

# Apprenticeship Achievement Rates

## Purpose

This paper is being made available alongside the 2017 to 2018 release of the National Achievement Rate Tables. It specifically looks at the position regarding frameworks and standards.

We caution users against using this data to compare outcomes between frameworks and standards. Although the take-up of standards has significantly increased in the last two years, given the average duration of a standard, many apprentices have not yet had sufficient time to reach the end of their programme. The QAR data for standards is based on very low numbers and it is therefore too early to draw conclusions from this data.

## Introduction

### What are QARs

Qualification Achievement Rates (QARs) are one indicator of the quality of the provision that an individual provider delivered in a particular academic year.

The QAR is the proportion of apprenticeship programmes undertaken at an individual provider that have been successfully achieved.

Compared with other success measures used in education, the Apprenticeship QAR measure is additionally reliant on the person's continued employment up to the point of assessment; retention is integral to the calculation.

QARs are used at an individual provider level to identify provision that falls below the minimum standards and are published for transparency and for re-use such as for informed choice.

The QAR is one of a range of measures used to monitor the success of the apprenticeship programme, as set out in the Benefits Realisation Strategy, and no one measure should be considered in isolation.<sup>1</sup>

### What are NARTs

The aggregation of the individual provider level QARs are presented in the National Achievement Rate Tables (NARTs) to show learners and employers the relative quality of provision. NARTs also provide stakeholders and the general public with access to QAR data. The methodologies are complex and do change from year to year. Therefore, the detailed tables are intended to provide our formal view of QARs used for performance management purposes for the year in question.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-reform-programme-benefits-realisation-strategy>

## What are Standards

Apprenticeship standards are new high-quality, employer-designed apprenticeships and will go onto replace existing frameworks. In 2017 to 2018 they represented 44 per cent of all starts. The Institute for Apprenticeships work with employers to develop each standard and are intended to identify what knowledge, skills and behaviours are required for someone to be fully occupationally competent in their profession.

Standards are occupation specific, with a minimum duration of 12 months and require at least 20% off-the-job training. Under standards, all apprentices need to pass a rigorous and independent end-point assessment to complete their apprenticeship and demonstrate occupational competency at the end of their programme. For standards, it is the achievement of the end point assessment which is used to determine the QAR data.

In comparison, frameworks are based on pathways and are primarily qualification focused so that apprentices are assessed throughout their apprenticeship. There is no overall end-point-assessment.

## Volumes for the 2017 to 2018 year

### Apprenticeships Overall Achievement Methodology

Volumes of leavers

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Frameworks	405,200	409,900	405,900
Standards	-	600	6,300
<b>Combined</b>	<b>405,200</b>	<b>410,500</b>	<b>412,200</b>

The QAR methodology uses the number of leavers as the denominator in calculating the achievement rate. This is based on the hybrid end year, which is the later of the expected end year, actual end year, or reporting year for each individual programme undertaken by the learner. The volume of leavers undertaking standards in 2017 to 2018 was very small. As a proportion of the total, less than two percent of the cohort were undertaking a standard:

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Frameworks	100.0%	99.9%	98.5%
Standards	-	0.1%	1.5%

**Given such a small volume of activity, we caution users against using this data to draw any conclusions on the quality of standards.** We know from other publications that there has been a big uptake on standards in the last two years. However, **the vast majority of apprentices undertaking a standard have not yet had sufficient time to achieve their programme:** standards have a longer average duration and there are very low numbers of apprentices therefore reaching the end of their apprenticeship<sup>2</sup>. We cannot compare outcomes between standards and frameworks. Given the typical length of an apprenticeship programme, we expect to be able to report on the impact on QARs in the NARTs publication due to be released in Spring 2020.

<sup>2</sup> An apprenticeship is recorded as completed once the apprentice has reached gateway. It is recorded as achieved once the apprentice has passed their end-point assessment.

## Achievement Rates

### Apprenticeships Overall Achievement Methodology 2017 to 2018 hybrid end year

Sector Subject Area	Frameworks		Standards		Combined	
	Cohort	%	Cohort	%	Cohort	%
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	6,700	73.0%			6,700	73.0%
Arts, Media and Publishing	810	65.1%	70	60.6%	880	64.8%
<b>Business, Administration and Law</b>	<b>102,170</b>	<b>68.4%</b>	<b>1,090</b>	<b>43.5%</b>	<b>103,260</b>	<b>68.2%</b>
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	17,930	68.0%	510	60.3%	18,440	67.8%
Education and Training	7,040	74.8%			7,040	74.8%
<b>Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies</b>	<b>58,740</b>	<b>72.8%</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>68.3%</b>	<b>59,540</b>	<b>72.8%</b>
<b>Health, Public Services and Care</b>	<b>109,850</b>	<b>66.6%</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>40.8%</b>	<b>110,240</b>	<b>66.5%</b>
Information and Communication Technology	8,840	77.7%	1,060	31.4%	9,910	72.7%
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	12,520	73.3%			12,540	73.1%
<b>Retail and Commercial Enterprise</b>	<b>58,280</b>	<b>68.4%</b>	<b>1,090</b>	<b>39.1%</b>	<b>59,370</b>	<b>67.9%</b>
Science and Mathematics	300	74.3%			300	74.3%
<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>383,180</i>	<i>69.1%</i>	<i>5,030</i>	<i>45.4%</i>	<i>388,210</i>	<i>68.8%</i>

*Note: Data from providers whom have been redacted from NARTs have been removed from the table.*

As detailed above the number of learners on standards being reported in the 2017 to 2018 NARTs publication are small and there is a risk that any calculations could be unduly affected by a number of factors as described below.

Standards contain a more rigorous assessment element. It is anticipated therefore that achievement rates may be lower under standards than under frameworks. Even so, the figures calculated as part of the 2017 to 2018 NARTs are not representative of true performance.

Analysis shows that 34% of learners participating on standards that were expected to complete in the 2017 to 2018 academic year have continued into the 2018 to 2019 academic year. Where learners were expected to complete in 2017 to 2018 but continued their programme and completed in 2018 to 2019 they are not counted for QAR until the year they actually achieve in. For frameworks only 10% of the cohort continue and achieve in the year after their expected end year. Those learners expected to finish in 2017 to 2018 who were unsuccessful or withdrew from their standard before the end of 2017 to 2018 are counted in the 2017 to 2018 QAR – in small cohorts of standards a small change in the volume of learners achieving after their planned end year can have a disproportionate impact on QAR.

With any new programme it may take longer for providers to develop and streamline a new syllabus, compared to their initial planning. Under QAR business rules, learners who withdraw early from their programme will always be counted in the year in which they were expected to complete. Given that the volumes above include those learners from the early stage of the programme being developed, a disproportionate number of early withdrawals may be included in the data for 2017 to 2018 and may negatively impact the achievement rate.

The main NARTs release redacts providers who ceased trading during the 2017 to 2018 academic year and that data is not included in the above figures. However within the data there are a number of providers who have subsequently stopped delivering apprenticeship provision. Achievement rates for those providers can be seen to be as low as zero percent which is again having an undue effect on the overall performance of standards. One example of this resulted in an achievement rate of 5% from a cohort of 130 learners. Conversely, the equivalent figures

from one of the other providers within the same sector of learning show an achievement rate of 89% from 210 learners.

There are instances where an employer has made a decision to move all of their learners to a new training provider, not due to performance issues with the provider, but for other strategic reasons within their own business.

There is a further instance where an employer, whom themselves act as the training provider, have taken the decision to move their delivery of apprenticeship provision to a separate training organisation. Under QAR business rules this results in a zero percent achievement rate for that provision.

In addition, redundancies at employers often result in relatively large numbers of learners withdrawing early and negatively affecting achievement rates.

Whilst all of these events also happen within the delivery of frameworks, because the volumes of learners on standards are so much lower these events have a larger effect.

## **Impact of standards**

NARTs provides users with the option to look at individual provider level data for both standards and frameworks. When looking at the combined QAR at an individual provider level, analysis has shown that in most cases, the data for standards typically only makes a difference of 1-2%.

With frameworks, the main driver historically for the variation in achievement rates across sectors has been the rate of retention rather than the achievement element of the programme. In particular, there have been retention issues in the areas of hospitality, customer service and management. It is too early to judge whether retention will equally impact on standards.

NARTS also show QARs at individual framework and standard level. Whilst it can be seen that QARs are generally lower for standards compared to frameworks, the picture is mixed with some individual standards performing strongly. Whilst some standards do have similar names to frameworks, standards are not designed to be a direct replacement for frameworks and as such they should not be directly compared. The accreditation elements of the two are particularly different with the end-point assessment process only applying to standards.

## **How intervention works**

We publish achievement rates to help providers and the sector as a whole reflect on their own performance. Although they are a useful comparison tool, no conclusions about apprenticeship quality should be drawn from achievement rates in isolation as they can be influenced by a range of other factors – such as employer retention rates.

The ESFA use achievement rates as a trigger for intervention activities. Where volumes are small and delivery is immature, as is the case with standards in the 2017 to 2018 reporting year, this will be taken into account. In addition, while providers and employers get used to delivering standards, ESFA are aware of issues around estimating and recording planned durations. This is the reason why the timely measure has not been used in calculating QARs for standards. Steps are being taken to improve recording these dates in future through planned ILR changes for new starts in 2019 to 2020.