



Department
for Education

Qualification achievement rates: Business Rules 2023 to 2024

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Summary

This document outlines the high-level business rules that explain how we calculate the qualification achievement rates (QAR) for the 2023 to 2024 funding year (1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024).

The specifications containing the detailed technical rules are published separately.

Understanding the terminology

The term 'we' refers to the 'Department for Education' (DfE) or Education and Skills Funding Agency' (ESFA), an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Education (DfE) and associated staff.

When we refer to 'you' or 'providers', this includes colleges, training organisations, local authorities and employers that receive funding from us, Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and the Greater London Authority (GLA) or Advanced Learner Loans (loans) payments from the Student Loans Company (SLC) on behalf of learners, to deliver education and training.

We take information for apprenticeships from the programme aim Individualised Learner Record (ILR) record. We use the learning aim level ILR record for education and training and Traineeships. We use the term 'learning aims' throughout this document to refer to both.

The term 'Education and Training' means ILR records that are recorded for 16 to 19 study programmes, the adult education budget (AEB) including the devolved AEB, and advanced learner loans.

Changes from the 2022 to 2023 business rules

The Government integrated the Traineeship programme into other grant funded provision from 1 August 2023. As a result of this change Traineeships will no longer appear as a separate report in the QAR provider dashboards.

Under section The learning aims we exclude from QARs:

- T Level Adult Pilot using LDM code 384 added as new permanent exclusion
- Flexi-Job Apprenticeship Agencies (FJAAs) using LDM code 386 removed as a time limited exclusion

Community Learning is currently permanently excluded from QAR data. Tailored Learning will be introduced on 1 August 2024, and we will review whether such an exemption will apply to Tailored Learning provision and include information on this in the 2024/25 QAR business rules.

About QARs

QARs, and the associated pass rates and retention rates, are a measure of the quality of the training courses that a provider delivered in a funding year.

QARs are included on the Explore our statistics and data service and used by Ofsted for risk assessment for training providers inspections.

They show learners, employers, and training providers the quality of training between organisations in the sector.

We will calculate the following measures:

- overall QARs
- pass rates
- retention rates

The overall QAR, pass rate and retention rate calculations use the hybrid end year of the learning aim. The hybrid end year is the later of the:

- achievement year (for apprenticeship standards on funding model 36 only)
- planned end year of the learning aim
- actual end year of the learning aim
- reporting year

The calculations use 3 values:

The number of aims that have ended - where they have an actual end date or where continuing learners, planned breaks in learning or transfers did not return

- The number of aims achieved. This includes reformed AS levels that are decoupled from the A Level and any cashed pre-reform AS levels
- The number of aims where the learner has completed all the learning activities

The different measures for each hybrid end year are:

- The overall QAR is the number of achieved learning aims as a percentage of the total number of learning aims in the cohort that ended
- The overall pass rate is the number of achieved learning aims as a percentage of the total number of learning aims that have completed all the planned learning activities
- The overall retention rate is the number of learning aims that have completed all of the planned learning activities as a percentage of the total number of learning aims that ended.

Matching learning aims across years

Data submitted using the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) for the last 5 years is used to create a QAR dataset for reporting.

Many learning aims take more than one year to complete, meaning that the same learning aim for a learner or apprentice can appear in more than one ILR file. We use various combinations of variables to ensure we match the correct records across years. At learner level, we utilise the Unique Learner Number (ULN) and where we are unable to do so we will match on Learner Reference Number (LRN).

Changes to the learner reference number should be avoided if at all possible between years for continuing learners. If a provider does unavoidably have to change the learner reference numbers used, for example because of a change to their MIS system, they should ensure that the Learner reference number in previous year field is completed. This allows us to match the records accurately. For more information about recording this correctly, please refer to the Provider Support Manual and technical specifications.

What we will produce for providers, share and publish

What we will share with providers

We will produce provider level QARs and comparison values for the previous 1 to 2 years to show a trend and share with you as follows:

- Education and Training for 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024
- Apprenticeships 2021 to 2022, 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024

We will also produce a national value for providers to benchmark their QARs.

Due to changes in funding arrangements for Traineeships, a separate QAR will no longer be produced. Historical trend data, presented in provider level dashboards, has not been re-calculated and is shown as originally calculated using the methodology of the business rules for the relevant academic year.

We will produce overall QARs for subcontracted provision for education and training and apprenticeships.

Summary data and data extracts will be produced 4 times a year and provide you views of your QAR data and the ability to create your own dashboards. These will be created:

- In-year data release in July each year using the provider's R10 ILR data. This gives providers opportunity to review their data, as it cannot be changed after the R14 ILR collection.
- In-year data release in September each year using the provider's R12 ILR data. This gives providers opportunity to review their data, as it cannot be changed after the R14 ILR collection.
- Provisional data release in January each year using the provider's R14 & R04 ILR data gives providers chance to check the QAR methodology has been applied correctly.
- Final data release in April each year using the provider's R14 & R04 ILR data to providers the final position.

What we will share with external stakeholders

Training provider level QARs are shared securely with:

- the Further Education Commissioner
- Ofsted
- relevant Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and Greater London Authority (GLA) for devolved AEB funded provision

What we will publish

QAR information is published through the [Explore our statistics and data service](#).

Historic versions up to the 2018 to 2019 year are available from [Statistics: national achievement rates tables](#).

QARs will continue to be published with information at provider level for 2023 to 2024.

College structural change

The term structural change covers various scenarios that, for example, result in:

- a merger or de-merger with another college
- the complete closure of a college
- sixth form college converting to academy status

For college mergers that take place up to and including 31 July 2024, we will produce a QAR for 2023 to 2024 reporting year combining the ILR learning aims from the pre-merger UKPRNs for the post-merger college UKPRN.

For college mergers that took place on or after 31 July 2024, we will produce the QAR for the 2023 to 2024 reporting year under the pre-merger UKPRNs.

Where there is college structural change between 1 August 2023 and 31 July 2024 we will aim to produce the QARs, including the historical trend, using the following principles:

- for learners still in learning on 31 July 2023, we will attribute these to the provider who continues to deliver the learning from 1 August 2023
- for learners who have already finished their learning and have a hybrid end year of 2022 to 2023 or earlier, we will attribute them to the provider who delivered the training before the structural change
- for learners who have already finished their learning but have a planned end date after 1 August 2023 (i.e. a hybrid end year of 2023 to 2024 or after), we will attribute these to the provider who 'owns' the campus from 1 August 2023

Each instance of structural change may be different and have unique characteristics not described here, and therefore there may be exceptions or additions to the principles above.

Subject to data quality we are continuing to review whether we reinstate publishing final QAR results for college structural change and campus level data as follows:

- transparency reports to show trends before and after college merger in that year.
 - Subsequent years will be QARs for the post-merger UKPRN.
- QAR datasets with campus level data, where providers have been issued a campus ID.

The learning aims we include in QARs

The learning aims we include in the QAR calculation are those in receipt of funding via:

- 16 to 19 recorded in the ILR under Funding model 25 ('16 to 19 (excluding Apprenticeships and 16-18 learner programmes funded through school or academy funding model)')
- the Adult Education Budget (previously called the Adult Skills Budget in historic data). This includes devolved delivery. Both devolved and non-devolved delivery are recorded in the ILR under Funding model 35 ('Adult Skills')
- Advanced Learner Loans recorded in the ILR under Funding model 99 ('Non-funded') using the Learning Delivery Funding and Monitoring Code 'ADL'
- Apprenticeships; this includes all standards and frameworks recorded in the ILR through Funding models 35 ('Adult Skills'), 36 ('Apprenticeships') and 81 ('Other Adult') for providers listed on apprenticeship provider and assessment register (APAR)¹ at the start of the academic year.
- Traineeships recorded in the ILR where the Programme Type is 24.

See also The learning aims excluded from the QAR calculation section to see what we exclude in these programmes.

How we calculate withdrawals

We treat withdrawals as:

- a 'Completion status' of 1 ('Learner continuing or intending to continue the learning activities leading to the learning aim') being recorded in the final R14 ILR return for a funding year
- not having a corresponding record in the following funding year

Where this occurs, we will set the reporting year as the year after the last submitted file containing the learning aim.

For example, an aim with a 'Learning planned end date' of June 2023 and a 'Completion status' of 1 recorded in the R14 ILR in 2022 to 2023 and does not appear in the R14 ILR in 2023 to 2024, will be a withdrawal in the 2023 to 2024 year.

We treat learning aims as withdrawals for the overall QAR methodology where they have a 'Completion status' of 6 ('Learner has temporarily withdrawn from the aim due to an agreed break in learning') and where either:

¹ [Apply to the APAR as an apprenticeship training provider \(gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-to-the-apar-as-an-apprenticeship-training-provider)

- they do not have a corresponding restart record in the same funding year or in the following 2 funding years, OR
- the planned break recorded in the R14 ILR return for 2022 to 2023 has no corresponding restart record in the R04 ILR return of 2023 to 2024

If this scenario happens, we will set the reporting year to 1 year after the later of either:

- the expected end year
- actual end year

For example, if you recorded an aim with a 'Learning planned end date' in July 2023 with a planned break in learning in April 2022, this will be a withdrawn aim in the 2023 to 2024 funding year if there is no restart record in either:

- the R14 ILR return in 2022 to 2023 OR
- the R14 ILR return in 2023 to 2024 OR
- the R04 ILR return of 2024 to 2025

We match restart records to planned break records by matching the 'UKPRN', 'Unique Learner Number' and the 'Original learning start date' on the restart record where it matches either the:

- 'Learning start date' OR
- 'Original learning start date' (to allow for situations where the planned break was itself a restart) of the planned break record for either:
 - 'Programme type' and 'Framework code'/'Standard code' for apprenticeships OR
 - 'Learning aim reference' for other aims

We treat uncashed AS levels as failures; this relates to pre-reform AS levels that appear in our trend data.

The learning aims we exclude from QARs

We monitor and analyse that providers are correctly excluding aims in QAR calculations.

Where we identify large volumes or proportions, we will contact you to discuss these and may require evidence to confirm these exclusions.

Permanent exclusions are applied in the current academic year business rules and unlikely to change to be included in future academic years.

Time limited exclusions are applied in the current academic year business rules but may change to be included in future academic years.

Permanent exclusions

Current permanent exclusions are:

- 14 to 16 year-old students who are direct funded or home educated, identified in the ILR using the LDM codes 320 ('14 to 16 direct funded students in FE') and 321 ('14-16 Home Educated Students').
- Transfers², where a learner transferred to:
 - a different programme or learning aim within the same provider and we can match to a new aim with a start date within 120 days of the actual end date of the old aim
 - a new provider following our intervention or from the Department for Education. The exclusion applies to the original provider's QAR, not the new provider's QAR. The new provider should assess the learners fully and plan their learning accordingly
 - another provider to undertake learning that meets a specific government strategy and they don't have a successful achievement from the previous training provider
 - an apprenticeship from a traineeship, other sustained employment or appropriate further learning (as defined in the Funding Rules for a 'positive outcome')
- Planned breaks where the learner has temporarily withdrawn due to an agreed break in learning for the learning aim; we will exclude these from the relevant hybrid end year. If a learner does not return from a planned break, then any learning aims excluded under this rule previously, will be included in subsequent reporting years

² We will not exclude transfers from apprenticeships to non-apprenticeship learning aims.

- Unemployed learners claiming Universal Credit, Job Seeker's Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance (Work Related Activity Group) who cannot continue their learning through to completion because they gained employment
- European Social Fund funded learning aims recorded under Funding model 70 ('ESF')
- Community Learning funded learning aims using the 'non-formula funded' approach recorded under Funding model 10 ('Community Learning')
- Where a learner withdrew within the respective funding qualifying period without achievement. There is no qualifying period for trailblazer pilot standards recorded under Funding model 81 ('Other adult'), however we exclude those where the apprentice withdraws without a net employer contribution payment being recorded (For example, any payments minus refunds)
- Where an instance of learning generates no funding
- Learning Technologies Pilot learning aims identified using LDM code 337
- Apprenticeship Seasonable Worker Pilot learning aims identified using LDM code 348
- Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) learning aims identified using LDM code 034
- 18-21 Work skills pilot learning aims identified using LDM codes 332 or 341
- Employer Ownership Pilot learning aims identified using LDM code 351
- Innovation Code learning aims (references ZINN0001 to ZINN0006 and Z0004474 to Z0007833)
- Unitisation qualifications (learning aim type code 8008 and 8009)
- Work experience or work placement aims
- Supported internships aims (where the Learning Aim Reference is 'Z0002347')
- Flexible Learning Fund aims identified by LDM code 360
- T Level Adult Pilot using LDM code 384
- Portable Flexi-job Apprenticeships Pilot using LDM code 383

Time limited exclusions

Time limited exclusions are:

- T Level and T Level Transition Programme aims
- Diploma in Sporting Excellence (DiSE) aims

More information about how we identify and exclude these aims is included in the [Technical specifications](#) under the relevant academic year.



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