



Education & Skills
Funding Agency

Qualification achievement rates business rules 2020 to 2021

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Introduction and purpose of document

1 This document outlines the high-level business rules that explain how we calculate the qualification achievement rates (QAR) for the 2020 to 2021 funding year (1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021).

2 We will publish the initial draft dataset specifications by mid-April 2021; these will contain the detailed technical rules. We will publish these on the [QAR website](#).

Understanding the terminology

3 The terms 'we' and 'ESFA' refer to the 'Education and Skills Funding Agency' and associated staff.

4 When we refer to 'you' or 'providers', this includes colleges, training organisations, local authorities and employers that receive funding from us, or Advanced Learner Loans (loans) payments from the Student Loans Company (SLC) on behalf of learners, to deliver education and training.

5 We take information for apprenticeships from the programme aim Individualised Learner Record (ILR) record. We use the learning aim level ILR record for education and training and Traineeships. We use the term 'learning aims' throughout this document to refer to both.

6 The term 'Education and Training' means all ILR records that are recorded for 16 to 19 study programmes, the adult education budget (AEB) including the devolved AEB, and advanced learner loans. Traineeship learning aims will no longer be part of the Education and Training QAR and there will be a separate Traineeship QAR.

Changes since the publication of 2020 to 2021 version 1.2 in September 2021

7 Paragraph 46 clarification on exclusion of unitisation qualifications.

Changes from the 2019 to 2020 business rules

8 The main methodology and principles for **calculating** apprenticeship and education and training QARs have not changed from 2019 to 2020.

9 We previously stated a separate Traineeships QAR would be created from 2019 to 2020, however due to the impact of Covid-19 this did not take place. For 2020 to 2021, we will create a separate Traineeship QAR and we will have 3 QARs:

- a Apprenticeships

- b Traineeships
- c Education and Training (excluding Traineeship learning aims)

10 Last year we announced that we were reviewing how we calculate QARs for apprenticeship standards for 2020 to 2021. Due to the impact of Covid-19, this review did not go ahead, and the QAR calculation will remain unchanged. We will now review how we calculate QARs as part of considering a wider set of quality measures to support provider improvement and more timely intervention.

11 Due to the impacts of Covid-19 on providers, we are maintaining our position from 2019 to 2020 and we will not calculate timely QAR.

About QARs

12 QARs, and the associated pass rates and retention rates, are a measure of the quality of the training courses that a provider delivered in a funding year.

13 We include QARs in the [Explore our statistics and data – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk) to show learners, providers and employers the relative quality of provision. The data also contributes to The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills’ (Ofsted) risk assessment for provider inspections.

14 Due to the impacts of Covid-19 on providers, we did not produce or publish QARs at institution level in 2019 to 2020.

15 In 2020 to 2021, where qualifications are subject to normal assessment arrangements, we will produce institution level QARs to share securely with Ofsted and providers. Where qualifications are subject to teacher assessed grades/alternative assessment arrangements, we will not produce institution level QARs and this data will not be shared with providers or Ofsted or used for accountability purposes. We will not publish any QARs at institution level in 2020 to 2021. To find out how a specific qualification will be awarded this year, providers can visit the online [2021 Qualifications Explainer Tool](#) and the awarding organisations’ website. In addition, Access to HE Diplomas which may, in extenuating circumstances be subject to a teacher assessed grade, are also out of scope for QAR. Further information is available on QAA website [COVID-19 support and information \(accesstohe.ac.uk\)](https://www.accesstohe.ac.uk).

The different measures within QARs

16 We merge data from the last 5 years into a QAR dataset, which we use for reporting. We use data from the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) submitted by providers.

17 We will calculate the following measures from this QAR dataset:

- a overall QARs
- b pass rates (excluding Traineeships)
- c retention rates (excluding Traineeships)

18 The **overall QAR**, **pass rate** and **retention rate** calculations use the hybrid end year of the learning aim. The hybrid end year is the later of the:

- a achievement year (for apprenticeship standards on funding model 36 only)
- b planned end year of the learning aim
- c actual end year of the learning aim
- d reporting year

19 The calculations use 3 values:

- a The number of aims that have ended - where they have an actual end date or where continuing learners, planned breaks in learning or transfers did not return
- b The number of aims achieved. This includes reformed AS levels that are decoupled from the A Level and any cashed pre-reform AS levels
- c The number of aims where the learner has completed all the learning activities

20 The different measures for each hybrid end year are:

- a The **overall QAR** is the number of achieved learning aims as a percentage of the total number of learning aims in the cohort that ended
- b The **overall pass rate** is the number of achieved learning aims as a percentage of the total number of learning aims that have completed all the planned learning activities
- c The **overall retention rate** is the number of learning aims that have completed all of the planned learning activities as a percentage of the total number of learning aims that ended

21 The overall QAR is the method we will use to inform outcomes for all age apprenticeships, Traineeships, and education and training provision. We use the pass rates and retention rates to provide additional information about the delivery of provision.

College structural change and learner reference number changes

College structural change

- 22 The term structural change covers various scenarios for example resulting in:
- a a merger or de-merger with another college
 - b the complete closure of a college
 - c sixth form college converting to academy status
- 23 We will treat college mergers in the same way as in 2019 to 2020:
- a For Further Education college mergers that take place up to and including 31 July 2021, we will combine the ILR learning aims from any pre-merger UKPRNs and we will produce the QAR for the 2020 to 2021 reporting year for the post-merger UKPRN
 - b Where the Further Education college merger took place on or after 1 August 2021, we will produce the QAR for the 2020 to 2021 reporting year under the pre-merger UKPRNs
- 24 Where there is college structural change, between 1 August 2020 and 31 July 2021, we will aim to produce the QARs, including the historical trend, using the following principles:
- a For learners still in learning on 31 July 2020, we will attribute these to the provider who continues to deliver the learning from 1 August 2020
 - b For learners who have already finished their learning and have a hybrid end year of 2019 to 2020 or earlier, we will attribute them to the provider who delivered the training before the structural change
 - c For learners who have already finished their learning but have a planned end date after 1 August 2020 (i.e. a hybrid end year of 2020 to 2021 or after), we will attribute these to the provider who 'owns' the campus from 1 August 2020
- 25 Each instance of structural change may be different and have unique characteristics not described here, and therefore there may be exceptions or additions to the principles above.

Learner reference number changes

- 26 If a learner's 'Learner reference number' changes, either within a funding year or between years, then you must record this using the 'Learner reference in previous year' field. This allows us to match the records accurately. For more information about recording this correctly, please refer to the Provider Support Manual.

What we will produce for you, share and publish

What we will produce for you

27 Qualifications that are subject to alternative assessment arrangements will not be included in institution level QARs for 2020 to 2021. We will produce QARs for those qualifications subject to normal assessment arrangements in 2020 to 2021, namely apprenticeships and some Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs) relating to occupational professions. The following paragraphs explain what we will produce for those qualifications that will be included in QARs in 2020 to 2021.

28 We will calculate overall QARs for the 2020 to 2021 funding year. Normally we provide comparison values for the previous 2 years using the same methodology to show a trend, however as we did not supply 2019 to 2020 data, we will only provide 2018 to 2019 data as a comparison. Values for previous years may be different from the officially published QAR for the previous years because of changes to the business rules between years, or if you reported or updated data after the final ILR submission for the year.

29 We will produce overall QARs for subcontracted provision for education and training, Traineeships and apprenticeship frameworks, although this is not available for apprenticeship standards.

30 We will produce summary data that contains various views of your QAR data, for example, by sector or by qualification type. We will also produce a data extract that contains the detailed information that allows you to recreate the dashboards along with guidance that explains how to do this.

31 We will produce the summary data and data extract 4 times a year. These will be an in-year release based on R10 and R12 data, a provisional QAR in January 2022 (following the R04 submission and time to process the data) and a final QAR in March 2022. The provisional QAR enables you to check your data and ensure that we have applied our published methodology correctly.

What we will share with Ofsted

32 As previously announced, we will not be sharing the 2019 to 2020 QARs with Ofsted. In 2020 to 2021, where vocational and technical qualifications are subject to normal assessment arrangements, we will produce institution level QARs and share these securely with Ofsted.

33 Where qualifications are subject to alternative assessment arrangements in 2020 to 2021, they will not be included in institutional level QARs and this data will not be shared with providers or Ofsted or used for accountability purposes.

What we will publish

34 Up to 2018 to 2019, we published on GOV.UK detailed final QAR information through the [National Achievement Rate Tables \(NARTs\)](#) and their [transparency tables](#). From 2019 to 2020, QAR information is published through the [Explore our statistics and data – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#). Pre-COVID, this allowed you to benchmark your performance against other providers and provider types. However, as for 2019 to 2020 we will not be publishing information at institution level for 2020 to 2021. We will not be including provider comparison values against the sector in the final reports once we publish through [Explore our statistics and data – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#).

35 We will publish QARs relating to qualifications subject to normal and alternative assessment, as referenced above, at national level only in 2020 to 2021.

36 We stated a separate Traineeships QAR would be created from 2019 to 2020, however due to the impact of Covid-19 this did not take place. A separate Traineeships QAR will be created for 2020 to 2021. These tables will be for 2020 to 2021 data only, we will not recreate the Traineeships QAR for 2019 to 2020 or before. All Traineeship aims that were delivered in the 2019 to 2020 funding year will continue to be recorded under the Education and Training QAR historical trends.

37 We will not produce final QAR results for the previous UKPRNs of colleges that merged in 2019 to 2020 for transparency. As previously announced, we will not be publishing information at institution level. We will only produce these tables for the year the college merged; in subsequent years, we will only publish QARs for the post-merger UKPRN.

38 We follow a similar principle for college structural change to how we treat mergers. However, this year we will not publish transparency reports to show the trends before and after structural change.

39 We will not be publishing campus level data in 2020 to 2021 QARs.

The learning aims we include in QARs

40 The learning aims we include in the QAR calculation are those in receipt of public funding through:

- a the Adult Education Budget (or previously called the Adult Skills Budget as we use data from the last 5 years). This includes devolved delivery. Both devolved and non-devolved delivery are recorded in the ILR under Funding model 35 ('Adult Skills')

- b Apprenticeships; this includes all standards and frameworks recorded in the ILR through Funding models 35 ('Adult Skills'), 36 ('Apprenticeships') and 81 ('Other Adult')
- c Advanced Learner Loans recorded in the ILR under Funding model 99 ('Non-funded') using the Learning Delivery Funding and Monitoring Code 'ADL'
- d 16 to 19 allocations recorded in the ILR under Funding model 25 ('16 to 19 (excluding Apprenticeships)')

See also [The learning aims excluded from the QAR calculation](#) section to see what we exclude in these programmes.

How we calculate withdrawals

41 We treat learning aims as withdrawals for the **overall QAR** methodology where they:

- a have a 'Completion status' of 1 ('Learner continuing or intending to continue the learning activities leading to the learning aim') in the final R14 ILR return for a funding year **AND**
- b do not have a corresponding record in the following funding year

Where this occurs, we will set the reporting year as the year after the last submitted file containing the learning aim. For example, an aim with a 'Learning planned end date' of June 2020 and a 'Completion status' of 1 ('Learner continuing or intending to continue the learning activities leading to the learning aim') recorded in the R14 ILR in 2019 to 2020, and does not appear in the R14 ILR in 2020 to 2021, will be a withdrawal in the 2020 to 2021 year.

42 We treat learning aims as withdrawals for the **overall QAR** methodology where they have a 'Completion status' of 6 ('Learner has temporarily withdrawn from the aim due to an agreed break in learning') and where either:

- a they do not have a corresponding restart record in the same funding year or in the following 2 funding years, **OR**
- b the planned break recorded in the R14 ILR return for 2019 to 2020 has no corresponding restart record in the R04 ILR return of 2021 to 2022

If this scenario happens, we will set the reporting year to one year after the later of the expected end year or actual end year. For example, if you recorded an aim with a 'Learning planned end date' in July 2020 with a planned break in learning in April 2019, this will be a withdrawn aim in the 2020 to 2021 funding year if there is no restart record in:

- a the R14 ILR return in 2019 to 2020, **OR**
- b the R14 ILR return in 2020 to 2021, **OR**
- c the R04 ILR return of 2021 to 2022

43 We match restart records to planned break records by matching the:

- a 'UKPRN'
- b 'Learner reference number'
- c The 'Original learning start date' on the restart record where it matches:
 - i. the 'Learning start date' **OR**
 - ii. the 'Original learning start date' (to allow for situations where the planned break was itself a restart) of the planned break record for either the:
 - 'Programme type' and 'Framework code'/'Standard code' for apprenticeships, **OR**
 - 'Learning aim reference' for other aims

44 We treat uncashed AS levels as failures; this relates to pre-reform AS levels that appear in our trend data.

The learning aims we exclude from QARs

45 We monitor and analyse the volumes and proportions of aims excluded from QAR calculations to ensure that providers are correctly excluding aims. Where we identify large volumes or proportions, we will contact you to discuss these and may require evidence to confirm these exclusions.

46 The following exclusions apply to all QAR, pass and retention rates (some of the terminology below relates to historical provision as we use 5 year's data to calculate QARs).

- a 14 to 16 year-old students who are direct funded or home educated, identified in the ILR using the LDM codes 320 ('14 to 16 direct funded students in FE') and 321 ('14-16 Home Educated Students')
- b Transfers:
 - i. Where a learner transferred to a different programme or learning aim within the same provider and we can match to a new aim where the start date of the new aim is within 120 days of the actual end date of the old aim
 - ii. Where a learner transferred to a new provider following our intervention or from the Department for Education. The exclusion applies to the original provider's QAR, not the new provider's QAR. The new provider should assess the learners fully and plan their learning accordingly
 - iii. Education and training learning aims without successful achievement following a transfer to other provision with another provider, aligning with government strategy such as the [apprenticeship 2020 vision](#)
 - iv. From a traineeship to an apprenticeship, other sustained employment or appropriate further learning (as defined in the Funding Rules for a 'positive outcome')

We will not exclude transfers from apprenticeships to non-apprenticeship learning aims.

- c Planned breaks where the learner has temporarily withdrawn due to an agreed break in learning for the learning aim; we will exclude these from the relevant hybrid end year. However, if a learner does not return from a planned break then any learning aims excluded under this rule previously, will be included in subsequent reporting years
- d Unemployed learners claiming Universal Credit, Job Seeker's Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance (Work Related Activity Group) who cannot continue their learning through to completion because they gained employment
- e European Social Fund funded learning aims recorded under Funding model 70 ('ESF')
- f Community Learning funded learning aims using the 'non-formula funded' approach recorded under Funding model 10 ('Community Learning')
- g Where a learner withdrew within the respective funding qualifying period without achievement. There is no qualifying period for trailblazer pilot standards recorded under Funding model 81 ('Other adult'), however we exclude those where the apprentice withdraws without a net employer contribution payment being recorded (i.e. any payments minus refunds)
- h Where an instance of learning generates no funding
- i Learning Technologies Pilot learning aims identified using LDM code 337
- j Apprenticeship Seasonable Worker Pilot learning aims identified using LDM code 348
- k Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) learning aims identified using LDM code 034
- l 18-21 Work skills pilot learning aims identified using LDM codes 332 or 341
- m Employer Ownership Pilot learning aims identified using LDM code 351
- n Innovation Code learning aims (references ZINN0001 to ZINN0006 and Z0004474 to Z0007833)
- o Unitisation qualifications (learning aim type code 8008 and 8009)
- p Work experience or work placement aims
- q T-Level and T-Level Transition Programme aims

47 More information about how we identify and exclude these aims will be published in the Technical specifications published on GOV.UK.



Department
for Education

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