

Apprenticeship Achievement Rates

Purpose

This paper is being made available alongside the 2018 to 2019 release of the National Achievement Rate Tables. It specifically looks at the position regarding apprenticeship frameworks and standards.

We caution users against using this data to compare outcomes between frameworks and standards. Take-up of standards increased to 74.3 per cent of all starts in the first quarter of 2019/20, but given the average duration of a standard, many apprentices have not yet had sufficient time to reach and successfully complete the end-point assessment and get their certificate. Standards and frameworks are not directly comparable: standards are designed to be of a higher quality and more demanding than the old frameworks, which do not require apprentices to pass a rigorous end-point assessment.

Introduction

What are QARs?

Qualification Achievement Rates (QARs) measure how many apprentices at a training provider successfully achieve their apprenticeship. For apprenticeship standards this measures how many pass the end-point assessment within a particular year. The introduction of the end-point assessment was a key element of the reform's drive to improve quality and ensure employers have confidence that apprentices are fully occupationally competent when they complete the apprenticeship.

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 stakeholder use to make informed choices about providers.

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.¹

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

What are National Achievement Rate Tables (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, and allows providers to benchmark their provision against other providers.

What are standards?

Apprenticeship standards are new, employer-designed apprenticeships which will replace apprenticeship frameworks. In the first quarter of 2019/20 take-up of standards represented 74.3 per cent of all starts.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education work with employers to develop each standard. Those standards describe the knowledge, skills and behaviours an apprentice needs to develop by the end of their apprenticeship to be competent in a defined occupation. Standards are occupation specific, with a minimum duration of 12 months and require at least 20% off-the-job training.

All apprentices on standards need to pass a rigorous and independent end-point assessment (EPA) 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 these apprentices are assessed throughout their apprenticeship. There is no overall end-point assessment.

Data for all apprenticeships

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Achievement Rate	67.1%	66.9%	64.7%
Retention Rate	68.0%	67.6%	65.7%
Pass Rate	98.7%	98.9%	98.4%
Volume of Leavers	412,420	414,890	296,260

The QAR 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.

Breakdown of frameworks and standards: 2018/19

Values	Frameworks	Standards
Achievement Rate	68.7%	46.6%
Retention Rate	69.7%	48.3%
Pass Rate	98.7%	96.4%
Volume of Leavers	241,670	54,590

2018/19 is the first year with significant volumes on standards, although the majority of data in this reporting year is still on frameworks.

Achievement Rates by Sector Subject Area

Sector Subject Area	Frameworks		Standards	
	Ach Rate	Leavers	Ach Rate	Leavers
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	72.8%	5,780	44.1%	110
Arts, Media and Publishing	68.3%	470	71.7%	310
Business, Administration and Law	66.4%	57,520	46.2%	20,460
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	65.5%	16,080	37.6%	660
Education and Training	73.8%	5,750	88.2%	20
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	72.0%	48,920	58.1%	2,960
Health, Public Services and Care	66.9%	66,910	47.1%	10,400
Information and Communication Technology	80.2%	6,890	50.5%	5,380
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	75.4%	8,540	48.4%	320
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	67.1%	24,480	42.6%	13,980
Science and Mathematics	72.5%	340	-	-
All Apprenticeships	68.7%	241,670	46.6%	54,590

Achievement Rates on Standards by Sector Subject Area and Level

Sector Subject Area	Achievement Rate		
	Intermediate	Advanced	Higher
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	33.3%	83.3%	-
Arts, Media and Publishing	-	71.0%	90.9%
Business, Administration and Law	41.8%	48.0%	47.7%
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	27.0%	62.6%	26.3%
Education and Training	-	-	85.7%
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	57.5%	60.6%	42.6%
Health, Public Services and Care	44.1%	47.7%	72.0%
Information and Communication Technology	-	52.8%	43.4%
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	79.3%	41.7%	-
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	43.8%	39.8%	43.3%
Grand Total	44.3%	48.2%	49.2%

Volume of Leavers on Standards by Sector Subject Area and Level

Sector Subject Area	Volume of Leavers		
	Intermediate	Advanced	Higher
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	90	20	-
Arts, Media and Publishing	-	300	10
Business, Administration and Law	5,690	11,640	3,120
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	440	200	20
Education and Training	-	-	10
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	2,030	870	50
Health, Public Services and Care	5,980	3,790	630
Information and Communication Technology	-	4,070	1,310
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	60	260	-
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	9,470	4,150	360
Grand Total	23,760	25,320	5,510

QARs measure how many apprentices at a specific training provider successfully achieved their apprenticeship within a particular year. Because the data is at provider level, it can include for example:

- apprentices who have transferred to a different provider, even where they have continued and completed the same apprenticeship, and
- learners who have transferred to a new learning aim with the same provider, e.g. the apprentice may have changed job and a more suitable apprenticeship was identified.

When looking at aggregate data, it can include a number of providers who have subsequently stopped delivering apprenticeship provision. These factors negatively impact the QAR and don't always mean the learner has withdrawn from the apprenticeship programme.

Achievement rates are important, but not always comparable with achievement on other training programmes because apprenticeships are paid jobs. Apprentices may not complete their apprenticeship for reasons outside the control of the training provider and that are not relevant to the training itself. Unlike other training and education programmes, the employer plays a crucial role in supporting the apprentice to reach end-point assessment. Labour market conditions including those that result in redundancy may have an impact. Reasons for non-completion can also include apprentices dropping out for personal reasons or apprentices moving to other employment, education or training.

Impact of standards

NARTs provides users with the option to look at individual provider level data for both standards and frameworks.

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.

NARTs also show QARs at individual framework and standard level. Whilst it can be seen that QARs are on average 22% lower for standards compared to frameworks, a difference in apprenticeship achievement rates is not, at least initially, an entirely unexpected consequence of our reforms. Standards and frameworks are not directly comparable. 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. Department for Education reforms changed what an apprenticeship is: standards are longer, with more training and an independent end-point assessment to test occupational competency at the end. End-point assessment is a new assessment method, making achievements on standards more demanding and this could also impact the QAR.

How QARs are used for intervention

QARs are one way, among others, DfE have historically assessed quality in apprenticeships. Where 40% or more of a training provider's cohort (a cohort is either a specific apprenticeship standard, or a specific framework at a particular level) does not achieve the qualification achievement rate of 62% for the particular year, that provider fails minimum standards. Minimum standards have historically been used to remove some of the poorest training provision from the market.

In April 2019, the department announced that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) would cease using minimum standards based on QAR in apprenticeships as a basis for judging the performance of providers from 2019/20, and that this would be replaced by a new approach.