



A new headline retention measure will replace the interim retention measure in 2016

The department is developing a set of [five headline measures](#) to give a rounded picture of school and college performance, as part of reforms to the 16-19 accountability system. A new retention measure will be one of these five headline measures. The new measures will be reported in the 2016 performance tables published in early 2017.

The interim retention measure is based on the retention element of [qualification success rates](#) and shows the proportion of courses completed. It is not possible to make direct comparisons between the interim retention measure and the withdrawn qualification success rates. This is because qualification success rates took into account whether courses were successfully achieved, which is not taken into account in the interim retention measure.

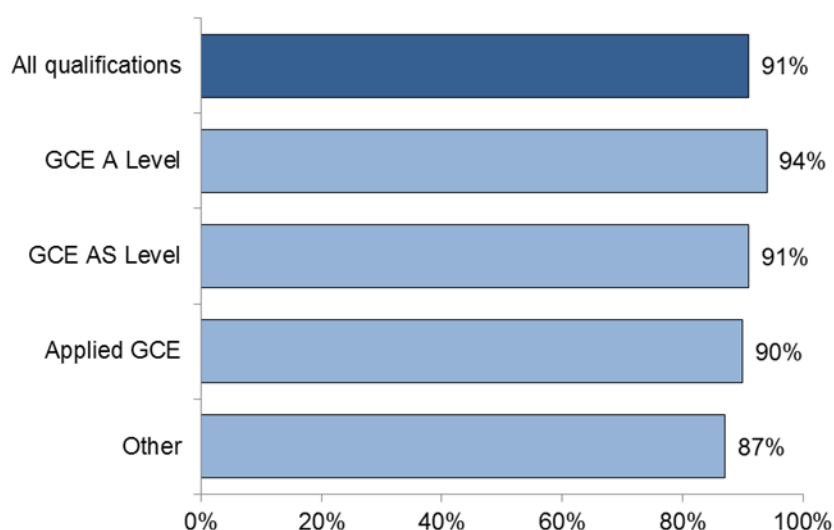
This statistical release will be the last interim retention measure to be published.

1.4 million courses were completed that were due to complete in 2014-15

There were around 1.5 million courses started at state-funded school and academy sixth forms that were due for completion in the 2014 to 2015 academic year.

Around 1.4 million of these courses were completed in the 2014 to 2015 academic year, giving a retention rate of 91%. The qualifications covered include A levels, AS levels and a range of other academic and vocational qualifications.

Proportion of courses completed which were due to complete in the 2014 to 2015 academic year



Millions	All qualifications	GCE A Level	GCE AS Level	Applied GCE	Other
Courses started	1.53	0.47	0.71	0.05	0.30
Courses completed	1.39	0.44	0.65	0.05	0.26

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About this release

This statistical first release provides information on the number of courses started and completed in the academic year 2014-15 at state-funded school and academy sixth forms.

In this publication

The following tables are included in the SFR:

- Proportion of courses completed which were due to complete in the 2014-15 academic year, school and academy sixth forms (Excel .xls)

1. Summary of retention measure

Overall, 91% of 1.5 million courses from state-funded school and academy sixth forms were completed. The overall number of courses started has increased by around 33,000 since the 2013-14 academic year, but the number of courses completed has remained broadly stable at around 1.4 million. The increase in courses started is partly due to an additional 7,900 students starting 4 or more A-levels compared to 2013-14. However, the retention rate for this group has fallen sharply, with these students on average completing around 3.6 A-level courses, compared to 3.9 in 2013-14. Partly as a result of this, the interim retention measure has fallen 3 percentage points from 94% in 2013/14 to 91% in 2014/15.

There was some variation in the retention rates of the different qualification types in 2014/15. Around 94% of GCE A level courses were completed compared to a retention rate of 87% for other vocational and lower level qualifications.

Table 1: Courses started, courses completed and the retention rates by qualification type School and academy sixth forms, 2014-15

Qualification type	Course started ¹	Courses completed ¹	Retention rate
GCE AS Level	712,470	649,710	91%
GCE A Level	465,000	435,490	94%
Applied GCE ²	50,700	45,680	90%
Other ³	302,390	262,850	87%
All qualifications	1,530,550	1,393,730	91%

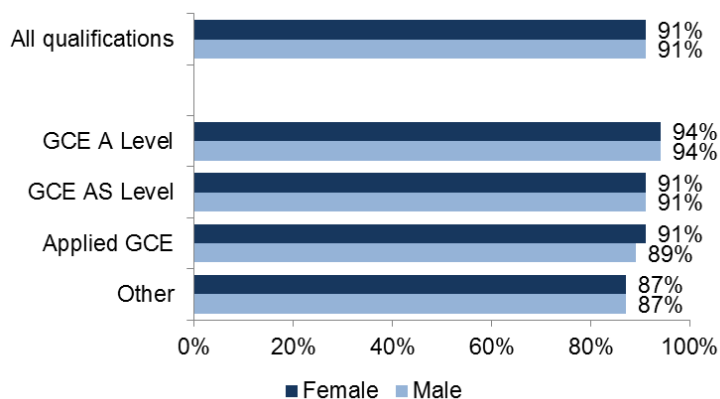
Source: School census

1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10.
2. A list of qualifications included in the applied GCE group can be found in the accompanying table.
3. Includes other vocational and lower level qualifications. A list of qualifications included in this group can be found in the accompanying table.

2. Retention measures by gender

The overall retention rate was 91% for both males and females. GCE A Levels had the highest retention rate with 94% for both males and females.

Figure 1: Proportion of courses completed which were due to complete in the 2014-15 academic year School and academy sixth forms, 2014-15



Number of courses, underlying data to figure 1

		All qualifications	GCE A Level	GCE AS Level	Applied GCE	Other
Courses started	Female	818,370	256,290	385,960	29,800	146,320
	Male	712,180	208,720	326,510	20,900	156,070
Courses completed	Female	745,970	240,180	351,670	27,020	127,100
	Male	647,770	195,310	298,040	18,670	135,750

3. Background and context

The department is developing a set of [five headline measures](#) to give a rounded picture of school and college performance, as part of reforms to the 16-19 accountability system. A new retention measure will be one of these five headline measures. The new measures will be reported in the 2016 performance tables published in early 2017.

The new retention measure will be based at student level, while the interim retention measure is based on courses. A single student can start multiple courses, but may not complete them all. This means that the new retention measure will show how many students started and finished their main course of study. The interim retention measure, however, shows the number of courses started and completed. This gives a picture of what types of qualifications are retained and which are more frequently dropped.

This statistical release will be the last interim retention measure to be published. Ofsted uses retention measures as part of their inspections process. This publication provides the national context for the school-level retention rates that Ofsted shares with schools.

The interim retention measure has been produced since 2015 based on the retention element of [qualification success rates](#) and shows the proportion of courses completed. The department previously published [qualification success rates](#) for school sixth forms, but these were withdrawn in 2014. This was because the data was not robust enough to calculate whether courses were completed successfully. It is not possible to make direct comparisons between the interim retention measure and qualification success rates. This is because qualification success rates took into account whether courses were successfully achieved, which is not taken into account in the interim retention measure.

4. Accompanying tables

The following tables are available in Excel format on the department's statistics [website](#):

National tables

Proportion of courses completed which were due to complete in the 2014-15 academic year

5. Further information is available

- The Interim Retention Measure figures for 2013-14 are published here:

[Interim retention measure for school sixth forms 2013-14](#)

6. Official Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as Official Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as Official Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The Department has a set of [statistical policies](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

The Interim Retention Measure is published as "experimental statistics" and does not display the National Statistics Logo. The data are produced on an interim basis as part of reforms to the accountability system to develop consistent measures covering schools and colleges.

7. Technical information

We use data from the school census	Only state-funded school and academy sixth forms in England are included in the interim retention measure. Of these, 2,059 were within the scope of the 2014/15 interim retention measure.
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There's a minimum participation criteria	Courses are only included if the learner completed the qualifying period. This is six weeks for long qualifications, two weeks for short qualifications, and one day for very short qualifications.
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There isn't a penalty for transfers	If a student transfers to a different course, their original course isn't included in the interim retention measure.
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The data's filtered to ensure it's in scope	Filters are applied to the school census so only those courses that are in scope are included. Courses are included if: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• students are funded by the Education Funding Agency• students aren't enrolled with guest or subsidiary status• qualification type isn't 'key skills' or 'functional skills'• the planned end date is between 1st August 2014 and 31st July 2015
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Completions	A course is counted as complete when its status in the school census is recorded as '2'.
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Calculation	Retention rate = courses completed / courses started
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8. Get in touch

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-attainment-at-19-years>

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