



## About this document

This document provides a range of information on the quality of the further education and skills participation and outcomes data, and the methodology used to produce it. It is based on the Office for National Statistics' guidelines for measuring statistical quality.

It provides an overview of the data used in the production of the further education and skills releases, along with information on data issues, data definitions, publication cycle and supplementary data produced.

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# 1. Introduction

This quality and methodology document provides an overview of the further education and skills participation and achievements data used in the production of the further education and skills releases. It provides information on the methodology used to calculate learner attainment, as well as information on the data sources, data issues and data definitions.

This document is based on the Office for National Statistics' [guidelines for measuring statistical quality](#).

## Changes included in this release

This release includes provisional figures for the first two quarters of the 2018/19 academic year based on information that has been reported to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) by further education colleges and providers in February 2019.

We made changes to our traineeship measures as set out in the change note published alongside the Apprenticeship and levy statistics: February 2019 statistics release here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/781239/Proposed-new-traineeship-measures-Feb-2019.docx.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781239/Proposed-new-traineeship-measures-Feb-2019.docx.pdf)

As part of this release we have added more granularity to various data products following user feedback, including:

- Publishing new machine readable CSV files. This new file will allow users to perform their own in-depth data analysis.
- Introducing Community Learning into the main table pack. Community Learning was in the main table pack in our November final year publication, but was not in the main table pack for the March 2018 mid-year Further education and skills publication.
- We are publishing an updated analysis of average expected on-the-job training hours (by the Institute for Apprenticeships) in the Apprenticeship and levy statistics: March 2019 publication, which covers the full 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years. We are exploring other measures that help show the trend towards longer and higher level apprenticeships.

In addition to the more detailed breakdowns outlined above, we have also made the following changes:

- The Institute for Apprenticeships have reclassified the sector subject area of the Motor vehicle service and maintenance technician (light vehicle) apprenticeship standard from Retail and Commercial Enterprise to Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies. The new sector subject area tier 2 for the standard will be Transportation Operations and Management. All tools containing the sector subject area fields have been updated to reflect this change, including historical data. This change will also alter figures for STEM, as the standard is moving from a non STEM sector subject area into a STEM sector subject area.
- The Institute for Apprenticeships have reclassified the sector subject area of the Motor vehicle service and maintenance technician (light vehicle) apprenticeship standard from Retail and Commercial Enterprise to Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies. The new sector subject area tier 2 for the standard will be Transportation Operations and Management. All tools containing the sector subject area fields have been updated to reflect this change, including historical data. This change will also alter figures for STEM, as the standard is moving from a non STEM sector subject area into a STEM sector subject area.
- The Institute for Apprenticeships have reclassified the sector subject area tier 2 of the Commis Chef apprenticeship standard from Retailing and Wholesaling to Hospitality and Catering. All tools containing the sector subject area tier 2 field have been updated to reflect this change, including historical data.
- We have stopped publishing Offender learning tables in the further education data library, with the last tables published in November 2018, as both budget and delivery have transferred to the Ministry of Justice, although associated learners will continue to be included in our overall Further Education and Skills national figures.
- Tables no longer being updated due to being more historical in nature: Apprenticeship Grant for Employers, Employer Ownership Pilots, and Workplace Learning tables.
- Tables that provide more contextual data around further education are no longer being updated in this release, although users can still obtain related data from Ofqual (vocational qualifications achievements data) and UK labour market statistics through Nomis provided by the Office for National Statistics (level of highest qualification held by economically active adults in the population).
- Qualification achievement rates tables are no longer included in this release, but are available as part of the National Achievement Rate publication: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sfa-national-success-rates-tables>

## 2. Scope

Should we need to make an unplanned revision to the statistics contained in this release, we will follow the procedures outlined in the statistical policy statement on revisions. This includes action to understand the impact that any revisions will have, as well as ensuring that they are clearly communicated to the reader. The revisions policy can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-official-statistics-published-by-the-department-for-education>

Information from the different further education learning options have been drawn together to give a coherent and comprehensive picture of the participation and achievement of young people and adults. These include:

- Further education organisations
- Sixth form colleges
- Local authorities
- Independent training organisations

These organisations deliver a wide variety of government programmes, including:

- Education and training
- Apprenticeships
- Workplace learning
- Community learning
- Traineeships

The release covers adults (19+)<sup>1</sup> and does not contain information regarding:

- **Delivery in school sixth forms**, including state-funded, independent and special schools. Provisional figures taken from the Department for Education (DfE) [Participation in education, training and employment by 16 – 18 year olds in England Statistical First Release](#) show there were 542,400 16-18 year old students studying in School Sixth Forms, based on a snapshot of participation as recorded on the January 2018 school census.
- **Higher education in higher education institutions**. The publication [Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2017/18 - Student numbers and characteristics](#), published on 17 January 2019 by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), shows that the total number of HE enrolments at UK Higher Education Institutions stood at 2,343,095 in 2017/18.
- **Privately-funded training at FE organisations and independent training organisations**. There is no single coherent source that provides a measure of privately-funded training. However, Ofqual publish [Vocational and other qualifications quarterly](#) which show the total number of vocational qualifications awarded in the UK. This includes both public and privately-funded qualifications and gives some sense of scale of total vocationally-related activity in the sector.

## 3. Data sources and methodology information

The key data used to produce the release are Individualised Learner Record (ILR) collections that are returned to the ESFA by further education colleges and providers and Employer Ownership Pilot (EOP) data returned by employers. A Single ILR collection (SILR) was introduced in 2011/12 to replace the multiple ILR collection types that were collected in previous years. There are no longer separate collections for different funding streams and providers return all information on all of their learners in a single file. The following ILR collections have been used to update the release:

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<sup>1</sup> The publication also includes data on all age apprenticeships and on traineeships (16-24).

Year	Data Source
2016/17	SILR (R14) EOP (R14)
2017/18	SILR (R14) EOP (R14)
2018/19	SILR (R06)

The data sources for all full academic years are final collections and include information on provision for the full academic year.

A statement of the administrative sources used within this release is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-official-statistics-published-by-the-department-for-education>

## ILR background information

The ESFA publish a large range of information relating to the ILR, which includes technical documents that define the ILR data that publicly funded providers must collect and return including ILR data returns calendar.

This also includes information to help further education providers collect, return and check the quality of ILR and other learner data.

All information and documents are published on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/individualised-learner-record-ilr>.

This includes

- ILR specification documents
- ILR structure and data types
- Validation rules and error handling
- Quality assurance
- Summary of collection changes
- Reference data
- Data collection timetables
- Freeze schedules
- Data sharing agreements
- Information on supplementary data collection

## ILR coverage

ILR data is submitted by providers if in receipt of funding through one or more of the following funding models:

- 16-19 ESFA
- Adult skills
- Apprenticeships
- Community learning
- European Social Funding (ESF)
- Other ESFA funding

All providers must send records for learners financed by advanced learner loans.

For the ESF 2014 to 2020 programme, providers must return all records for all learners who have received ESF funding as part of the current programme. This includes records for learners who completed their learning aims in the teaching year.

FE colleges must also send details of all learners who are not in receipt of public funding from the ESFA (apart from learners subcontracted in from a school or higher education institution).

Training organisations are asked to send details of apprenticeships that are not funded by the ESFA where they are delivered within the terms of an ESFA contract. In all other cases, this data can be sent on a voluntary basis.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) who receive funding from ESFA should return data about these learners in their Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student record.

For higher and degree level apprenticeships, HEIs must send an ILR return for all apprenticeship standards and for 16-18 apprenticeship frameworks.

An individual learner may, during the course of one teaching year, benefit from more than one type of funding. A single learner record should be returned for this learner detailing all of the learning aims that they are undertaking.

## Advanced learner loans

**From 2013/14 to 2015/16, advanced learning loans were available for learners aged 24 or older studying Full level 3 and Level 4 qualifications. From 2016/17, these loans were extended to learners aged 19 or older on the first day of their course and studying at Levels 3 to 6. They are now known as advanced learner loans from 2016/17.**

The number of learners with an advanced loan reported through the ILR differ from data showing loan applications (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/further-education>) and loans paid (<http://www.slc.co.uk/official-statistics/financial-support-awarded/england-further-education.aspx>).

Loan application information relates to applications received for FE provision funded through advanced loans. The data used to produce the publication are sourced from the Student Loans Company (SLC) application database. The data refer to received applications, including those not yet processed, and will therefore be different than actual number of learners participating on a course with an advanced loan. For the 2017/18 academic year, both datasets have been published as supplementary tables in the FE data library.

The latest SLC advanced learner loans paid in England data were released on 24 January 2019. These data refer to all payments made to FE providers on behalf of learners, and numbers of learners will be lower than the ILR numbers. It covers the payments made in 2018/19, August to October inclusive and also includes the figures for the equivalent period for previous years for comparison.

## Employer Ownership Pilot collection

The Employer Ownership Pilot (EOP) 2014/15 collection was affected by the move to an improved collection system between provisional and final return dates. While this move has put future collections on a better footing, issues resulting from the transfer remain. Rather than extend the considerable work with providers to reconcile remaining differences between returns we have decided to continue to use the provisional data at this stage. The provisional data are complete and have passed full quality assurance.

The overall impact on the main FE tables is negligible because EOP is very small in relation to the ILR collection, the main data source for this release. In 2014/15, just 1,500 apprenticeship starts of the 499,900 in total were EOP and in 2015/16, just 1,000 apprenticeship starts of the 509,400 in total were EOP. There were no EOP starts since 2016/17.

## New Full level 2 and Full level 3 methodology in 2016/17

The 2016/17 Full level 2 and Full level 3 figures have been calculated using a new methodology.

### Rationale

In 2016/17 the number of qualifications classed as Full level 2 and Full level 3 have been reclassified by the ESFA for the 19-23 entitlement, and to align with the 16-19 offer and recommendations in the [Wolf Review of Vocational Qualifications](#).

Therefore the number of learning aims (qualifications) designated as 'full' for 2016/17 onwards has decreased, as the Department continues to rationalise and streamline the qualifications offer. This release therefore now aligns more closely with the 16 to 19 Performance Tables in terms of the qualifications included.

### The new methodology

The methodology change has involved a number of Level 2 and Level 3 vocational qualifications no longer being classed as Full level 2 or Full level 3 for funding purposes. This has affected the figures presented and led to a large fall compared to what the numbers would have been under the previous methodology applied in the academic years prior to 2016/17.

As a result, from 2016/17 some people who would have previously been included in the Full level 2 and Full level 3 figures in this release are no longer included following changes to funding rules on funding vocational qualifications. In effect these learners have been 'reclassified' from Full level 2 and Full level 3 to Level 2 and Level 3, respectively, following changes made by the ESFA to the qualification reference data used to calculate the Full level 2 and Full level 3 measures in this release.

This methodology change affects the overall FE and Skills participation figures (Table 4.1), the Education and training participation figures (Table 5.1).

### Impact assessment of 2016/17 Full level 2 methodology

As noted above, from 2016/17 some people who would have previously been included in Full level 2, have been reclassified in the tables shown below:

*Table 4.1: Adult (19+) FE and Skills Participation by Level (2010/11 to 2018/19 reported to date) and Table 5.1: Adult (19+) Education and Training Participation by Level (2010/11 to 2018/19 reported to date):*  
Between August 2016 and July 2017, 183,200 learners have been reclassified to level 2 in both tables.

### Impact assessment of 2016/17 Full level 3 methodology

As noted above, from 2016/17 some people who would have previously been included in Full level 3, have been reclassified in the tables show below:

*Table 4.1: Adult (19+) FE and Skills Participation by Level (2010/11 to 2018/19 reported to date) and Table 5.1: Adult (19+) Education and Training Participation by Level (2010/11 to 2018/19 reported to date):*  
Between August 2016 and July 2017, 3,300 learners have been reclassified to level 3 in both tables.

### Apprenticeships expected duration

In 2017/18, we produced a new table on apprenticeships expected duration. Apprenticeship expected duration is the expected time period to complete the framework/standard.

In our March 2018 release, we based duration on learning start date and actual end date where available, otherwise the planned end date of the Apprenticeship as recorded in the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) was used. Specifically, actual end date was used if the apprenticeship completion status was 'completed'; planned date was used for other reasons (e.g. withdrawn, planned break, transferred, continuing).

In the November 2018 release, we changed the methodology slightly to use planned end date as recorded on the ILR and exclude re-starting learners who may have returned from a planned break of stay. If a learner has an original start date that is different to their learning start date this indicates that the learner is restarting the learning aim at the same provider, for example if they are returning from an agreed break in learning. As these learners will have some prior attainment, it is expected that the duration of their apprenticeship on returning would be shorter compared to new starters. Therefore they have been removed from the duration calculation. The impact of the change is listed in the table below:

## Impact assessment of the new methodology for 2016/17 and 2017/18:

Academic year	Apprenticeship duration based on previous methodology in days	Apprenticeship 'expected duration' based on new methodology in days
16/17 (final)	494	511
17/18 (final)	551	581

### Planned length of stay

Minimum durations have been in place for framework-based apprenticeships since August 2012. For learners aged 16 to 18, apprenticeships must last at least 12 months, but for learners aged 19 and over there is more flexibility, as some adults have prior learning / attainment and can complete more quickly (for example if the training provider can evidence prior learning the minimum duration is reduced to 6 months). For new apprenticeship standards the minimum duration is 12 months, with no exceptions.

The methodology to calculate planned length of stay has been slightly revised from 2015/16. We include those learners whose start date is the same as their planned end date. In 2014/15 this would have meant 100 learners included in the total for '*12 months or more*' would have been included in total for '*fewer than 12 months*'.

As this methodology change does not affect many learners (i.e. 100 in 2014/15), figures for previous years have not been revised.

### Apprenticeships expected off-the-job training hours

We estimate the total expected volume of off-the-job training by taking the findings on average hours of formal training per week from the [Apprenticeship Evaluation Learner Survey 2017](#) research report<sup>2</sup> and combining them with apprenticeship starts and expected duration data from the Individualised Learner Record (ILR)<sup>3</sup> dataset. The granularity is set by the survey data, with inputs split by detailed apprenticeship level (2-7) and by fifteen distinct Sector Subject Areas.

For the weekly hours of off-the-job training we use the learner survey findings on the percentage reporting any formal training, and the average reported hours of formal training either in the workplace or at an external provider. For example, see figure 4.4 and table 4.4 of the learner survey report for apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3.

It is important to note that we use the same survey estimates of weekly off-the-job training for starts in 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18. This survey data, collected between late-February and mid-April 2017, sampled an even split between current apprentices at that time and apprentices who had completed their apprenticeship between 1st June 2015 and 31st January 2016 (i.e. 13 to 21 months prior to being interviewed). This data may under-estimate the average hours of expected off-the-job training in 2017/18 for two reasons: firstly, the shift from apprenticeship frameworks to standards requires relatively more training, and secondly, the apprenticeship reforms introduced in May 2017 ensured a minimum of 20 per cent off-the-job training. These effects will likely increase the average weekly training in 2017/18 beyond those used in this publication.

2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 apprenticeship starts and expected duration figures are final figures. Where an apprentice restarted their programme, they have been excluded from analysis. The apprenticeship durations are expected durations, rather than actual durations, since actual durations are only partially known at the time of publication. We expect that accounting for unplanned changes to apprenticeship duration (e.g. withdrawals) will reduce the training figures reported here in both 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18.

For the estimate of expected off-the-job training associated with an apprenticeship start, we have not made any assumptions to account for factors like annual leave, whether term dates affect total training, or how patterns of training are distributed over a duration. As such this is not a comprehensive estimate of off-the-job training; the insight comes from any relative change, not the absolute values of off-the-job training.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-evaluation-2017-learners-survey>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfa-ilr-standard-file-specifications-and-reference-data>

## Motor vehicle service and maintenance technician (light vehicle) apprenticeship standard sector subject area change

- The Institute for Apprenticeships have reclassified the Motor vehicle service and maintenance technician (light vehicle) apprenticeship standard from the Retail and Commercial Enterprise sector subject area tier 1 to Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies. The new sector subject area tier 2 for the standard is Transportation Operations and Management. All new tables and tools published containing sector subject area fields have been updated to reflect this change, including historical data. There were 150 starts on this standard in 2016/17, 2,510 starts in 2017/18 and 2,140 in the first two quarters of 2018/19 (reported to date). The following table shows the impact on this change on the sector subject areas affected:

### Apprenticeship Starts by Sector Subject Area before and after and the reclassification of the Motor vehicle service and maintenance technician (light vehicle) apprenticeship standard

Academic Year	Sector Subject Area	Starts		Proportion of total starts		% change starts <sup>4</sup>
		Before	After	Before	After	
2016/17	Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (tier 1) <i>of which, Transportation Operations and Maintenance (tier 2)</i>	74,870	75,020	15.1%	15.2%	0.2%
		15,810	15,960	3.2%	3.2%	1.0%
2017/18	Retail and Commercial Enterprise (tier 1) <i>of which, Service Enterprises (tier 2)</i>	74,740	74,590	15.1%	15.1%	-0.2%
		23,160	23,010	4.7%	4.6%	-0.7%
2018/19 (Q1+Q2)	Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (tier 1) <i>of which, Transportation Operations and Maintenance (tier 2)</i>	58,890	61,400	15.7%	16.3%	4.3%
		13,270	15,780	3.5%	4.2%	18.9%
	Retail and Commercial Enterprise (tier 1) <i>of which, Service Enterprises (tier 2)</i>	54,160	51,650	14.4%	13.7%	-4.6%
		18,540	16,030	4.9%	4.3%	-13.5%
	Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (tier 1) <i>of which, Transportation Operations and Maintenance (tier 2)</i>	36,530	38,670	17.1%	18.1%	5.9%
		7,330	9,470	3.4%	4.4%	29.1%
	Retail and Commercial Enterprise (tier 1) <i>of which, Service Enterprises (tier 2)</i>	29,000	26,870	13.5%	12.5%	-7.4%
		10,890	8,750	5.1%	4.1%	-19.6%

STEM figures we publish include learners in the Construction, Planning and the Built Environment, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies, Information and Communication Technologies and Science and Mathematics sector subject areas, hence this change in SSA classification is going to affect the volume and proportion of total starts of learners undertaking courses in the STEM sector subject areas. After the SSA change, for 2016/17 the proportion of total starts that are STEM remains unchanged at 22.6%, but for 2017/18 it increases by 0.6 percentage points, from 26.7% to 27.3%. Furthermore, the change causes a 1.0 percentage point increase in the proportion of total starts that are STEM in the first two quarters of 2018/19, from 30.2% to 31.2%.

## 4. Key definitions

### Apprenticeships measures

#### Apprenticeships participation and starts

Two measures of apprenticeships are presented to give a clearer view of the changes and trends in apprenticeships in England:

- Participation refers to the number of people who are undertaking an apprenticeship in a given time period. This

<sup>4</sup> Percentages derived from unrounded figures so may not equal the percentage change derived from figures in the table.

measure is helpful for quantifying the number of people on an apprenticeship programme throughout the academic year. An apprentice studying towards more than one apprenticeship at the same level is counted once.

- Starts refer to the number of programmes that begin in a given time period. This measure is helpful in determining the take-up of programmes. An apprentice is counted for each apprenticeship they start.

The apprenticeship programme has expanded since 2010/11 as a result of increased government investment in adult apprenticeships. More recently apprenticeship policy has focused on raising standards, improving the quality and introducing minimum durations of apprenticeships. This means some learners find it more difficult or take longer to complete their apprenticeship.

24+ Advanced learner loans were introduced in August 2013, and withdrawn for apprenticeships in March 2014. This appears to have affected learner numbers on Level 3 and above courses and apprenticeships for ages 24 and over in 2013/14. This should be noted when comparing the 2014/15 volumes with 2013/14.

## **Public Sector apprenticeships**

Public sector apprenticeships are those where the employer is a public sector body. In this publication, apprentices employed by public sector bodies are identified by mapping apprenticeship service accounts to public sector bodies. This is an estimate, hence why we produce 'indicative' public sector ratios.

## **Apprenticeship standard**

Apprenticeship standards are new high-quality employer-designed apprenticeships. Apprenticeship standards outline the skills, knowledge and behaviours (KSBs) required to carry out a certain job role. All apprentices must take an independent assessment at the end of their training to demonstrate the KSBs set out in the occupational standard. Old style apprenticeships known as 'frameworks' are being replaced; from the start of the 2020/21 academic year, all new apprenticeship starts will be on standards.

## **Degree apprenticeship**

A degree apprenticeship is a level 6 or 7 apprenticeship that includes either a full bachelors or master's degree as a mandatory qualification. Some level 6 and 7 apprenticeships do not mandate a degree but it is possible that learners may achieve a degree as part of their employers particular apprenticeship programme; these apprenticeships are not considered to be degree apprenticeships.

## **Expected duration**

Indicates the time period for which the learner is expected to complete the learning related to a particular learning aim. For Apprenticeships, this is the expected time period to complete the framework/standard.

The duration is based on the learning aim start date and expected learning end date, as recorded on the programme record in the Individualised Learner Record (ILR). Re-starting learners who may have returned from a planned break of stay are excluded from the analysis as these typically have a shorter expected duration.

## **Length of employment**

This is the length of time that a learner has been with their employer prior to starting their apprenticeship programme. It has only been recorded from the 2013/14 academic years onwards.

## **Apprenticeship levy:**

The UK wide apprenticeship levy came into force on 6 April 2017 requiring all UK public and private sector employers with an annual pay bill of £3 million or more to invest in apprenticeship training. Since May 2017, funding arrangements for apprenticeships changed to give employers greater control over funding for apprenticeship training.

More information on paying the apprenticeship levy can be found at this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pay-apprenticeship-levy>

## **Levy supported:**

An apprenticeship start that is either partially or completely funded by an employer's apprenticeship levy funds. Levy funds are calculated by HMRC based on returns made by the employer of the apprentice.

#### **Traineeship completion rate**

The number/proportion of learners starting a traineeship that go onto complete it.

#### **Traineeship conversion rate**

The number/proportion of traineeship starts that go onto start an apprenticeship.

## **5. Glossary of key terms**

**Further education and skills** includes: learners who are studying a course in a FE College, training provider or within their local community; and employees undertaking an apprenticeship or other qualification in the workplace.

**Apprenticeships** are paid jobs that incorporate on- and off-the-job training leading to nationally recognised qualifications. As an employee, apprentices earn as they learn and gain practical skills in the workplace. An apprenticeship framework typically contains the following separately certified elements:

A knowledge-based element (the theoretical knowledge underpinning a job in a certain occupation and industry, typically certified via a technical certificate).

A competence-based element (the ability to discharge the functions of a certain occupation, typically certified via work-based assessed national vocational qualifications – NVQs).

Transferable skills (English and maths) – key skills / functional skills.

A module on employment rights and responsibilities.

Personal learning and thinking skills (PLTS): independent enquiry, creative thinking, reflective learning, team working, self-management, effective participation.

See <https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships> for further information.

The government has introduced reforms to apprenticeships, see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-apprenticeships-in-england-richard-review-next-steps>). As part of these reforms, in future all apprenticeship standards will be designed by employers. For a full list of the standards and assessment plans designed and approved so far, see:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards>

**Employer Ownership Pilot** offered all employers in England direct access to up to £340 million of public investment over the period of the pilot (up to 2015/16) to design and deliver their own training solutions.

See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employer-ownership-of-skills-pilot>

**Education and training** covers further education learning delivered mainly in a classroom, workshop, or through distance or e-learning. See: [Data Dictionary - Business Definitions - Learner Responsive Business Definition](#)

**English and maths** qualifications (previously Skills for Life) are designed to give people the reading, writing, maths and communication skills they need in everyday life, to operate effectively in work and to help them succeed on other training courses. It also includes learners who are undertaking English and maths qualifications as part of an apprenticeship and those who are taking a qualification in English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). See: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-maths-and-english-condition-of-funding>

**Advanced learner loans:** From 2013/14 to 2015/16, loans were available for eligible learners, aged 24 and above studying full Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications, to help meet up-front course costs. An extension to advanced learner loans from 2016/17 was announced in November 2015: any learner aged 19 or older on the first day of their course and studying at Levels 3 to 6 can apply for a loan to help fund the fees /

course costs. Those aged 19-23 still retain an entitlement to full funding of their first full level 3 qualification. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sfa-24-advanced-learning-loans>.

The number of learners with a 19+ Advanced Learner Loan reported through the ILR differ from data showing loan applications and loans paid.

**Offender learning** aims to ensure offenders have the skills that will enable them to gain worthwhile, sustainable employment and in-so-doing reduce the likelihood of re-offending. The Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) funds a wide range of learning aims for adults (aged 18 and over) in custody in prisons in England, including awards and units, with a focus on addressing English and maths at the start of a sentence and vocational skills in the run-up to release.

The offenders reported in this release were funded via the OLASS budget but responsibility transferred to the Ministry of Justice from 1 October 2016 following a machinery of government change. However, data for 2017/18 was still reported here.

**Community learning** funds a wide range of non-formal courses, from personal development through to older people's learning, IT courses, employability skills, family learning and activities to promote civic engagement and community development. Courses may be offered by local authorities, colleges, and voluntary and community groups, and include activity targeted at deprived areas and disadvantaged groups. See: <http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/community-learning-government-funding>

**Full level 2** is equivalent to an NVQ at Level 2, or 5 GCSEs. The widths of all of a learner's Level 2 aims are summed to establish whether a learner is taking a Full level 2 programme. **Full level 3** is equivalent to an NVQ at Level 3, or 2 A-Levels. The widths of all a learner's Level 3 aims are summed to establish whether a learner is taking a Full level 3 programme. Please see section 3 on the reclassification of some Full level 2 and Full level 3 qualifications in 2016/17.

**Traineeships** were introduced in the 2013/14 academic year to provide young people with essential work preparation, English, maths and work experience to secure an apprenticeship or other work.

**Academic year** runs from 1 August to 31 July.

**BAME** – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic group

## 6. Issues with using in-year data

It is important to provide the earliest picture of further education performance once it becomes available so that users may assess the impact of government-funded provision and hold the system to account. However, in-year data are taken from an operational information system that is designed to support the funding of providers and there are some important limitations users should take into consideration.

In-year information is subject to data lags when providers submit information after the period it related to. This information is subsequently attributed to the correct time period. Data are subject to data lag until the final returns for the academic year are made by providers, after the end of the academic year. Final data for each academic year (August to July) are published in the following November. The size of revision to individual estimates that arise from data lag can vary greatly. They tend to be around 2 to 3 per cent but have been as much as 20 per cent. Revisions are typically upward though it should be noted that on occasions small downward revisions are possible.

Data lag from one year to the next is not predictable as provider behaviour changes over time and there is no source of information that would enable a robust estimate of completeness of data that have been returned. We generally recommend using final data for the last complete academic year for analysis of changes over time.

We carry out a quality assessment of the volume of providers that have made their returns. If we consider estimates to be particularly weak, due to data lag or any other factor, we may defer publication of those

estimates. In recent years we have encouraged more timely reporting of data ahead of the final return. This is set out in our quality statement, which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-official-statistics-published-by-the-department-for-education>

Figures for the first two quarters of the 2018/19 academic year (August 2017 to January 2018) are based on information that has been reported to the Education and Skills Funding Agency in February 2019 by further education colleges and providers<sup>5</sup>. The data provide an early view of performance and will change as further data returns are received. Since providers report some of their data for this period later in the year, the data are subject to change (in either direction) until final data is received. At this point in the year, 2018/19 figures are referred to as reported so far or reported to date to reflect this. It is not possible to determine how complete or incomplete the information returned so far is, therefore care should be taken when comparing data reported so far in 2018/19 to the equivalent reporting period in 2017/18. This is particularly the case as provider reporting behaviour may change year to year. More accurate comparisons can be made once final returns for the academic year are made (data returned in October 2019, due to be published in November 2019).

## 7. Issues with comparing data across academic years

In the 2011/12 academic year, a Single ILR (SILR) data collection system was introduced. This replaced the multiple separate data collections used in previous years and led to small technical changes in the way learners from more than one funding stream are counted.

Overall, the new collection system led to a removal of duplicate learners and a reduction in total learner participation of approximately 2 per cent. However, apprenticeship participation figures were more significantly affected due to a change in the way learners participating on more than one apprenticeship programme were counted. This has led to a removal of duplicate learners and a reduction in overall apprenticeship learners of approximately 5 per cent; therefore participation figures for 2011/12 onwards are not comparable to earlier years.

A paper is available on our website to explain the SILR and the small effects it has on this release at:  
[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140107201041/http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/C05DCDD5-67EE-4AD0-88B9-BEBC8F7F3300/0/SILR\\_Effects\\_SFR\\_Learners\\_June12.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140107201041/http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/C05DCDD5-67EE-4AD0-88B9-BEBC8F7F3300/0/SILR_Effects_SFR_Learners_June12.pdf).

Further information on the SILR is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/individualised-learner-record-ilr>

## 8. Publication cycle across the year

Further information on future editions of the release can be found on the most recent collection website at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/further-education-and-skills-statistical-first-release-sfr>

The table below shows the annual publication cycle and information regarding the in-year data and final data included for each release.

Release	Data Included
Apprenticeships and Traineeships release: January 2019	- Apprenticeships and traineeships data reported so far for the first quarter of 2018/19

<sup>5</sup> The Apprenticeship and levy statistics: March 2019 publication is based on information that has been reported to the Education and Skills Funding Agency in March 2019

<b>Further Education and Skills: March 2019</b>	- FE and skills data reported so far for the first two quarters of 2018/19. This incorporates an update to the Apprenticeships and traineeships quarterly release
<b>Apprenticeships and Traineeships release: July 2019</b>	- Apprenticeships and traineeships data reported so far for the first three quarters of 2018/19
<b>Further Education and Skills: November 2019</b>	- Final FE and skills data for the full 2018/19 academic year. This will include updates to the Apprenticeships and traineeships release.

This release is an evolving product and we welcome feedback. If you have comments or feedback on this release or have a statistical question about this release, please contact:

[FE.OFFICIALSTATISTICS@education.gov.uk](mailto:FE.OFFICIALSTATISTICS@education.gov.uk)

## 9. Supplementary tables

Supplementary tables relating to this release can be found on GOV.UK. The tables are published as part of the [FE Data Library](#) and include breakdowns by age, gender, ethnicity, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, region, local authority, parliamentary constituency, sector subject area and funding stream.

Local authority reports are published on GOV.UK. Local authority districts are shown based on the postcodes of delivery locations and on the home postcodes of learners and the data covers enrolments, participation and provider level. The latest figures can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-further-education-and-skills>

## 10. Table footnotes

### General footnotes relevant to all tables

In the main tables, headline volumes are reported rounded to the nearest 100.

In the supplementary tables, volumes are rounded to the nearest 10.

Percentages reported are calculated on pre-rounded data and given to one decimal place.

'-' indicates a headline volume with below 50 in the main tables and below 5 in the supplementary tables.

\*\* indicates a percentage of less than 0.5%.

For definitions of variables used in the tables, please see the ILR data specification and also the data dictionary:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfa-ilr-standard-file-specifications-and-reference-data>  
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140107201041/http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/datadictionary/>

Except for Tables 2.1 and 2.2, age is reported as at 31 August of the academic year for all provision.

In tables reporting full-year numbers, full-year numbers are a count of the number of learners that participated/achieved at any point during the year. Learners undertaking/achieving more than one course will appear only once in the 'total learners' category for each data collection. All learners undertaking/achieving a Full level 2 or Full level 3 qualification will also appear in the Level 2 or Level 3 category, respectively.

The data source for all tables is the ILR, except where stated.

Further breakdowns of the data are available at the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fe-data-library>

### **Tables 1, 2 and 7 – Apprenticeships**

Apprenticeship starts and achievements include all funded and unfunded learners reported on the ILR.

For apprenticeship starts and achievements, age is calculated based on age at start of the programme rather than based on 31 August.

In Table 2.1, full-year numbers are a count of the number of starts at any point during the year. Learners starting more than one apprenticeship will appear more than once.

In Table 2.2, full-year numbers are a count of the number of framework achievements at any point during the year. Learners achieving more than one framework will appear more than once.

Programme-led apprenticeships recorded in ILR returns are included in the above figures.

In order to be counted as a successful achievement, all elements of the framework must have been achieved.

Quarter 1 is 1 August to 31 October; Quarter 2 is 1 November to 31 January; Quarter 3 is 1 February to 30 April; Quarter 4 is 1 May to 31 July.

### **Table 3 - Traineeships**

Age is reported as at 31st August of the academic year. From August 2014, Traineeships are available to young people aged 16-24. Previously Traineeships were only available to young people aged 16-23. For more information, see guidance below:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/traineeships>

Data now available through the DfE further education Outcome-Based Success Measures provide a more accurate source of progression information for traineeships, and other forms of provision:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-outcome-based-success-measures>

### **Tables 7 and 8 – Demographics**

Learners undertaking courses at more than one level will be counted once for each applicable level, but once only in the total.

Age, gender, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and ethnicity are based upon self-declaration by the learner.

### **Table 9 – Community learning**

For 2008/09 to 2010/11, only community learning provision recorded in the community learning collection is included in totals except for 2009/10 where community learning provision recorded in the education and training collection for five specially designated colleges is also included.

There are a number of learners with community learning aims that are recorded in the education and training funding stream and are not included in the figures in Table 9. In 2009/10 there were 7,700 participating and 6,300 achieving learners and in 2010/11 there were 8,300 participating and 6,900 achieving learners. The only community learning provision included for Table 9 for 2010/11 is recorded in the community learning funding stream. Community learning in 2011/12 onwards is recorded in the Single ILR collection only.

## 11. Users of these statistics

This publication attracts a wide variety of users who use the statistics in various ways including:

- Department for Education (DfE) who use the statistics to report on ambitions; develop and monitor policies; and answer parliamentary questions
- ESFA who use this release for all statistics shared externally including press releases and for responding to requests from educational bodies, and to respond to requests for participation, achievement and success rates information from external partners and organisations
- Providers and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)
- Ofsted (for achievement rates information) and Ofqual
- Researchers
- Academics
- Media
- General public

The statistical policy statement on how we meet user needs through engagement for this release is available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/287444/User\\_engagement\\_policy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287444/User_engagement_policy.pdf)

## 12. Related statistical publications

- There are a number of other statistical publications available that can be used to provide contextual information to this release. Some of those most relevant to this release are discussed below:
- [Qualification rates tables](#) are released as part of the National Achievement rates tables for each academic year
- [Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 Year Olds in England](#) published on 28 June 2018 by the Department for Education. This shows that the provisional proportion of 16–18 year olds in education and training was 81.0 per cent with a decrease of 0.3 percentage points from 2016.
- [Level 2 and 3 attainment by young people aged 19](#) published on 24 May 2018 by the Department for Education. This shows that in 2017, 85.3 per cent of 19 year olds were qualified to Level 2 or higher in 2017. This is a decrease of 1.6 percentage points compared to 2016.
- [Higher Education Student Enrolments and Qualifications Obtained at Higher Education Providers in the United Kingdom for the Academic Year](#) published on 17 January 2019 by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). This shows the total number of HE enrolments at UK higher education institutions stood at 2,343,095 in 2017/18, an increase of 1% from 2,317,880 in 2016/17. In 2017/18, there were 777,005 HE qualifications obtained in the UK. Of these, 418,895 were at first degree level.
- [Education and Training Statistics for the United Kingdom](#) published on 22 November 2018 by the Department for Education. This release provides statistics relating to education and training in the UK and includes chapters relating to post-compulsory education and training and qualifications. Information includes participation of learners in further education by country of study,

participation in job-related training and the highest level of qualification held by adults in the population (UK).

- [FE Choices](#) data provides four performance indicators: success rates; learner destinations (including employment rate and learning rate); learner satisfaction; and employer satisfaction. Results at National level by type of provider and by individual provider for each performance indicator are available.
- [Further education: outcome based success measures](#) presents experimental statistics on employment and continued education of adults finishing funded further education training. The measures make use of administrative datasets already held by government to observe learning and employment activity in the year following completion of funded FE learning.
- [Further education for benefit claimants](#) provides information on further education activity funded by the ESFA for adult benefit claimants in England. The statistics are produced using a matched dataset of the ILR from the (former) Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS) from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The publication provides statistics on benefit spells with training, learners who were on benefits at the start of training, level of qualification studied (all and highest) and type of learning provision.
- [Apprenticeships in England by Industry characteristics](#) – provides information on apprenticeship starts between the 2012 to 2013 and 2016 to 2017 academic years by employer size, sector and region.

## Further education statistics for other countries in the UK

- The focus of this release is on government-funded further education provision in England. Similar information is available for other countries in the UK, and provides useful contextual background to these statistics.
- Statistics on all education types (including further education) for the United Kingdom as a whole can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-education-and-training>
- Statistics on further education and work-based learning in **Wales** can be found at: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/further-education-work-based-learning-community-learning/?lang=en>
- Statistics on accredited enrolments in the **Northern Ireland** further education sector can be found at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/further-education-statistics>
- Statistics on learners in further education in **Scotland** can be found through user-defined tables on further education learners and courses: <https://stats.sfc.ac.uk/infact/>

## 13. Get in touch

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