

# A level and other 16-18 results

Quality and methodology information

October 2019

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## Introduction

This document provides an overview of the data used in the production of the 'A level and other 16-18 results' statistical publication and the 16-18 school and college performance tables.

It describes the methodology used to calculate student attainment and progress measures in these publications. It also provides information on the data sources, coverage, quality, and on how the data is validated and processed.

The statistics published in this publication and performance tables have been badged as National Statistics, which means they meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value set out in the [Code of Practice](#) for official statistics.

## About the statistics

National and local authority (LA) information on the A level and other 16-18 results in England is published in statistical publications available [online](#). The provisional publication is released in October 2019, and the revised publication, which incorporates updates and feedback collected during the checking exercise, will be published in January 2020. Further 2019 data will be released in March 2020, covering the completion and attainment, and retention measures.

School and college level information for 16-18 students at the end of 16-18 study in England will be published in the 16-18 [performance tables](#) in January 2020.

Information on changes in 16-18 measures can be found in the [technical guide](#) and the [performance tables statement of intent](#). The technical guide also contains detailed information on how these measures are calculated.

## Data sources

### 16-18 qualification entries and attainment

The awarding organisations (AOs) deliver examination entries and results for all qualifications reported in this statistical publication and 16-18 performance tables for students at the age of 16-18. The AOs hold information on their qualifications, the students who have entered them and the results awarded. The department collects data from AOs each year via an external contractor.

### Key stage 4 prior attainment

The department collects key stage 4 attainment for pupils at the end of key stage 4 each year, also from AOs. The information is used to calculate level 3 Value Added (VA) to measure the progress students have made between the end of key stage 4 and the end of level 3 study. It is also used to calculate the English and maths progress measures, for those students who did not

achieve 9-4 or A\*-C<sup>1</sup> by the end of key stage 4. Most of students at the end of 16-18 study in 2018/19 have key stage 4 prior attainment from the 2016/17 academic year, although some may have prior attainment from the 2015/16 or 2017/18 academic years.

## Student characteristics at the end of key stage 4

Student characteristics, such as ethnicity and free school meal eligibility are not routinely or consistently collected at key stage 5. Characteristics information as recorded for students at the end of key stage 4<sup>2</sup> are used in this publication.

We publish data broken down by the following student characteristics:

- disadvantage status;
- free school meal (FSM) eligibility;
- ethnicity;
- first language;
- special educational needs (SEN)

From 2015, the disadvantaged pupils include those who by the end of KS4:

a) were known to be eligible for FSM in the previous six years as indicated in any termly or annual school census, pupil referral unit (PRU) or alternative provision (AP) census; or

b) ceased to be looked after by a local authority in England and Wales because of adoption, a special guardianship order, a child arrangements order or a residence order; or

c) were looked after for at least for one day during the year.

Since 2013 Universal Credit (UC) has been gradually rolling out nationwide replacing a number of income-related benefits, some of which provided families with entitlement to free school meals. The 16-18 performance measures use the disadvantaged status at the end of key stage 4, therefore, the impact of Universal Credit on 2018 results is quite limited, but may increase in future years. On 1 April 2018 a [new eligibility criteria](#), in the form of an earnings threshold under Universal Credit, was introduced for determining eligibility for free school meals and the early years pupil premium.

More information on disadvantaged status at the end of key stage 4 can be found in the Quality and Methodology document for the [revised GCSE and equivalent results publication](#).

## Student level information

The provisional A level and other 16-18 results statistical release publishes statistics by gender. Student information such as enrolment status and learning aim is collected through the

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<sup>1</sup> Students reported in the 2019 16 to 18 performance tables would have taken new GCSE (9-1) or the legacy GCSEs (A\*-G) or equivalent during key stage 4.

<sup>2</sup> Key stage 4 data, from which student characteristics information is sourced, is compiled by the department from key stage 2 results, school census records and qualification entries and results collected from awarding bodies

department's school census and the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) for state-funded schools and colleges.

The school census is a statutory termly data collection, during which schools/LAs send the department details of the pupils they have on their roll.

The following school types participate in the pupil-level school census:

- Local authority-maintained schools: community, foundation, voluntary-aided, voluntary-controlled schools, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and special schools (including hospital schools)
- Academies, including alternative provision (AP) academies
- Free schools, including AP free schools
- Studio schools
- University Technical Colleges (UTCs)
- Non-maintained special schools

More detail is available from the following link: [school census guidance](#)

The ILR is an ongoing data collection run by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to collect data about learners and the learning they are undertaking, from learning providers in the Further Education (FE) and Skills sector. The ESFA is also responsible for funding the provision of 16 to 19 education and receives relevant ILR funding returns. More information is available from the following link: [ILR guidance](#).

For independent schools, information on individual pupils is taken from the awarding organisation data, as it is not collected via a student level return.

### **Institution characteristics**

Information on school or college type and phase of education is taken from '[Get Information about Schools](#)' (GIAS). This is a register of educational establishments providing compulsory, higher and further education in England and Wales, maintained by the Department for Education. More information is available in the [GIAS guidance](#).

The school and college types that are reported in the 2018/19 statistical publications have been taken as at the start of the 2018/19 academic year. Any schools or colleges which converted to an academy before 12 September 2018 have been reported as an academy and those that have converted on or after this date have been treated as their predecessor school or college type.

### **Information on where students studied**

In the 16-18 statistical publication and performance tables, each student is assigned to a school or college based on where they are recorded as being on roll for the purpose of school or college funding each year. The examination results collected from awarding organisations only tell us at which institution a student took exams, not whether the student was also recorded as being on roll. In order to assign students, we use the spring school census for schools and, since 2016, the

Individualised Learner Record (ILR) for colleges. These tell us where students were on roll in each year of their 16-18 studies.

For the purposes of the 16-18 statistical publication and performance tables, the ESFA's June ILR snapshot (SN10) is used to identify where students are on roll at a college. More detail on the ILR is available [here](#).

Where a student is not recorded on either the school census or the ILR, usually because they are attending an independent school, the awarding organisation data is used to assign them to a school. This is usually based on where they took the highest volume of their exams.

### **Condition of funding exemptions**

The statistical publication tables on English and maths attainment during 16-18 studies (for those pupils who did not achieve 9-4 or A\*-C in GCSE maths or equivalent by the end of key stage 4) are calculated using key stage 4 and 16-18 attainment data submitted from awarding organisations. However, in order to align with the ESFA's [condition of funding rules](#), the department also uses funding data from the autumn school census and the ILR that identifies students who are exempt from the requirement to retake English and maths during 16-18 study. This includes students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have overseas qualifications that are equivalent to GCSE grade C/4 or above.

### **Student learning aims**

The 16-18 performance tables use information on student 16-18 learning aims from the school census and ILR to calculate two performance measures: the retention measure and the completion and attainment measure. Due to data availability, these measures will be published in March 2020.

### **How the statistics are created**

The entries and awards for qualifications at key stage 4 and 16-18 are submitted by awarding organisations to an external contractor, who processes the data and completes a set of quality checks on behalf of the department. This includes checks that the coverage is as expected and that the data does not contain inaccurate or missing values.

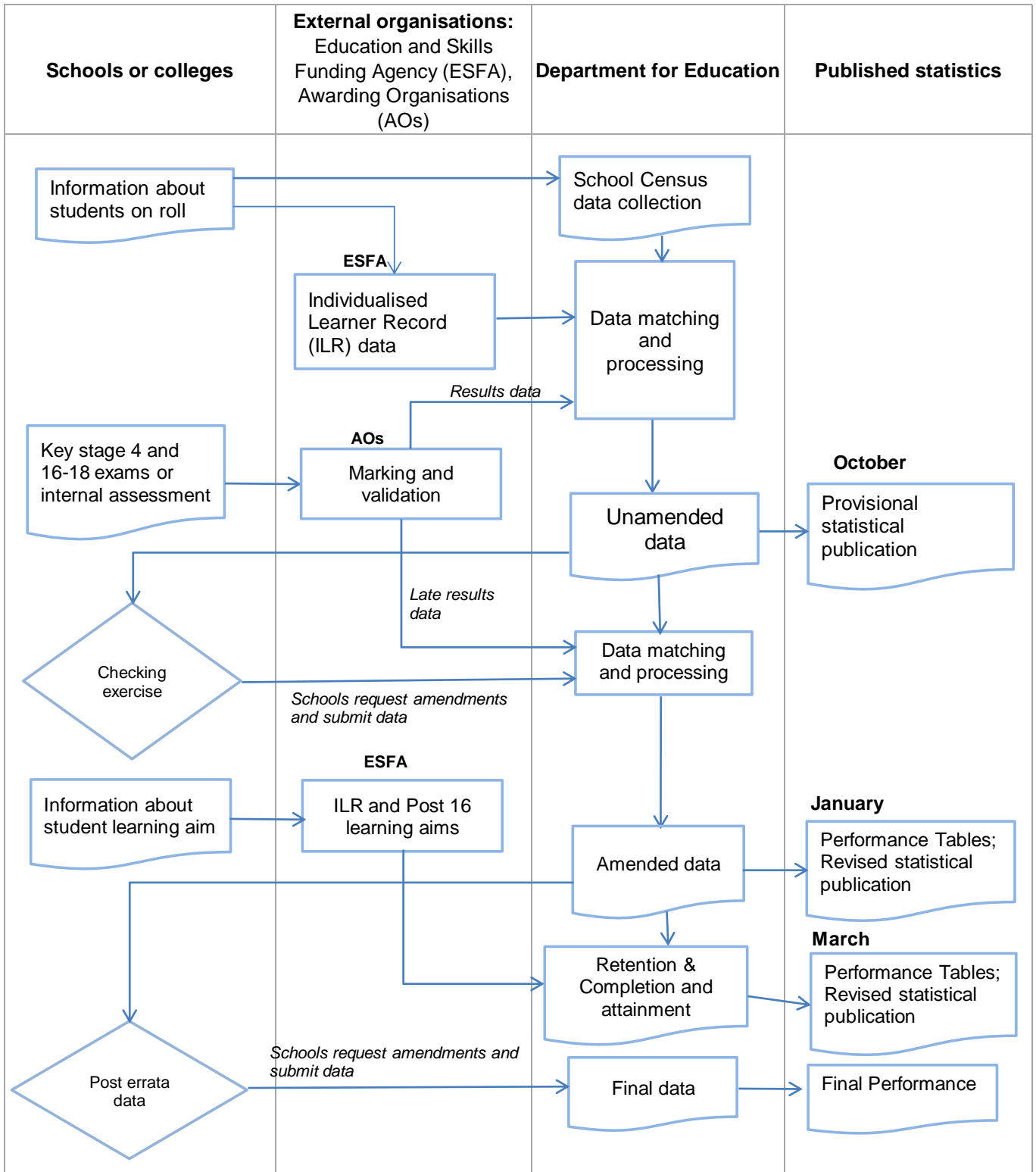
Once the latest entries and results data has been submitted to the contractor in August, this is matched to students' characteristics and information on students' prior attainment to calculate performance measures for each student. These student level performance measures are then aggregated to give the overall results for schools, colleges, local authorities, regions and England as a whole. Several performance measures and other derived variables (see Annex B) are added during this process. This data is then used to produce the provisional statistical publication released in mid-October.

The data is checked with schools and colleges during the 16-18 performance tables checking exercise, which runs between September and October, and allows schools and colleges to request amendments to their data. This could include adding any missing results, supplying information on grade amendments following successful reviews of results, or deferring students

who are not yet at the end of 16-18 study. The student attainment data is updated to take on board any accepted amendments (i.e. those where the school or college has supplied enough evidence for the change), and any late results submitted by awarding organisations. This updated data was used to produce the revised statistical publication and performance tables in January. Following publication of the performance tables, there is a short errata process to allow updates in exceptional circumstances, for example as a result of outcomes of appeals or re-marks from awarding organisations that arrived too late for the checking exercise. Following this process, the performance tables' data is finalised and the performance tables website is updated in spring. The final data is used to update any time series in the data tables in the following year's statistical publications.

The performance tables will also be updated in March with additional performance measures based on Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data from the October SN14 snapshot and post-16 learning aims data from the autumn school census. These will be used to calculate the new retention and combined completion and attainment measures, which require data on student learning aims and on whether they have been recorded as complete by the relevant school or college. As the ILR and school census data will be supplied directly from schools and colleges rather than a third party and validated by the ESFA and Department for Education, it will not go through a separate performance tables checking exercise.

The diagram below summarises the main process for producing 16-18 performance statistics:





## Relevance

This section describes the degree to which the statistics meet current and potential needs of the users.

## Key users

The school and college performance statistics are used by a wide range of users, including:

- **Parents** - choosing a school or college for their child (or children), seeing how well the school or college their child (or children) attends is performing
- **Students** - choosing a school or college for post-16 study
- **Government organisations** - the Department for Education, Ofsted, Regional School Commissioners, and Local Authorities use performance statistics to hold schools and colleges to account for their performance and to support policy monitoring and decision-making
- **Other organisations** - research bodies, charities and other organisations use performance statistics for research, decision-making or to support the development of new products in the education sector

## Key strengths and limitations of the data

The key strength of the data is that it is derived from an administrative data collection and quality assured. This means that it can supply accurate data down to small geographical areas and school and college levels. In addition, the data is merged with other administrative data held by the department (the school census and ILR) to provide detailed information on sub-groups of the school/college population. Student level data from different key stages can also be merged so that we can produce precise measures of student progress between one key stage and another.

However, the student counts for some groups, particularly at local authority or school/college level, can be small. Care should be taken when comparing performance measures for small group. Users should be aware that, whilst the statistics cover a wide range of information with high coverage and quality, they do not cover every aspect of a school or college's individual circumstances, or the full breadth of their activity. Performance tables users who want to know more may wish to look at other information published about a school or college, for example Ofsted reports.

Users should note that the 16-18 performance tables are not intended to provide a prediction of future performance. The results published each year are based on the most recent cohort of students who finished the relevant key stage.

## Timeliness

Timeliness refers to the lapse of time between the period to which the data refers and the publication of the statistics.

The department quality assures the data, produces statistics and publishes the provisional 'A level and other 16-18 results in England' statistical publication after receiving the provisional data from the contractor. This process takes around four weeks.

Revised 16-18 results and additional information such as mathematics and sciences results tables and breakdowns by school locations are published in January. These statistics include school level information that is released at the same time as the 16-18 performance tables.

A more detailed production timetable is shown below:

**May and June**

Main A level and AS level examinations are taken. (Vocational qualifications can be taken throughout the year.)

**July and August**

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) collects results data from the awarding bodies. JCQ publish A level and AS level exam results in mid-August.

The department's contractor collects attainment data from awarding organisations (data is collected throughout the year but the majority is collected in the summer).

**September**

The contractor matches the latest attainment data with other departmental data sources (school census and ILR). The department then receives unamended (provisional) attainment data from the contractor.

The schools and college 16-18 performance tables checking exercise takes place in late September/early October, providing schools and colleges with the opportunity to check and, where necessary, amend their results. In addition, institutions such as independent schools, which do not complete a student level return, can check that students assigned to them are on roll.

**October to December**

The department publishes the provisional A level and other 16-18 results statistical publication in mid-October based on unamended data.

Amendment requests from schools and colleges are scrutinised following the checking exercise.

The department normally receives three sets of revised data during November and December, which take account of changes made during the checking exercise, and any late results.

**January**

The department publishes the revised A level and other 16-18 results statistical publication and the 16-18 performance tables, based on the revised version of the data. The performance tables will include level 3 attainment results, the English and maths progress measures and Level 3 Value Added results. The headline measures also include a disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged breakdown.

**January to February**

The errata period commences for schools and colleges. This provides a further opportunity to request limited additional amendments to the data.

The autumn school census learning aims data becomes available. This is matched alongside learning aims data from an autumn ILR snapshot, in order to calculate retention and completion and attainment measures.

**March to April**

The revised A level and other 16-18 results statistical publication and performance tables are updated with retention (including the new supporting retention measures) and completion and attainment measures.

The department receives final (post errata) data from the contractor and updates the performance tables with this data.

**Punctuality**

Punctuality refers to the time lag between the actual and planned dates of publication.

The proposed month of publication is announced on [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) at least twelve months in advance and precise dates are announced in the same place at least four weeks prior to publication. In the unlikely event of a change to the pre-announced release schedule, the change and the reasons for it will be announced.

# Accuracy and reliability

Accuracy describes the closeness between an estimated result and the (unknown) true value.

## Data coverage

The source data covers the eligible population for the statistical publication and 16-18 performance tables, as the department collects annual data on all results achieved by students. The eligible population for the qualification data collection is all 16 to 18 year old students who by the end of the 2018/19 academic year have completed 16-18 studies (similar to a traditional school sixth form) in schools and colleges in England. Students who are not at the end of advanced level studies, or are doing re-sits, are excluded from the calculations. However, as these students cannot be identified centrally, the department applies a set of rules to identify students at the end of 16-18 study, namely:

- a) they have entered for at least 2 qualifications, each of which is at least the size of an A level or they have entered for at least 1 qualification the size of at least 2 A levels, in the reporting year;

**OR**

- b) they have been allocated to the same school or college for the last two years;

**OR**

- c) they are 18 at the start of the reporting year and have not been reported in the performance tables at their current allocated school or college

During the September checking exercise, schools and colleges may apply for students to be removed from their figures for several reasons; for example, the student is not at the end of 16-18 study, if the student is an external candidate and not on roll, or if the student is deceased.

**Schools and colleges cannot remove students in certain circumstances, for example if the student is recorded as on roll at the school or college, or if they have already reached academic age 18.**

## Measurement error

Measurement error is the difference between the actual value of a quantity and the value obtained by a measurement.

## Examination results

The following steps are taken to minimise measurement error in examination results.

Clear guidance is provided to schools and colleges regarding the administration of examinations, including instructions for keeping the exam materials secure prior to the exams and storage of completed scripts until they are collected for marking.

Once schools and colleges have completed 16-18 exams such as AS and A levels, they are required to send their exam materials and attendance registers to the awarding organisations for external marking and data capture.

The exam papers are externally marked by the awarding organisations to ensure that marking is consistent between institutions. Exam boards follow the principle that if the cohort of students taking a subject is similar to that of previous years, then the proportions of students at each grade will be similar. A key piece of evidence in determining if the cohort is the same is prior attainment at GCSE.

After marking, results are returned to schools and colleges. Data is then passed from the awarding organisations to the department's contractor for use in the statistical publications and 16-18 performance tables. If schools and colleges have concerns over the marking of an exam paper, they may request for it to be re-marked. Outcomes of reviews are not reflected in the provisional statistical publication data but are included in the revised data and [performance tables](#).

Further information on the general regulations for schools and colleges and how exams are conducted and marked can be found on the JCQ website: [Joint Council for Qualifications \(JCQ\) website](#).

## **Qualifications**

Ofqual sets the standards and rules that awarding organisations need to meet when they design, deliver and award regulated qualifications. They monitor awarding organisations and qualifications to maintain standards. They are a risk-based regulator and concentrate their resources on where they are most needed. For example, they may discover that an awarding organisation's processes need updating or that there are risks associated with a qualification taken by thousands of students every year. Further guidance on the role of Ofqual can be found at their [website](#).

## **School census**

The school census is a statutory data collection, which means that schools are obliged to provide the department with data on their pupils. School census returns are quality assured by the department to ensure that they contain data that is as accurate and complete as possible. The department acts to ensure the quality of this data in the following ways:

- Detailed technical guidance is provided to schools to support them in submitting full and accurate data to the department;
- Management Information System suppliers build validation into the systems that they provide to schools. The department provides guidance on the types of validation it expects for school census purposes;
- The department's COLLECT web-based data collection tool automatically validates the data that schools and local authorities supply, providing error and query reports so that these can be investigated/fixed.

More information on the school census can be found on [gov.uk](#).

## **Individualised learner record (ILR)**

The ILR is managed by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), who undertake various activities to ensure the data returned by colleges is accurate and high quality:

- Detailed technical guidance and specifications are published by the ESFA to support colleges in providing the data that they must return
- Data submitted through the web-based data collection system is validated to check for errors or issues. Detailed validation guidance is available to colleges.
- As part of assurance work, the data reported through the ILR is monitored by the ESFA to ensure it is high quality and meets their published funding rules. A sample of colleges are also selected for external funding audit, part of which checks that ILR returns accurately reflect the learners on roll and the learning they receive.

More information on the ILR can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

## **Validation and quality assurance of source data**

### **School and college checking exercise**

As a further check of the accuracy of the underlying data, the department collates the data into institution level information and shares this with schools and colleges, together with the underlying student level data, during the performance tables checking exercise in September/October. Schools and colleges are requested to check the data and notify the department of any students that are included in their school or college in error, or of any missing students. They can also notify us of any other potential errors in the data. Any changes requested are validated to ensure that they comply with the rules before being accepted. As a guide, in previous years approximately 75% of schools and colleges checked their data during this process.

Following the checking exercise, the revised data is supplied to the department through our contractors. This data takes account of accepted changes requested during the checking exercise, including successful marking reviews, late results and changes to number of students on roll. The data is then published in the revised statistical publication and in the 16-18 performance tables in January.

Following publication of the performance tables, some schools and colleges notify us of further changes required to the data. These should typically be changes that could not have been made earlier, such as notification of outcomes of appeals or re-marks from awarding organisations that arrived too late for the checking exercise. These changes are validated in the same way as those which are received during the checking exercise. Final data for the attainment, English and maths, retention, and completion and attainment measures is produced in April in the final performance tables, but is not updated in the statistical publication. However, the final data will be used to update any time series in the data tables in the following year's statistical publication. The extent of change in the data is typically very small.

## Departmental quality assurance

The department applies a set of internal quality protocols to ensure the published data is accurate. First, the data production process is subject to a 'dry run' during the summer. This involves producing a dummy dataset, which conforms to how the current year's data will be supplied (e.g. if new subjects have been introduced, then dummy data would be added to last year's data to simulate these). This dummy dataset is used to test the contractor's systems and the department's checking processes. This allows potential problems to be resolved prior to receiving the live data.

In addition, at every stage in the 'live' data cycle, the department checks all calculations used in the production of the figures by independently dual-running the methodologies at institution, local authority and national levels. Further quality assurance is then carried out on the data produced for the statistical publication (see examples below). Any discrepancies in the data are discussed and resolved prior to publication.

### Examples of additional checks

Comparisons with previous figures to identify any large changes

Comparisons with provisional data to identify any large changes (revised/final data only)

Check totals are consistent across tables

Check patterns in the data are as expected

Check figures against those produced by our contractor for the performance tables

Check the data format against specifications

## Disclosure Control

The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires us to take reasonable steps to ensure that our published or disseminated statistics protect confidentiality. We assess our statistics with reference to the National Statistician's Guidance on Confidentiality of Official Statistics and guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to establish the risk of disclosure and its associated impact and suppress the data accordingly. In our statistical releases, an 'x' indicates that a figure has been suppressed.

In the school level data, any figures relating to a cohort of 5 pupils or fewer will be suppressed. This applies to sub-groups of pupils as well as the whole cohort; for example, if there were 5 boys and 3 girls in a school, we would not publish attainment for boys or girls separately but would publish attainment for all pupils (as this is based on 8 pupils).

## Reliability

Reliability is the extent to which an estimate changes over different versions of the same data.

## Change between releases

The figures published in the statistical publication may change between provisional and revised releases; however there tends to be a slight change in the headline national performance measures rather than any significant fluctuation in the statistics. This is due to the combined effect of removals of students that should not be included and re-marking and submission of late results by awarding organisations.

## **Comparability of the statistical publication and performance tables**

The statistical publication and performance tables use the same data sources. Where they both reference the same performance measures, they use the same methodology for calculation. In addition, the statistical publication includes further A level and other examination results based on a single year of academic study. The statistical publication also includes further tables on English and maths progress for those students who did not achieve 9-4 or A\*-C by the end of key stage 4. These use the same methodology as the performance tables measure.



# Accessibility and Clarity

Accessibility is the ease with which users can access the data. It also relates to the format(s) in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information.

Clarity is the extent to which easily comprehensible metadata are available, where these metadata are necessary to give a full understanding of the statistical data.

The statistical publication text is published in pdf format so that it is accessible to all users irrespective of their choice of software. Care is taken to ensure that the document meets accessibility guidelines. Key figures are highlighted in the statistical publication text, which draws out the key messages such as changes over time and differences between groups of pupils. Small tables or charts illustrating key figures are included in the text.

Each statistical release is accompanied by formatted Excel tables and CSVs with clear titles which allow general users to find more detail than can be provided in the text. Any important limitations or inconsistencies in the data are mentioned in footnotes so that users do not have to refer to the text or this document. Where there are large numbers of tables, these are split into manageable sections (for example, national tables in one file, LA tables in a separate file) so that users do not need to download larger files than necessary for their needs.

The performance tables website has been reviewed and improved, incorporating user feedback to make it easier to navigate. There are numerous ways of searching for schools or colleges of interest (for example, by name of school/college, by town, within x miles of a postcode or all schools and colleges within an LA area) and data is presented as simply as possible so that a range of users can find what they need.

Users can download the data for all schools and colleges in either Excel or csv format. Comprehensive metadata is provided for these files.

Any user wishing to conduct more detailed research or analysis may request an anonymised pupil/student level extract of the [National Pupil Database](#).

## Coherence and comparability

Coherence is the degree to which the statistical processes, by which two or more outputs are generated, use the same concepts and harmonised methods.

Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time, region or another domain.

We use the same methodology to produce the data within our statistical publications and the performance tables. We also use a dataset produced at the same time for the performance tables and the revised statistical publications. As a result, the national and LA figures included in both the revised release and the performance tables will match.

The Department for Education and other organisations publish similar statistics. There are key differences to note, as summarised below.

### Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ)

The figures in the statistical publication and 16-18 performance tables differ from those published by JCQ, whose figures relate to the outcome of all students in England, Wales and Northern



Ireland in the latest academic year, regardless of their age. The examination results published in this statistical publication include the performance of students aged 16 to 18 taking examinations in England only. We also publish statistics that relate to students aged 16 to 18 who are at the end of 16-18 study. This will include results of qualifications taken by these students in previous academic years.

## Wider UK education data

### Wales

The Welsh Government publishes the results of external examinations taken by students aged 15 or 17, available at [Welsh government statistics and research](#)

They also publish information about individual schools at [My Local School](#)

### Northern Ireland

The Department for Education Northern Ireland (DENI) publishes AS and A level headline statistics at [Department for Education Northern Ireland \(DENI\)](#)

### Scotland

The publication, 'Summary statistics for attainment, leaver destinations and healthy living', is published by the Scottish Government and is available at [The Scottish Government website](#)

## Changes over time

In 2016, there were several changes to 16-18 attainment measures due to educational policy reforms. As such, there are difficulties with making comparisons to data published in 2015 or earlier in the headline performance measures. The impact of the 2016 reforms was assessed in the [2016 A level and other 16-18 results provisional release](#).

## Other statistics from the Department for Education

The statistics shown below are produced by the Department for Education but provide different information to that published in the 16-18 statistical publication and performance tables.

<a href="#">Destination measures</a>	<p>Figures for young people who went into education, employment or training destinations the year after they completed key stage 4 or key stage 5. The department publishes statistics including information from a data source which gives more complete coverage of participation in employment than the earlier 'experimental' destinations data.</p>
<a href="#">Level 2 and 3 attainment at 16-18</a>	<p>Statistics on the attainment of young people aged 19, based on matched administrative data.</p>

<a href="#"><u>Participating in education, training and employment by 16 18 year olds in England</u></a>	Estimates of participation in education, training and employment and those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) for 16, 17 and 18 year olds in England.
<a href="#"><u>Key stage 4</u></a>	GCSE and equivalent results for key stage 4.
<a href="#"><u>Key stage 2</u></a>	National curriculum assessments and review outcomes at key stage 2 (KS2), including measures of progress between KS1 and KS2.
<a href="#"><u>Key stage 1</u></a>	National curriculum assessments at key stage 1 and phonics screening check results.

## Got a query? Like to give feedback?

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If from the media      Press Office News Desk, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings,  
Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.  
020 7783 8300

If non-media      Email: [Attainment.STATISTICS@education.gov.uk](mailto:Attainment.STATISTICS@education.gov.uk)

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## Annex A: Further detail on institution characteristics

This section provides further detail on the school/college characteristics.

### School Admission Basis

Schools can be grouped based on whether they select their pupils by ability. State-funded school admission basis has historically been taken from 'Get information about schools' as per the following definitions:

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Comprehensive schools	Takes all pupils, usually regardless of their ability, aptitude or whether they have been selected for a place at a selective school. Includes schools operating pupil banding admission arrangements.
Modern schools	Takes pupils regardless of their ability or aptitude, including those who have not been selected for a place at a local selective school.
Selective schools	Admits pupils wholly or mainly with reference to ability. These schools are formally designated as grammar schools.

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However, this information is self-declared by each school and may not necessarily be a true reflection of a school's admissions policy.

## Institution Type

The institution types are taken from Get Information about Schools (GIAS) and are given at 12<sup>th</sup> September at the start of the academic year. They are defined as follows:

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Academy Sponsor Led	Sponsored academies are all-ability, state-funded schools established and managed by sponsors from a wide range of backgrounds, including high performing schools and colleges, universities, individual philanthropists, businesses, the voluntary sector, and the faith communities.
Academy Converter	Schools that have chosen through Governing Body Resolution and application to the Secretary of State to become an academy under the Academies Act 2010.
Free School	Free schools are funded by the government but are not run by the local council. They have more control over how they do things. They are 'all-ability' schools, so cannot use academic selection processes like a grammar school. Free schools can, set their own pay and conditions for staff, change the length of school terms and the school day and they do not have to follow the national curriculum.
Further Education (FE) colleges	An FE College is an educational institution, eligible for the receipt of public funding through the Skills Funding Agency, which deals with the delivery of a full range of full and part-time vocational and academic provision, principally to those students above key stage 4.
Studio School	Studio schools are all-ability and mixed sex state funded schools, independent of local authorities. They are an innovative new model of educational provision, delivering mainstream qualifications through practical project-based learning. They are not extensions or conversions from existing provision, but are new 14-19 academies, typically with around 300 pupils.
University Technical College (UTC)	UTCs are all-ability and mixed sex state funded schools, independent of local authorities. UTCs specialise in subjects that need modern, technical, industry-standard equipment, such as engineering and construction, and teach these disciplines alongside business skills and a broad, general education. Pupils integrate academic study with practical learning, studying core GCSEs alongside technical qualifications.

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City Technology College (CTC)	CTC's are independent all-ability, non-fee-paying schools offering students and pupils the opportunity to study a curriculum geared, with the help of private sector sponsors, towards the world of work.
LA maintained school	Schools fully or partially under LA control that are state-funded, mainly by the Dedicated Schools Grant. These include community schools, foundation schools, voluntary aided school, voluntary controlled schools and LA maintained special schools.
Registered independent school	Any school which provides full time education for 5 or more students which is not state-funded or a non-state-funded special school.
Independent special school	Approved by the Secretary of State for Education. They are run on a not-for-profit basis by charitable trusts and normally cater for children with severe and/or low incidence special educational needs.
State-funded school	Includes LA maintained schools, academies, free schools, city technology colleges and state-funded special schools (excluding hospital schools, pupil referral units, alternative provision and independent schools).
State-funded mainstream schools	Includes LA maintained mainstream schools, academies, free schools, city technology colleges (excluding all special schools, pupil referral units, alternative provision and independent schools).
State-funded special schools	Includes LA maintained special schools, academy sponsor led special schools, academy special schools and special free schools.
All independent	Includes independent schools and independent special schools.
Non-maintained special schools (NMSS)	NMSS are schools for children with special educational needs that the Secretary of State for Education has approved under section 342 of the Education Act 1996. They: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teach students with special educational needs</li> <li>• are independent of local authority control</li> <li>• operate on a not-for-profit basis</li> </ul>

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Pupil referral unit (PRU) A PRU is established and maintained by a local authority which is specially organised to provide education for children who are excluded, sick or otherwise unable to attend mainstream school and is not a special or other type of school

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Alternative provision (AP) Education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour.

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## Annex B: Derived variables

Several derived variables are produced in response to changes in education policy and statistical methodology. The following derived variables are added to calculate student level results in the 16-18 statistical publication and performance tables.

### Examination point score and size

Points are allocated to each of a student's 16-18 exam results using a scoring system. You can find full detail on point scores in the [discounting guidance](#), and how they are calculated in the [Practical guide](#).

The point scores for level 3 qualification are assigned for each qualification by calculating GCE A level size equivalence using the Guided Learning Hours (GLH) from the Ofqual register and the base points for each grade from the level and grade structure.

This enables the calculation of average level 3 point scores for 16 to 18 year old students at the end of advanced level studies.

New performance points were developed for the vocational qualifications at level 2, reported for the first time in 2017 16-18 performance tables. The performance points at level 2 have been designed to have the following properties:

- as per level 3 performance points, larger qualifications attract more points (size is measured relative to 1 GCSE equivalent);
- differences in reported headline attainment measures (average point score per entry, average grade) make intuitive sense; for most qualifications an improvement of one grade throughout an institution would translate into an improvement of one unit (APS per entry) or one grade (average grade)

### Point scores – English and maths progress measures

The English and maths progress measures use a distinct point score system, ranging from 0-8 points for those qualifications in scope. It is used to assign points to both a student's prior attainment at key stage 4 and their attainment by the end of 16-18 study, for the purpose of calculating the progress they have made.

Since 2017, English and maths results include reformed GCSEs graded on a 1-9 scale. These points have been mapped to the 0-8 scale to ensure that students are treated fairly whether they have results in either legacy or reformed GCSEs. You can find the full English and maths point scores in the [accountability headline measures](#).

### Qualifications reported

**Level 3 Academic:** Results reported only cover qualifications accredited by Ofqual and approved under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act (2000). Other qualifications or learning provisions such as Graded Exams or work-based learning are not included.



**Technical and applied:** From 2016 onwards, the vocational qualifications that can count are restricted to those that are on the approved list of applied general or tech level qualifications. The 2019 list is available on [gov.uk](http://gov.uk). This change is the result of policy reforms to encourage schools and colleges to offer qualifications that help prepare students for further study or employment. The background to the reforms can be found in the [Wolf review of vocational education](#). As a result, the 'vocational' cohort measures published in the statistical publication and performance tables have been broken down into the 'applied general' and 'tech level' cohorts, reflecting the approved qualifications included in these categories.

**Below level 3 English and maths:** The 16-18 statistical publication and performance tables have reported attainment in below level 3 qualifications in the English and maths progress measures since 2016. Qualifications included are only those English and maths qualifications that are approved for either prior attainment or progress purposes, according to the condition of funding rules.

You can find the full list of qualifications included in the condition of funding on [gov.uk](http://gov.uk)

**Level 2 vocational qualifications:** From 2019, only technical certificates will be recognised in the 16-18 performance tables. In 2017 and 2018 performance tables all level 2 vocational qualifications of size equivalent to at least two GCSEs (minimum 145 guided learning hours) were reported to give time for institutions to transition towards these qualifications.

**Technical certificates:** Technical certificates are a subset of the level 2 vocational category. The lists of eligible qualifications can be found here: [performance tables: technical and vocational qualifications](#).

The statistical publication and performance tables include statistics for different cohorts of pupils, depending on the type of study programme they took. Since 2016, students need to have entered a qualification at least the size of 0.5 of an A level or equivalent to be included in a cohort.

- A level students: students entered for an AS or A level, applied single award AS or A level or applied double award AS or A level during 16-18 study
- Academic students: students entered for an advanced level academic qualification at least the size of 0.5 of an A level during 16-18 study. The academic cohort includes A level cohort students
- Applied general students: students entered for an approved applied general qualification at least the size of 0.5 of an A level during 16-18 study
- Tech level students: students entered for an approved tech level qualification at least the size of 0.5 of an A level during 16-18 study
- Level 2 vocational students: students entered for an level 2 vocational qualifications of size equivalent to at least two GCSEs during 16-18 study (2016 to 2018 performance tables)
- Technical certificate students: students entered for an approved technical certificate qualification during 16-18 study

More details of qualifications recognised in the performance tables data for each cohort can be found in the [technical guide](#).

## **Institutions reported**

The performance of schools and colleges is in scope for reporting purposes but other education and training provider types, such as independent training providers, are not (see annex A for further information).

In the 16-18 performance tables, special schools are not automatically reported but they may opt to have their results published. However, for aggregated results at national level in both the performance tables and statistical publication, special schools are included.

### **Discounting flags**

Discounting is used to ensure that, when a student takes two or more qualifications in the same subject area and where there is significant content overlap, the performance measures only give credit once for teaching a single course of study. For example, where a student has gained an AS level but then went on to complete an A level in the same subject, only the A level result will count (i.e. the AS is 'discounted' as it is in the same subject as the A level, and the smaller qualification). However, if a student fails to obtain a pass grade at A level, the AS pass grade would be reported in the statistical publication. For further information on discounting rules, please see the [technical guide](#).

By applying discounting, the number of examination entries and results reported as A levels in this statistical publication are different from the figures reported by [JCO](#).

### **Allocation of students to institutions**

Since 2016, students are allocated to institutions on an annual basis, for the reporting year and the two years prior to this. This means they can be reported at up to three institutions if they moved during 16-18 study. Previously, a student was reported against a single institution only, regardless of whether they had moved during their 16-18 studies.

Results will continue to be published at the end of the 16-18 study phase; usually when the student is academic age 17<sup>3</sup> (year 13). However, students can be reported up to academic age 18, which might mean that some results are published three years after the end of key stage 4.

The allocation methodology ensures that the results more accurately reflect where a student has studied and the patterns of movement between different schools and/or colleges.

### **Handling of duplicate students in institution-type breakdowns**

The change to allocation rules in 2016 has an impact on the calculations for the national institution-type breakdowns reported in the statistical publication. In 2015 and earlier years, these statistics were calculated by aggregating school and college results by type of institution e.g. academy converter, studio school, FE college. However, taking the same approach this year would result in double counting because students may be included in more than one institution.

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<sup>3</sup> Aged 17 at the start of the academic year, i.e. 31<sup>st</sup> August 2018 for the 2018/19 statistical publication and performance tables.

As such, we have amended the methodology to remove duplicate records for students within each school type. This means, for example, that:

- if a student is recorded at two FE colleges, they are counted only once within the aggregate FE college results
- if a student is recorded at both a sponsored academy and an FE college, they are counted once within the aggregate sponsored academy results and once within the aggregate FE college results. Only the exam results taken at the sponsored academy are included in the aggregate sponsored academy results and only the exam results taken at the FE college are included in the aggregate FE college results
- if a student is recorded at two sponsored academies and an FE college, they are counted once in the sponsored academy results and once in the FE college results. Only the exam results taken at the two sponsored academies are included in the aggregate sponsored academy results and only the exam results taken at the FE college are included in the aggregate FE college results

Students continue to be reported only once in national and local authority results.

## Performance measures

The following headline measures are published in the A level and other 16-18 results statistical publication:

- Progress<sup>4</sup>: The progress of students is the main focus of the new accountability system. This measure is a value added progress measure for academic and Applied General qualifications, and a combined completion and attainment measure for Tech Level and level 2 vocational qualifications.
- Attainment: The attainment measure shows the average point score per entry, expressed as a grade and average points. Separate grades are shown for level 3 academic (including a separate grade for A level), Applied General, Tech Level and level 2 vocational qualifications.
- English and maths progress (for those students who have not achieved A\*-C in 2016 and earlier years, or 9-4 from 2017): This measure shows the average change in grade separately for English and maths, with students who do not enter an English or maths qualification as applicable, being given a score of -1. The methodology for the measure is closely aligned with the condition of funding rules, which means that students that do not achieve the standard by the end of key stage 4 are required to continue to study English and/or maths at post-16.
- Retention<sup>5</sup>: As the participation age has increased to 18, it is increasingly important that all young people are given suitable education and training opportunities that they see through to completion. The retention measure therefore shows the proportion of students who are retained to the end of their main programme of study.

The following additional attainment measures are also published alongside the headline measures:

- Best 3 A levels
- AAB including at least 2 facilitating subjects
- Tech Bacc
- Technical certificate
- Level 3 maths
- Returned and retained for a second year (to be published in March 2020)
- Retained and assessed (to be published in March 2020)

More details on how the performance measures are calculated can be found in the [technical guide](#).

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<sup>4</sup> Note that some of these measures are not published in the revised publication in January. The retention measure (and the new supporting retention measures), and completion and attainment measure (the progress measure for tech level students), will be published in March 2020 once the data is available.



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