



Department
for Education

Discounting and early entry guidance

**Guide for local authorities, maintained
and independent secondary schools,
academies, free schools and FE colleges
with 14 to 16 provision**

October 2017

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Summary

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. The early entry policy means credit is given to the first qualification taken where a pupil has more than one qualification in the same subject.

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 the [Analyse School Performance](#) (ASP) data release (previously 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.

Discounting is only applied to qualifications which count in the school and college performance tables in a given year. There is a restricted list of qualifications which count in secondary school performance tables, and each qualification counts for no more than the equivalent of one GCSE. The number of non-GCSEs that can count in the tables is restricted to three.

Expiry or review date

This advice will next be reviewed before September 2018.

Who is this advice for?

This guidance is for:

- local authorities
- school leaders, school staff and governing bodies in all maintained and independent schools, academies, free schools and FE colleges with 14 to 16 provision

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 one taken first counts (this applies where the first qualification is level 1 and the second qualification is level 2)
- for qualifications which discount and are taken on the same day, the best result counts. However, schools should not vary the published starting time for an examination if there is a clash between papers of different awarding bodies or specifications in the same subject. For more information please see Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) instructions [here](#)
- 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-enters 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 allowing comparisons to be made between qualifications with the same discount code.

A list of qualifications that count in the 2017 secondary school performance tables, together with their discount codes, can be found [here](#).

Using this, schools can see where two qualifications discount one another. The list provides descriptions of the discount codes and covers each year up until 2019.²

¹ See section on AS level exception discounting for further information

² 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.

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 for science qualifications

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 only to science qualifications. Qualifications which count as science in performance measures are detailed on the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) list which is available [here](#). This includes details on the criteria for entering and achieving the science element of the EBacc.

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 those which count in the school and college performance tables.

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

- core science, additional science, further additional science
- individual sciences (biology, chemistry, physics³)
- double/combined science

³ 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.

To meet the criteria for the science element of the EBacc, 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 the school and college 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 single science qualification can count towards Progress 8/Attainment 8, for example, core science can take up one slot and a pupil does not have to take additional science for it to count.

A pupil takes the following:

| November 2016 | January 2017 | June 2017 |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Biology (C) | Core science (A) | Double science (AA) |

Table 1: Science example 1

Only the biology qualification taken in November 2016 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. However the biology grade may count towards Progress 8/Attainment 8.

A pupil takes the following:

| June 2016 | January 2017 | June 2017 |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Core science (A) | Double science (AA) | Additional science (C) |

Table 2: Science example 2

The core science qualification taken in June 2016 determines that the pupil is on the core science/additional science pathway. Therefore the additional science taken in June 2017 also counts, but the double science taken in January 2017 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. Both grades can also count towards Progress 8/Attainment 8.

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 2016 | January 2017 | June 2018 |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Biology (A) | Chemistry (A) | Environmental science (A) |

Table 4: Science example 4

The biology qualification taken in November 2016 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 have not been taken.

Computer science is 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 2016 | January 2017 | May 2017 | June 2017 |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Computer science (A) | Core science (B) | Double Science (AA) | Additional Science (C) |

Table 5: Science example 5

The computer science qualification taken in May 2016 does not determine the science pathway and all pathways are still open. Therefore the science pathway is determined by the next qualification taken, for example the core science in January 2017. 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.

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 science 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 6: Moving school example 1

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 11: Moving school example 2

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

AS level exception discounting in English and mathematics

After early entry discounting has been carried out, exception discounting is carried out across levels for English and mathematics qualifications, for example 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, and an AS English language and literature discounts GCSE English language and/or GCSE English literature.

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 us](#).

Annex A – Science pathway discounting

| | Pathway 1 | Pathway 2 | Pathway 3 | All other science qualifications |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Pathway Name | Individual sciences | Core, additional and further additional | Double/combined science | |
| Qualification discount code(s) | RC1 RH3 RD1 | RA1B RA1C RA1D | RA1E | 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) | Applied science (RA14) Computer science or computing (CK1*) Any other science qualifications, such as a GCSE in environmental science (QA3) |
| Pathways discounted | 2 and 3 | 1 and 3 | 1 and 2 | 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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