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[Department
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Guidance

16 to 18 performance measures discounting guidance

Updated 27 September 2023

Applies to England

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Discounting is an important part of performance measures. It defines how the Department for Education (DfE) selects performance points and the size of a subject if a student entered more than one qualification in the same subject area.

This guidance explains how DfE discounts qualifications for the 16 to 18 performance measures. It does not provide a comprehensive list of discount codes and families for all qualifications.

DfE may update discount codes at any time during the year to improve the quality of discounting. This can affect the current cycle without prior notice.

When discounting applies

Where a student has taken more than one qualification in the same subject area, DfE applies discounting. This is so the performance measures only give credit once for teaching a single course of study. If qualifications do discount each other, this impacts the school or college's performance measures. Discounting does not affect the qualifications an individual student has achieved.

Discounting applies in a number of situations.

1. A student resits a qualification before the end of 16 to 18 study, possibly with a different awarding organisation. Discounting ensures that DfE only counts the best result in the performance measures.
2. A larger qualification incorporates several smaller qualifications within it. Many of the vocational qualifications are structured in this way. Discounting ensures that DfE only uses the overarching (largest) qualification in the performance measures.
3. The school or college provides a single course of study but then enters the students for 2 or more very similar qualifications. Discounting ensures that DfE

only counts the achievement from this course once.

There are a number of educational reasons why a student might undertake several qualifications which discount each other. A common one is to recognise their progression through a course of study. For example, taking an AS level before progressing to an A level in the same subject.

Which qualifications discount

DfE applies discounting to all qualifications which count towards performance measures taken by a student during 16 to 18 study up to the past 3 years. This includes technical certificates and level 2 vocational qualifications.

DfE will apply discounting if 2 qualifications:

- are in the same discounting family (broad class of qualification)
- have the same discount code (reflecting same subject area)

Qualifications do not discount each other if they have the same discount code but belong to different discounting families. Discounting can occur across categories. For example, if a tech level and an applied general have the same discount code and are in the same discounting family.

Performance measures at institution level

Qualifications achieved at different providers by a student will not discount against each other.

For example, if a student took an AS level in the first year at one school and then achieved an A level after moving to another school in the second year, DfE would count the:

- AS level in performance measures for the first school
- A level in performance measures for the second school

Discounting families

The discounting family describes the nature of the qualification. For example, whether it is:

- an A level
- a vocational qualification
- an International Baccalaureate diploma

Qualifications in different discounting families do not discount against each other.

16 to 18 performance measures discounting families

General	General vocational	AEA	Vocationally related	Free standing maths	Other general
GCE A Level	Applied GCE A level Double Award	Advanced Extension Award	VRQ Level 2 and 3*	Level 3	International Baccalaureate
GCE AS level	Applied GCE A level		BTEC Diploma Level 1/2, 2 and 3		Other general qualifications Level 2 and 3
Diploma Extended Project	Applied GCE AS level Double Award		BTEC Certificate Level 1/2, 2 and 3		
Pre U Diploma	Applied GCE AS level		BTEC Award Level 3		
Pre U Principal Subject	Applied GCE A level / AS combined		OCR Cambridge Technical Certificate Level		

Pre U
Short
Course
Subject

OCR
Cambridge
Technical
Diploma Level 2
and 3

Principal
Learning
(Diploma)
Level 3

OCR
Cambridge
Technical
Extended
Diploma Level 3

Core
Maths
(Level 3)

OCR
Cambridge
Technical
Introductory
Diploma Level 3

OCR
Cambridge
Technical
Subsidiary
Diploma Level 3

OCR
Cambridge
Technical
Extended
Certificate Level
2 & Level 3

OCR
Cambridge
Technical
Foundation
Diploma Level 3

Level 2 and Level 3 VRQs can be of a variety of sizes. They may be equivalent to or smaller than other qualifications in the same discounting family.

Discount codes

DfE assigns discount codes to qualifications based on the subject areas they cover. The purpose of this is to:

- gather qualifications with similar content
- compare different qualifications which have the same code

Discount codes are only allocated to qualifications which contribute to the performance measures. DfE does not give discount codes to qualifications at level 4 and above.

Specifications from awarding organisations may include classification codes. These can match the DfE qualification discount codes, however the classification code is not a formal record.

Discounting for level 3 attainment measures

When 2 (or more) level 3 qualifications have the same discount code and belong to the same discounting family, DfE applies the following principles.

1. Where a student has entered qualifications of different sizes and passed the larger qualification, DfE counts the larger qualification. The smaller qualification is not counted (even if the larger qualification has less points). For example, where a student has gained an AS studying towards an A level in the same subject, only the A level result will count.
2. Where a student has failed to pass a larger qualification but passed a smaller qualification, DfE selects passes in smaller qualifications for point score and the size of the larger qualification for the size of entry. This also applies where a student has taken a legacy AS qualification and a reformed A level qualification with the same discount code. For example, if a student gained an AS level but fails to get a pass grade at A level, DfE selects the point score for AS level as the point score for the subject. The size of entry to the subject would be equivalent to one A level.
3. Where a student has more than one qualification of the same size, DfE gives credit to the one with the highest point score.
4. If there are still 2 or more qualifications that DfE could count, we select one

qualification randomly.

Exception discounting for level 3 qualifications

Occasionally there are situations where assigning discounting families and discount codes are not sufficient to achieve accurate discounting. In these circumstances, DfE applies rules about specific qualifications. This is referred to as 'exception discounting'.

Exception discounting applies in:

- the use of maths and free-standing maths qualifications (FSMQs)
- GCE AS and A level maths qualifications
- International Baccalaureate and International Baccalaureate components

AS and A level use of maths and free-standing maths qualifications

The AS and A level use of maths is a combination of:

- level 3 free standing maths qualifications
- core units that are not qualifications in their own right

If the use of maths qualification is positively graded, DfE will discount the FSMQs. The FSMQs will only count towards performance measures if the use of maths is an unclassified qualification, and one or more FSMQs are positively graded. DfE will count the AS and A level size in the 16 to 18 performance measures but will take the points from the FSMQs.

GCE AS and A level maths qualifications

In the 16 to 18 performance measures, DfE discounts the following AS qualifications if students achieve them studying towards an A level in general maths:

- maths (mechanics)
- maths (pure)
- maths (discrete)
- maths (applied)
- maths (statistics)

Maths (general) is already discounted under the normal discounting rules.

International Baccalaureate and International Baccalaureate components

In the 16 to 18 performance measures, if a student passes the International Baccalaureate, DfE discounts all components on both size and points. DfE will only count the baccalaureate.

If a student fails the International Baccalaureate, then DfE:

- discounts the baccalaureate points and counts the size
- counts the points for the components and discounts their sizes

If there is no International Baccalaureate result, then DfE counts the component results and sizes.

The International Baccalaureate career-related programme (IBCP) includes:

- a core consisting of 4 components
- a career-related study
- a minimum of 2 International Baccalaureate diploma courses

Students can take the career related qualification with any awarding organisation. Where a student takes more than one career related qualification, DfE only reports the results of accredited component qualifications within the IBCP, rather than the certificate itself.

Discounting for A level cohort indicators

In 2012, DfE introduced a new group of A level-only indicators in the 16 to 18 performance measures. As A levels are in the same discounting family as Pre-U qualifications it would have been possible for a Pre-U to discount an A level result if the qualifications were in the same subject area. To avoid this, DfE implemented a new discounting method.

Discounting for level 2 attainment

measures

Discounting only applies to qualifications which count towards performance measures and occurs between qualifications that fall in the same discounting family and discount code. A failed level 3 qualification cannot discount a level 2 pass.

The following discounting rules apply to level 2 qualifications in level 2 attainment measures.

1. Where a student achieved a qualification in level 3 as well, DfE discounts the level 2 qualification.
2. Where a student has entered qualifications in different sizes, DfE counts the larger qualification and discounts the smaller qualification.
3. Where a student has more than one qualification of the same size, DfE selects the qualification with the highest point score and discounts the other qualifications.
4. If there are still 2 or more qualifications that DfE could count, we select the one with the latest award date.

Contact us

If you need further information about specific scenarios, [contact the Department for Education](#). If possible, include the 8-digit qualification number. You can find the qualification number on Ofqual's [regulated qualifications register](#).

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