Measures of Success and Framework for Excellence – Frequently Asked Questions for Colleges
November 2006

This document provides answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the measures of success and Framework for Excellence. For further information please go to the website at: www.lsc.gov.uk/ffe

Framework for Excellence is a small, standard set of performance indicators which is being developed by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), in consultation with providers, inspectorates and other stakeholders. Framework for Excellence builds on and includes the measures of success. The Framework for Excellence will consist of key performance indicators and is currently planned to be piloted in autumn 2007.

1. Which of the measures of success will apply to me?
   - value added (VA) and distance travelled (DT) measures
   - qualification success rates (QSR)
   - recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA).

2. What is the timescale for these measures?

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Questions on value added and distance travelled measures

3. What are the value added and distance travelled measures and what information will they show?

Value added (VA) and distance travelled (DT) measures aim to show the progress of individual learners based on their prior attainment up to the end of Key Stage 4, and compare the results to national norms. The starting point for both the VA and DT calculations is the average prior attainment of the student, for Level 2 qualifications, at age 15 or 16.

4. Will fails be included in the value added and distance travelled measures?

Fails are included for a limited set of qualifications. These are qualifications where the only pass grades are Pass, Merit and Distinction.

Further information is available in the online document *Treatment of fails in the calculation of Value Added and Distance Travelled for the Learner Achievement Tracker*.

5. What qualifications are included in value added and distance travelled measures?

The scope of the qualifications included in the value added (VA) measure is different to that in the distance travelled (DT) measure. The VA measure includes graded level 3 qualifications; while the DT measure records other approved qualifications at level 1 and 2, as well as pass/fail level 3 qualifications, like National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ), key skills and Apprenticeships.

VA data can be used as a predictive tool for achievement of individual learners based on their prior attainment. The DT data may be used to predict the achievement of a group of students.

6. Which of my learners are included in value added and distance travelled measures?

Both VA and DT measures will mainly include learners following programmes for approved qualifications, who were aged 16, 17 or 18 on 31 August at the beginning of the year in which they completed their post-16 qualification.
7. How large does a group/class have to be to generate a reliable value added or distance travelled score?

Groups or classes need to consist of more than four students (with prior attainment) for a value added or distance travelled score to be calculated.

8. Where does the data for the value added and distance travelled calculations come from?

The data used to calculate the value added measure is obtained directly from awarding bodies. Attainment data is subsequently matched to attainment information on pre-16 qualifications, using forename, surname, date of birth and gender. The process for sourcing the data for the distance travelled measure is the same as for the VA measure, with the addition of individualised learner record (ILR) data.

9. How will the value added and distance travelled measures be piloted?

Both measures are being piloted by the four partners - Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), and Department for Education and Skills (DfES), from March 2006.

During the pilot and evaluation period:

- the LSC will pilot the use of the value added and distance travelled measures by all relevant LSC-funded providers in planning, self-assessment and discussions of three-year development plans from March 2006 to Autumn 2007.

- Ofsted will pilot the use of value added (VA) and distance travelled (DT) in planning inspections and making inspection assessments over a two-year period. In the second year of the pilot, inspectors will also review the progress being made by providers in using the measures for self-assessment and evaluation. During the pilot, inspectors will not base judgements solely on VA and DT data, but will compare the data within the Learner Achievement Tracker with evidence from other sources.

- ALI will pilot the use of DT in planning inspections and during inspections for work based learning (WBL) providers between March 2006 and autumn 2007.
The DfES will be piloting the use of an institutional VA measure in the Achievement and Attainment Tables (AAT) in 2007, with a view to rolling out nationally in the 2008 tables. This measure will be calculated on a 'learner-level' basis, which differs from the qualification level methodology used by the LSC measure.

10. What is the Learner Achievement Tracker?

The Learner Achievement Tracker (LAT) is software, which shows value added (VA) and distance travelled (DT) data. It will cover a wide range of learners and compare providers’ performance with the national norm for all learners taking that particular subject or qualification.

11. How does the Learner Achievement Tracker differ from existing proprietary systems?

During the development of the methodology used in the value added (VA) and distance travelled (DT) for 16–19 students, account was taken of existing systems which calculate VA for students on graded qualifications. The most well-known of these systems are the A Level Information System (ALIS) and the A Level Performance System (ALPS). The VA and DT measures use a different methodology from these systems, called multi-level modelling (MLM). The use of MLM provides the following advantages:

- it provides a flexible and efficient means of data calculation
- it is robust in terms of dealing with very small national cohorts of learners, so that more institutions can be included in the national measure
- there is clear information about how providers are performing with learners at different levels of prior attainment
- the use of MLM in pre-16 value added calculations is well established.

The Learner Achievement Tracker will:

- be provided free of charge to all LSC-funded providers and Local Authorities.
- cover a wider range of learners, including vocational qualifications, and compare providers’ performance with the national sample of all learners taking that particular subject or qualification
- be used by the four partners and other stakeholders in making assessments of provider performance.

12. **Who will be able to see Learner Achievement Tracker outputs in my college?**

Your data will be available to you through the Provider Gateway, a secure internet website, available following the link: https://gateway.lsc.gov.uk. A user approver has been designated to manage the access to the Provider Gateway in your college. Also, a username and password has been sent to your user approver to access the system. And you will only have access to information about your own college.

The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), and your local LSC has access to pdf reports for all providers in your area. However, they will only have access to aggregated data and will not be able to see learner level information.

13. **Can I download data from the Learner Achievement Tracker?**

Yes, you will be able to download your own data from the Learner Achievement Tracker (LAT) into an Excel file via the Provider Gateway.

**Questions on the qualification success rates**

14. **What is the qualification success rates measure?**

Qualification success rates (QSR) are the number of qualifications achieved as a proportion of the total number of qualifications studied. This measure has been used by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and inspectorate for many years.

15. **How will the revised qualification success rates affect me?**
The impact of these changes on your college will be small.

There are, however, extensive changes to the way Qualification Success Rates are calculated in Work-based Learning provision. See the FAQ’s for work based learning providers on the Framework for Excellence website.

16. Why aren’t the new qualification Success Rates being piloted like the other measures of success?

Since the new qualification success rates are a development of existing measures based on data sets that have been used for a number of years, it was felt that they should be adopted without a piloting year.

17. Will the qualification success rates include partial achievement or include learners who transfer to employment before completion?

The qualification success rates (QSR) measure is based on achievement of whole qualifications. The QSR measure is designed to show the proportion of learners, from a starting cohort, who go on to achieve the full qualification.

18. What are the length and level adjusted benchmarks?

Length and level adjusted benchmarks are an overall success rate for an institution. It is calculated by comparing the institution’s success rates with national norms for qualifications at different levels and of different lengths.

Questions on recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA)

19. What is the recognising and recording progress and achievement measure?

The recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) measure describes an approach to the quality assessment and assurance of non-accredited provision in the learning and skills sector.

20. When would the RARPA measure be implemented?

The RARPA measure is being implemented for non-accredited learning in 2005-2006 academic year.
Questions on Provider Gateway

21. What is the Provider Gateway? And how can I access it?

The Provider Gateway is a secure internet website, available following the link: https://gateway.lsc.gov.uk. Each learning provider will only have access to information about their own organisation on that website.

Your user approver will be designated and responsible for managing the access to the Provider Gateway. You will only be able to see outputs within your own organization.

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