

Learner Achievement Tracker (LAT) Value Added (VA) Tool

Communications update October 2010

Introduction

In April 2010, the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) assumed responsibility for the policy development in respect of the Learner Achievement Tracker Value Added (LAT VA) measure. The Data Service has been commissioned to produce the LAT VA reports to the specification set out by the YPLA. The reports that are generated feature as part of the data used by Ofsted in their inspection of all post 16 provision.

What is the Learner Achievement Tracker Value Added Tool?

The LAT VA analyses the progress of 16-18 year-old students undertaking graded Level 3 qualifications relative to the average progress made by similar learners nationally for the same qualification and subject, based on their prior attainment at Key Stage 4 (typically GCSEs).

The VA scores are calculated by comparing the expected outcome at Level 3 based on prior attainment at KS4 with the grade the student actually achieved at Level 3, using awarding body data. More details of the statistical model and calculation are available at

<http://thegateway.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/training-support/achievement-tracker/>

History

The LAT VA was developed as part of 'success for all' by the LSC working in partnership with the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the inspectorates and was first run as a national pilot in 2006.

In 2009, following public consultation, Ofsted adopted LAT VA information as an integral and standard piece of evidence to be used in their inspection of all post 16 education.

Why is LAT VA information important?

Learner progress is a key indicator of effectiveness. It informs a school or college's own self assessment and continuous improvement arrangements. As it identifies individual qualification and subject areas it can also inform advice and guidance about the right progression route for students and the quality of teaching and learning. As noted above, Ofsted use LAT VA as an integral piece of evidence in their inspection of all post 16 provision. The YPLA recognises that value added information is a valuable way of contextualising success rates and how colleges perform against national

average success rates and national minimum standards such as minimum levels of performance (MLP)¹.

What does a LAT report tell you?

The Report provides data on the qualification, VA score, sample size and the 95% confidence interval – that is a lower bound score and an upper bound score, as well as the statistical significance of the score ('Below Average', 'Not Different from Average', or 'Above Average'), where 'Average' refers to the progress of similar students nationally for the same qualification and subject, taking into account prior attainment. Where a student achieves a grade higher than the expected outcome this produces a positive VA score and vice versa.

The statistical significance of the score depends on the upper and lower bound scores:

- a) If the lower bound is negative, and the upper band is negative, there is a 95% certainty that performance is below the national average
- b) If the lower band is positive, and the upper bound is positive, there is a 95% certainty that performance is above the national average
- c) If the lower bound is negative, and the upper bound is positive, then it should be assumed that performance is not different from the national average.

Users of the report should look at the score in the context of these confidence intervals to understand if the performance of a qualification is above or below average.

How do I access the reports?

The LAT VA reports can be accessed via the Data Service's Provider Gateway, this is the vehicle which enables the YPLA, the Skills Funding Agency, Ofsted and providers to access information which supports quality assurance, improvement and inspection. If you do not currently have access to the gateway please contact the data service helpdesk (call 0870 267 0001) or email servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk) in the first instance.

Who has access to the reports?

Every School, College and Academy has access to their own reports. They can also be accessed by School Improvement Partners (SIPs) via YPLA for Academies' SIPs and LAs for maintained School SIPs. In addition, all LAT VA reports can be accessed by Ofsted and the YPLA. Local Authorities have

¹ Schools and Academies are not currently in scope for MLP, because the required success rate data is not available for them to enable the MLP calculation.

access to the reports for those providers located within their geographical boundaries.

How often are the reports produced?

The reports are produced annually, using the most recently available awarding body data. There are two stages to the process.

1. In November of each year an 'unamended' version of the LAT VA reports are published on the provider gateway. The reports are described as 'unamended' as they are constructed from awarding body data before it has been checked by schools and colleges themselves.

This year the data checking exercise ran from 27 September to 15 October. The website can be accessed via the link below.

<https://tableschecking.education.gov.uk/>

2. In January the reports are re-run to take account of amendments and published as final amended reports.

Where do I go if I have a query?

All queries on LAT reports should, in the first instance, be directed to the Data Service helpdesk (call 0870 267 0001) or email servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk).

Data and reports relating to previous years – data relating to previous years can be made available upon request to the Data Service (call 0870 267 0001 or email servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk).

What is new in LAT VA for this year?

There are three areas of development in respect of LAT VA this year:

- (1) A pilot 'ready reckoner' tool.

As described above, the LAT VA tool produces reports that are published in unamended format in the autumn and in amended format in the winter. A number of providers have advised the YPLA that they would find it beneficial to have access to LAT Value Added data earlier in the year.

In response to this we have developed a 'ready reckoner' tool which enables schools, academies and colleges to model their LAT VA outcomes based on their own information about examination results.

The tool is accessible from <http://www.ypla.gov.uk/aboutus/ourwork/ga/lat-va-tool/>

(2) Enhanced reporting

In line with previous years, the on-line LAT will contain a standard set of reports, accessible via the provider gateway. These reports will be unchanged from previous years. However, in addition to the on-line LAT reports, the YPLA has designed some new complementary reports that present LAT VA data in a simpler and more intuitive way than the on-line LAT. These reports contain the following features:

- Showing multiple years data
- Breakdowns by age
- Colour coding of statistical significance
- Separate reports for consortia and individual schools and colleges.

These reports will be available in pdf format via the provider gateway.

(3) Technical Improvement

The LAT VA calculation has been updated this year to take account of the new A* grade at GCSE.

The YPLA will use feedback and queries from schools and colleges to help to refine and improve both the measure and the reporting capability.

What was the Learner Achievement Tracker Distance Travelled Tool and why has it not been published since 2006/07?

The distance travelled (DT) tool was developed alongside VA to measure ungraded level 3 qualifications. DT scores were expressed as the percentage difference in a provider's cohort achievement compared with the national average, taking prior attainment into account.

However, it has not been possible to develop a sufficiently robust methodology and the YPLA judged that the best use of resources at this time was to focus its resource on the VA measure.

What is the Link to DfE's Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 Value Added Measure

The Department for Education (DfE) have also developed a measure for reporting progress between KS4 and KS5 at an institutional level. An average of all students' scores is produced for a school/college, which is adjusted for the model to take account of the cohort size, which produces a school/college level value added measure. This number is presented as a number based around 1000, alongside a 95% confidence interval, to indicate the value that a school/college has added on average for its students.

The underlying calculation and methodology for the DfE's measure and LAT VA are similar, but not identical. The key differences are:

- the DfE measure looks at overall learner achievement (including total size of learner programme), LAT looks at performance for individual qualifications
- the DfE measure gives single overall scores, whereas the LAT provides an analysis by qualification and subject (but no overall score)
- the DfE measure uses factors other than average prior attainment

The YPLA works with the DfE to ensure that the two measures are aligned and complementary as far as possible.

What happens next?

The 'unamended' provider level LAT VA reports will be available via the provider gateway from 15 November this year, and the amended reports will be published in late January 2011.

Website links

<http://www.ypla.gov.uk/>

<http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/>

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/>