

successforall

transforming quality and meeting needs in the learning and skills sector

New measures of success for the learning and skills sector

Success for All is the Government's programme of reform and investment in the learning and skills sector. It will raise standards, increase participation and improve outcomes for learners and employers. It also recognises that learning and skills providers and employers must work together to raise productivity and meet skills needs at a national, regional and local level.

These objectives are reinforced by the Government's Skills Strategy. This will develop and coordinate learning and training provision so that it is more responsive to the needs of employers and helps learners get the skills they need for sustainable, fulfilling employment. The aim is to identify and resolve weaknesses in the sector and build on its existing strengths. Therefore it is essential that the performance of education and training providers be measured accurately and fairly.

To achieve this, in 2003/04, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) carried

out a joint consultation to develop new measures of success for the learning and skills sector.

We have reviewed our original proposal to reflect the outcomes of the consultation and the priorities for further work. These outcomes, priorities and next steps are published on the *Success for All* website at www.successforall.gov.uk.

All the new measures proposed were widely supported by respondents to the consultation. Their feedback has been reflected in the work programme and priorities for 2004. Although not everything will be completed in 2004/05, we remain committed to developing them in phases.

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Priority 1

Developing a new measure of learner success that can be applied to all providers while recognising their unique characteristics.

The learner success rate is the number of qualifications achieved as a percentage of the number of learners who started the course for that qualification. For example, if 100 learners start a course and 50 complete it successfully, the learner success rate is 50 per cent.

This measure of learner success will be developed in three ways.

- We will introduce a standard headline indicator of success – a single grade or number for each education and training provider that reflects their overall performance. This will follow work to standardise the way in which different organisations track many of the parameters for success, such as start dates and learners transferring between courses. The headline indicator can then be applied uniformly to all colleges and work based learning providers. We will also explore the possibility of extending it to school sixth forms.
- We will develop appropriate national benchmarks to enable the performance of everyone undertaking work based learning to be judged in a consistent way.
- We will review how we calculate success rates for work based learning providers. This may result in a new system that is based on the success rates achieved by the planned completion dates for apprenticeships.

The aim is to develop this measure of learner success for all providers by May 2005, for introduction from September 2005.

Priority 2

Value-added/distance travelled measures.

Value-added and distance travelled measures of performance relate to learning and training for 16-19 year olds. Value-added measures cover Level 3 graded qualifications, such as A levels, while distance travelled measures apply to all qualifications at all levels, graded or ungraded. Both reflect differences in the prior attainment of learners, thereby measuring how much an individual student or learner has progressed. As a result, they can be used to assess the performance of different education and training providers and can also help providers consider their performance and improve it in the future. These measures complement the learner success rate and allow the overall performance of a provider to be understood more accurately and represented more clearly.

The first two of these measures (see box) will be developed, tested and reviewed by April 2005. They will be carried out in stages during 2005/06. Implementation of a staff development programme, support materials and guidance will begin in May 2005. These measures will be piloted from 2005/06, with a launch in 2006/07.

In response to the consultation, a number of concerns were expressed about the use of the distance travelled measure for adult learners (aged over 19). As a result, we will publish a report in spring 2005 outlining possible approaches to take. This report will inform further discussions with stakeholder groups early in 2005/06.

Priority 3

Refining and improving existing measures of employer engagement to support the delivery of the Skills Strategy.

The Skills Strategy gives employers more say in how, where and when training is delivered. It is therefore vital that further education providers engage employers successfully. The main elements needing more work are:

- improvement to the LSC's key performance measure of success rates (as outlined under Priorities 1 and 2); this will benefit the workforce by improving the relevance and quality of the skills and education that they gain
- a new measure that will ensure good and appropriate guidance, both for learners who qualify for the Level 2 learning entitlement and their employers
- continued development of the annual employer survey, with greater use made of its findings when implementing the Skills Strategy.

In addition, we plan big improvements in the information available on learners' destinations. As this information becomes available, it will help the Government and the LSC to understand how different learning routes affect individuals' employability, career paths and rates of promotion. This information will also help learners decide which options are best for them.

The impact of these measures on the delivery of the Skills Strategy will increase over a number of years. The most important objectives to be delivered in 2004/05 are:

- more appropriate and meaningful targets for employers' engagement – these will be a key part of each provider's three-year development plan, with the allocation of funding linked to the successful delivery of the plan
- better guidance for those adults qualifying for the Level 2 entitlement.

Priority 4

More work developing value for money indicators.

Currently there are no approved or consistent ways to measure value for money in the education and training sector. Many current methods are relatively crude. As a result, we will continue work to develop a better system that can reflect and track:

- economy – the cost of inputs to deliver services
- efficiency – most appropriate approaches and processes to deliver the desired services
- effectiveness – the degree to which services meet their original objectives.

This work will produce improved options for consideration towards the end of 2004.

Identified priorities for 2004/05

- 1 developing a new measure of learner success that can be applied to all providers while recognising their unique characteristics
- 2 value-added/distance travelled measures:
 - more work on a value-added measure for learners aged 16-19 taking graded qualifications at Level 3
 - development of a distance travelled measure for learners aged 16-19, based on their prior attainment
 - exploring how to develop a distance travelled measure for adult learners that commands the confidence of the sector and other users
- 3 refining and improving existing measures of employer engagement to support the delivery of the Skills Strategy
- 4 more work developing value for money indicators.

Other measures

In addition to the work needed on the four key priorities, a number of new measures are planned during 2004/05. These will track learner satisfaction, as well as achievement and progress in non-accredited learning. They also include targets to increase the proportion of teaching and training staff holding professional educational qualifications. The arrangements by which these targets are agreed within three-year development plans will be extended to all education and learning providers.

We are grateful to the many organisations and individuals that responded to the consultation.

Next steps

Our goal is to define and measure success more appropriately. This will help learners, parents and employers choose the right course. It will also help funding bodies, inspectorates and ministers make accurate judgements. However, we need to ensure we strike the right balance between precision and simplicity.

Education and training providers and their representatives will continue to be involved to ensure that all users have confidence in the new indicator. We will consult further on the final measures before they are put into place.

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