles of Applied Science and the OCR Cambridge National Certificate in Science have the same discount code as core science. If one of these qualifications is taken first, subsequent qualifications in any of the other pathways do not count in the performance tables, and a pupil does not meet the EBacc criteria.

A pupil takes the following:

July 2014	January 2015	June 2015
BTEC Principles of Applied Science (Pass)	Core science (A)	Additional science (A)

Table 7: Table example

The BTEC qualification taken in July 2014 discounts against all of the science pathways, therefore only the BTEC counts, and the pupil does not meet the science element of the EBacc.

Some science qualifications, such as computer science and applied science GCSEs are not included in the pathways. These are detailed in the last column in Annex A. This means that while they discount against other qualifications with the same discount code they still count in the performance tables even if taken subsequently to other science qualifications in other pathways.

A pupil takes the following:

November 2014	January 2015	June 2015
Biology (A)	Chemistry (A)	Environmental science (A)

Table 8: Table example

The biology qualification taken in November 2014 determines that the pupil is on the individual sciences pathway, therefore the chemistry also counts. As environmental science is not in a science pathway, it counts alongside the individual sciences as an extra qualification. This pupil does not meet the science element of the EBacc as three individual sciences haven't been taken.

Since 2014, computer science has counted as an individual science in the EBacc. Computer science can also count alongside the core/additional and double science pathways. Therefore if computer science is a pupil's first science qualification it does not determine a pathway, and all three science pathways are still open.

A pupil takes the following:

May 2014	January 2015	May 2015	June 2015
Computer science (A)	Core science (B)	Double Science (AA)	Additional Science (C)

Table 9: Table example

The computer science qualification taken in May 2014 does not determine the science pathway and all pathways are still open. Therefore the science pathway is determined by the next qualification taken, ie the core science in January 2015. Double science is discounted. The pupil meets the criteria for the science element of the EBacc with the core and additional science results, and computer science also counts.

Pathways started before 29 September 2013

Any qualification taken before 29 September 2013 is not used to start a pathway, and one new pathway can be opened after 29 September 2013. The best result(s) from the two pathways then count in performance tables.

For example, if a pupil took English language in June 2013, English in June 2014 and English literature in June 2015 then the best entry from either English or English language/literature is included in the performance tables.

Similarly for science, if a pupil took core science in June 2013, and then biology, chemistry, physics and additional science in June 2015, then the best entry from either the core science/additional science pathway or the individual sciences pathway is included in the performance tables.

The 2013 exception discounting methodology is used to determine which pathway is the best in these scenarios. This is available on [RAISEonline](#) in the 'How Ofsted and DfE analyse your data' folder.

A pupil takes the following:

June 2013	June 2014	June 2015
English language (E)	English (A)	English literature (D)

Table 10: Table example

As the English language was taken before 29 September 2013, another pathway can be opened and the best pathway counts. Therefore the English discounts the English language/English literature qualifications.

A pupil takes the following:

June 2013	November 2014	June 2015
Mathematics (B)	Methods in mathematics (A)	Applications of mathematics (A)

Table 11: Table example

As the mathematics was taken before 29 September 2013, another pathway can be opened and the best pathway counts. Therefore the methods in mathematics and applications of mathematics discount the mathematics qualification.

A pupil takes the following:

June 2013	June 2014	June 2015
Core science (B)	Biology (A) Chemistry (A)	Physics (A) Additional science (B)

Table 12: Table example

As the core science was taken before 29 September 2013, another pathway can be opened and the best pathway counts. Therefore the individual sciences discount the core science/additional science qualifications.

In scenarios where 'best' discounting is used, exception discounting is not applied to the English Baccalaureate measure or the English/mathematics components in headline measures. This is because one pathway might have more points but not reach the criteria for the EBacc and vice versa. A pupil takes the following:

June 2013	November 2014	June 2015
Core science (C)	Biology (D)	Physics (D)

June 2013	November 2014	June 2015
	Chemistry (D)	Additional science (C)

Table 13: Table example

As the core science was taken before 29 September 2013, another pathway can be opened and the best pathway counts. Therefore the individual sciences discount the core science/additional science qualifications (as three Ds have more points than two Cs). However, as exception discounting is not applied to the EBacc measure, the pupil still meets the science element of the EBacc with the C grades in core and additional science.

Only one additional science pathway can be opened after 29 September 2013 – this is the first pathway taken after this date. For example, if a pupil took core science in June 2013, double science in June 2014 and individual sciences in June 2015, only the best between the core science and the double science counts.

A pupil takes the following:

June 2013	November 2014	June 2015
Core science (D)	Double science (EE)	Biology (A)
Additional science (D)		Chemistry (A)
		Physics (A)

Table 14: Table example

As the core and additional sciences were taken before 29 September 2013, another pathway can be opened and the best pathway counts. Therefore the core and additional sciences discount the double science qualification. The individual science qualifications taken in June 2015 are automatically discounted because only one extra pathway can be opened after 29 September 2013, which must be the first pathway started after this date.

Retakes

If a pupil takes a qualification before 29 September 2013, and retakes the qualification after 29 September 2013 (or takes another qualification from the same pathway), the pathway is set and qualifications in subsequent pathways are discounted. However, this is only the case if the retake is the first qualification taken after 29 September 2013. If the retake is not the first qualification taken after 29 September 2013, the pathway is not set and the best pathway counts.

A pupil takes the following:

June 2013	June 2014	June 2015
English (C)	English (B)	English language (A) English literature (A)

Table 15: Table example

As English was retaken and it was the first one after 29 September 2013, the pathway is restricted, and the English language/English literature qualifications are discounted. The better of the two English grades counts.

A pupil takes the following:

June 2013	May 2015	June 2015
Methods in mathematics (C)	Applications of mathematics (D)	Mathematics (A)

Table 16: Table example

As the linked pairs pathway was retaken and it was the first one after 29 September, mathematics is discounted.

A pupil takes the following:

June 2013	November 2014	June 2015
Biology (B)	Biology (C)	Core science (A)

Table 17: Table example

As biology was retaken and it was the first one after 29 September, core science is discounted. The better of the two biology grades count.

A pupil takes the following:

June 2013	November 2014	June 2015
Biology (B)	Core science (A*)	Biology (A)

Table 18: Table example

Even though biology was retaken, it wasn't the first qualification taken after 29 September 2013, therefore the pathway isn't restricted. This means that the best result from the individual sciences pathway and the core/additional sciences pathway counts, therefore the A* in core science counts.

Moving schools

The early entry policy states that if a pupil previously certificated a qualification whilst enrolled at another school, the grade does not count in performance measures unless the new school chooses not to re-enter the pupil. If the school decides to re-enter the pupil, the grade from that attempt counts, regardless of whether it is higher or lower than the previous attempt.

For exception discounting purposes, this means that if a pupil starts a new pathway at a new school, the previous qualifications are discounted. However, if a pathway is continued, the whole pathway counts.

A pupil takes the following:

Old School	New School
Biology (A)	Core science (C)

Table 19: Table example

As a new pathway has been started at the new school, the biology qualification is discounted.

A pupil takes the following:

Old School	New School
Biology (A)	Chemistry (C)

Table 19: Table example

As the same pathway has been continued at the new school, both qualifications count.

AS level exception discounting in English and mathematics

After the early entry rules have been carried out, exception discounting is carried out across levels for English and mathematics qualifications, ie between AS levels and level 1/level 2 qualifications. The AS level(s) always discount the lower level qualifications as per the first discounting principle. For example, an AS mathematics discounts the GCSE linked pairs in mathematics, and an AS English language and literature discounts GCSE English language and/or GCSE English literature. If a pupil has an AS in English language or English literature and a GCSE English, the AS will count for 5+ A* to C, points measures etc but the pupil will still meet any English specific measures already met by the GCSE.

AS level exception discounting is not applied to science qualifications. For example, a pupil could have GCSEs in core and additional science and an AS level in an individual science.

If you require more detailed information for a specific situation, please contact the department at [Contact us](#).

Annex A – Science pathway discounting

	Pathway 1	Pathway 2	Pathway 3	Other qualifications discounting all pathways	All other science qualifications
Pathway Name	Individual sciences	Core, additional and further additional	Double/combined science	Applied science qualifications with the same discount code as core science	
Qualification discount code(s)	RC1 RH3 RD1	RA1B RA1C RA1D	RA1E	RA1B - that are not core science	RA14 CK1* QA3
Qualifications included	Physics (RC1) Biology (RH3) Chemistry (RD1)	Core (RA1B) Additional (RA1C) Further additional (RA1D)	Edexcel L1/2 Certificate (RA1E) AQA Level 1/2 Certificate (RA1E) - from 2016	Pearson BTEC Level 1/Level 2 First Award in Principles of Applied Science (RA1B) OCR Level 1/2 Cambridge National Certificate in Science (RA1B)	BTECs, for example Pearson BTEC Level 2 Diploma/Extended Certificate in Applied Science (RA14) OCR Level 2 National Award/Certificate in Science (RA14) Applied science GCSEs (RA14) Computer science or computing GCSEs (CK1*) Any other science qualifications, such as a GCSE in environmental science (QA3)
Pathways discounted	2 and 3	1 and 3	1 and 2	1, 2 and 3	None

* Since 2014 computer science and computing have been included in the science element of the EBacc, and count in addition to the other separate sciences. If computer science is a pupil's first science qualification all available science pathways are still open. For example, a pupil may take the computer science GCSE and then go down the 'core' pathway and take all three 'core' qualifications – in which case all four science qualifications count.



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