



Department
for Education

Statistical First Release

Interim retention measure for school sixth forms: 2013 to 2014

These are experimental statistics.

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1.5 million courses started There were 1.5 million courses started at state-funded school and academy sixth forms that were due for completion in the 2013 to 2014 academic year.

94% of all courses were completed Over 1.4 million courses were completed in the 2013 to 2014 academic year, giving a retention rate of 94%. The qualifications covered include A levels, AS levels and a range of other academic and vocational qualifications.

1. Summary interim retention rates for 2013 to 2014

Overall, 94% of 1.5 million courses from state-funded school and academy sixth forms were completed.

There was some variation in the retention rate by qualification type. Around 97% of GCE A levels were completed compared to a retention rate of 93% for applied GCE AS levels.

Qualification type	Courses ¹ started	Courses ¹ completed	Retention rate
GCE AS Level	733,350	682,690	93%
GCE A Level	428,620	417,330	97%
Applied GCE ²	54,380	50,470	93%
Other ³	281,310	250,480	89%
Total	1,497,660	1,400,970	94%

¹ Courses are rounded to the nearest 10. Courses started include qualifications that were due to be completed in the 2013 to 2014 academic year.

² Applied GCE qualifications have been aggregated into the "Applied GCE" group. A list of qualifications included in this group can be found in the accompanying table.

³ Other vocational and lower level qualifications have been aggregated into the "Other" group. A list of qualifications included in this group can be found in the accompanying table.

2. Background and context

The department previously published [qualification success rates](#) for schools, but these have been withdrawn. This was because the data wasn't robust enough to calculate whether courses were completed successfully. The department is developing a new retention measure to replace qualification success rates. This will be one of the [five headline measures](#), as part of the reforms to the 16 to 19 accountability system from 2016.

To prepare for the transition to the new retention measure, an interim retention measure has been produced based on the retention element of qualification success rates. Ofsted uses this retention component as part of their inspections process. This publication provides the national context for the school-level retention rates that Ofsted has shared with schools.

The qualification success rates were based on two data sources: the autumn school census and the awarding body data. The autumn school census was used to define the cohort and calculate retention. The awarding body data was then matched to this to obtain final achievement. The match rate differed greatly by schools, so it wasn't robust enough to allow comparisons to be made.

The interim retention measure is based on courses, while the new retention measure will be based at student level. A single student can start multiple courses, but may not complete them all. This means that the new retention measure will show how many students started and

finished their main course of study. The interim retention measure, however, shows the number of courses started and completed. This gives a picture of what types of qualifications are retained and which are more readily dropped.

A qualification is counted as complete when a student has continued studying to the end of the course. Students don't necessarily have to be entered for, or pass, exams.

This change in method means it's not possible to make direct comparisons between the interim retention measure and the qualification success rates.

The interim retention measure doesn't take into account success (whether a qualification was achieved), it only accounts for completion. Therefore, the retention rate will almost always be higher than the qualification success rates, as not all courses that are completed are done so successfully.

This publication, and the accompanying table, are classified as "experimental statistics" and don't display the National Statistics logo. The data are produced on an interim basis as part of reforms to the accountability system to develop consistent measures covering schools and colleges. The figures should, therefore, be treated with caution.

3. Supplementary headline statistics

The table below shows how the retention of courses differs by gender. The total retention rate for females was 1% higher than for males. GCE A levels had one of the highest levels of retention, with 97% for both males and females.

Qualification Type	Courses ¹ started	Courses ¹ completed	Retention rate	
			Male	Female
GCE AS Level	733,350	682,690	93%	93%
GCE A Level	428,620	417,330	97%	97%
Applied GCE ²	54,380	50,470	92%	93%
Other ³	281,310	250,480	89%	89%
Total	1,497,660	1,400,970	93%	94%

¹ Courses are rounded to the nearest 10. Courses started include qualifications that were due to be completed in the 2013 to 2014 academic year.

² Applied GCE qualifications have been aggregated into the "Applied GCE" group. A list of qualifications included in this group can be found in the accompanying table.

³ Other vocational and lower level qualifications have been aggregated into the "Other" group. A list of qualifications included in this group can be found in the accompanying table.

4. Calculating the measure

We use data from the school census	Only state-funded school and academy sixth forms in England are included in the interim retention measure. Of these, 2,042 were within the scope of the 2013/14 interim retention measure.
There's a minimum participation criteria	Courses are only included if the learner completed the qualifying period. This is six weeks for long qualifications, two weeks for short qualifications, and one day for very short qualifications.
There isn't a penalty for transfers	If a student transfers to a different course, their original course isn't included in the interim retention measure.
The data's filtered to ensure it's in scope	Filters are applied to the school census so only those courses that are in scope are included. Courses are included if: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• students are funded by the Education Funding Agency• students aren't enrolled with guest or subsidiary status• qualification type isn't 'key skills' or 'functional skills'• the planned end date is between 1st August 2013 and 31st July 2014
Completions	A course is counted as complete when its status in the school census is recorded as '2'.
Calculation	Retention rate = courses completed / courses started

5. Got a query? Want to give feedback?

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