



Skills Funding  
Agency

# Qualification Success Rates

Rationale for the method to be used  
from 2013 to 2014

May 2014

Of interest to providers and employers

# Introduction

- 1 Qualification Success Rates (QSR) are used to assess the quality of publicly-funded provision. They are published and used by the Skills Funding Agency, Ofsted, providers and other users, such as members of the public and employers, to inform their respective decision making about which provision to take up or which providers to offer their learning, and to drive improvements in the quality of learning and skills provision.
- 2 The academic year from 2013 to 2014 has brought significant changes to government-funded learning provision for learners aged 19 years and over, with the introduction of the new simplified funding methodology and 24+ Advanced Learning Loans and Traineeships. These changes provided an opportunity to review the calculation of QSR so we can simplify the approach applied to all Adult Skills Budget (ASB)-funded provision.

## Purpose

- 3 This paper provides information about the rationale for making the changes to the approach for calculating QSR and other changes as outlined in the business rules document<sup>1</sup>.

## Rationale for changing the methods of calculating QSR: key points

- 4 The established principles that underpin the QSR calculation are:
  - a simplicity
  - b consistency
  - c transparency
  - d appropriateness
  - e fairness
  - f maximise the inclusion of government-funded provision

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<sup>1</sup> The Business Rules [document](#) for QSR from 2013 to 2014 was published on our website on 31 March 2014.

- 5 You can find associations between each of the business rules and its main principle in Appendix 1 at the end of this document.
- 6 The changing nature of the funding and the data collection has enabled a consistent approach to measuring success rates that is consistent across the ASB provision. The approach to simplifying QSR is to use the current methods of calculation (which are well known and understood), but to extend the application consistently across all ASB-funded provision. The current calculation for classroom-based provision has limitations, and so we have extended the Overall and Timely methods currently used for Apprenticeship and workplace provision.
- 7 The table below briefly explains the different methods of calculating the QSR.

<b>QSR method</b>	<b>Summary description</b>
<b>Overall</b>	<p>The <b>current</b> methodology for <b>employer-based provision</b> (including Apprenticeship) with the results published in the Statistical First Release (SFR), FE Choices and the National Success Rate Tables (NSRT).</p> <p>Success is simply the achievement of the qualification aim, based on the later of the planned or actual leaving date (Hybrid date).</p>
<b>Timely</b>	<p>Currently used as a <b>secondary and supporting method for employer-based provision only (published in the NSRT for the first time in 2014).</b></p> <p>Success is counted if the qualification achievement occurs on, before or within 90 days after the planned end date.</p>
<b>Classroom-Based provision</b>	<p><b>Currently</b> used only for the <b>classroom-based provision.</b> A method that counts success as achievement of a qualification at anytime within the same academic year as the planned end date.</p> <p>The results are published as per the Overall methodology.</p>

- 8 We consulted the main stakeholder groups representing the sector in May and October 2013. You can find further information about this in the final section of this document.

- 9 The introduction of flexibility for providers to deliver ASB provision has created a situation where an increasing volume of classroom provision is being delivered by private providers. Therefore a solution was needed that was flexible enough for all types of delivery. The use of the Overall method of calculation is more appropriate given that currently uncounted (late) achievements will now not be counted as failed achievements in the planned end-year and will be counted as successes in the actual end-year. The delivery of courses in colleges, usually following timed syllabuses, also means that the use of a time period beyond the planned end date within the Timely method doesn't affect results significantly.
- 10 In its simplest form, measuring the successful achievement of qualifications needs to include an element of what was planned to be achieved and whether it was achieved or not. However, the Timely approach brings about the important addition of achievement close to the time it was planned from the outset. This gives insight into the initial assessment of each learner and the organisation and quality of the delivery and assessment. The two methods will work in tandem to provide a greater insight into the delivery of provision and in a comparable way across the range of adult education and training funded by the Adult Skills Budget.
- 11 We will also be making some presentational changes to the reporting of QSR results. The main categorisation of provision changes from one based on planned length of duration that is, Long, Short and Very Short courses, to one based on qualification type categories. This benefits clarity for users, will enable improved Minimum Standards for 2013 to 2014 and will be more aligned to simplified and unified funding, skills strategy and regulatory framework that brings together:
- a. the simplified funding method
  - b. the skills strategy around vocational, academic, English and maths provision

- c. improvements in comparing between providers delivering complex qualification portfolios currently not recognised under long and short durations
  - d. enabling Minimum Standards and the approach to intervention to be more relevant to key areas of performance in the FE sector
- 12 Other considerations are the emerging Apprenticeship reform programme and the Vocational Education reforms. Therefore undertaking a fundamental review of the QSR is inadvisable until more detail is known about the reforms and their impact. This ensures that the QSR has a consistent and stable base to progress from to ensure it remains appropriate and inclusive.

### **Key implications**

- 13 The change to the methods of calculation affects classroom-based provision, which is predominantly delivered by general and further education colleges and sixth-form colleges. Further changes however are listed in the business rules document that will affect the other areas of provision.
- 14 The Overall method is estimated to increase the national QSRs for college-based provision only marginally (<1% point based on early modelling). This is due to late achievements now counting in the results for the first time.
- 15 The Timely method of calculation is new for classroom-based provision and is estimated to deliver a lower national QSR result than the Overall method. The estimated difference between the current national QSR result and the new Timely method's result is marginal. Early modelling using the 2011 to 2012 data showed a difference of 0.4% points. It is not expected to significantly affect the approach to delivering provision within colleges as a majority of achievements will be on or within the planned end date or 90 days thereafter.
- 16 All providers of classroom-based provision will need to carefully consider the planned end dates for new enrolments that are recorded in the Individualised Learner Record (ILR). This will likely affect longer duration courses/mainly higher levels more, where the planned end dates are harder to estimate

because of the increased potential for unforeseen events that delay successful achievement.

- 17 The structured approach to a timed delivery of a set syllabus is more likely to lead to successful achievement of the qualification within the planned duration and is at a reduced risk of lower results using the Timely method.
- 18 The use of a consistent method of calculation will enable us to compare of all aspects of ASB-funded provision – particularly similar types of qualifications delivered in different ways. Having a consistent qualification success measure means delivery will be less affected by any bias of different success rate methodologies.
- 19 Providers have to become familiar with the new methods and software companies need to develop their systems to deliver results based on the classroom-based provision. This will take time and adds to the importance of highlighting changes as early and as detailed as possible.

### **Stakeholder support**

- 20 The following is a list of key stakeholders that were involved in the consultation.
  - a External consultative group –representation from BIS, DfE, EFA, Ofsted, AoC, AELP, 157 Group of Colleges, LEA FEA, HOLEX, sixth- form colleges and specialist colleges.
  - b Ofsted has been significantly involved and highly supportive of the changes. Ofsted is a standing member of the Project Board that delivers the QSR and is able to continuously feed in views and requirements. Ofsted firmly believes that the Timely method presents a broader picture of delivery and strongly supports the use of both methods to complement each other.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Linking Business Rules to the principles of QSR calculations**

#### **Consistency**

- Change the method for all provision to Overall and Timely

#### **Transparency**

- Publishing Overall and Timely results
- Calculating QSR results for subcontractor provision (within each lead provider)
- Calculating QSR by qualification category

#### **Maximises funded provision**

- Include Functional Skills
- Include funded QCF units
- Include the Large Employer Outcome Pilot (not seen as a pilot for delivering provision in the main)
- Include provision funded through 24+ Advanced Learning Loans
- Include component qualifications delivered as part of Traineeships
- Exclude aims that do not achieve the funding qualifying period

#### **Appropriateness**

- Changes to the qualification/reporting categorisation
- Exclude Access to Apprenticeship provision
- Exclude provision in adult learner accounts
- Exclude provision within the Joint Investment Programme (JIP)
- Exclude provision delivered to learners under 16 years of age (unless specific activity is stated)
- Exclude programme aims for provision outside of Apprenticeships
- Exclude provision funded through the European Social Fund (ESF)
- Exclude Community Learning provision
- Uncashed AS-level qualifications are treated as fails
- Exclude Employer Ownership Pilot
- Exclude Innovation Code provision

## **Fairness**

- Exclude withdrawals due to the learner taking a planned break
- Exclude withdrawals for the reasons set out in the business rules
- Exclude certain withdrawals where the learner gains employment
- Exclude OLASS aims (that are ASB-funded) withdrawn from but outside of the provider's control
- Exclude provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities within independent specialist providers
- Exclude provision that falls within the stated range of uncertified aims and tests
- Continued exclusion of Key Skills qualifications.



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