

Calculation of Post-16 success rates in Schools: Definition

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Background and introduction

- 1 A number of measures have been used to monitor the performance of post-16 education and training in recent years, covering both the success / achievement side and the value added / distance travelled.
- 2 In 2008, DfE and partner organisations set about harmonising the success and achievement measures used across the post-16 sector into one measure that could be used by all. The success measure that has been used extensively across the FE college sector for nearly ten years was chosen as the measure of choice for the 16-18 sector, including school / Academy sixth forms.
- 3 Success rates for Schools and Academies are used in the funding allocations formula, and DfE officials have indicated that they will publish these success rates for the 2010/11 academic year¹ and use them in league tables.
- 4 Success rates for FE are also used to identify underperforming colleges through the Minimum Levels of Performance (MLP) project. This project is likely to be extended to other areas of post-16 education sectors such as school sixth forms and possibly Academies.

What are success rates, and how do they differ from achievement and attainment measures?

- 5 In its most simplest form, a School's / Academy's success rate is the number of learning aims achieved divided by the number of learning aims started
- 6 The technical definition is this:

The number of learning aims due to be completed in an academic year that have been successfully completed ('achievement') divided by

¹ These success rates would be published in 2012. A small pilot was run by the Framework for Excellence team this year using 2008/09 data, and a further sector wide pilot will be run next year for schools and Academies using 2009/10 data, with results due in Spring 2011.

The number of learning aims due to be completed in an academic year ('start')

- 7 It is important to note that the denominator includes those learning aims that learners withdraw from during the year.
- 8 There are some exceptions. In cases where a learner transfers from one aim to another, the learning aim transferred from is excluded, as are learning aims that are withdrawn from within 6 weeks (for learning aims lasting more than 24 weeks) or 2 weeks (for short courses).
- 9 The example below shows how the success rates methodology works for an Academy's 2009/10 success rate. The annex includes details of why each aim is included / excluded.

Learning aim	Start date	Expected completion date	Actual completion date	Status	Does it count as a 'start'?	Does it count as a 'achievement'?
1	1 st September 2009	1 st July 2010	1 st July 2010	Achieved	Yes	Yes
2	1 st September 2009	31 st January 2010	1 st July 2010	Achieved	Yes	Yes
3	1 st September 2009	1 st July 2010	1 st July 2010	Failed	Yes	No
4	1 st September 2008	1 st July 2009	31 st January 2010	Failed	No	No
5	1 st September 2009	5 th June 2011		Continuing	No	No
6	1 st September 2009	5 th June 2011	5 th June 2010	Achieved	No	No
7	1 st September 2009	5 th June 2010	5 th June 2010	Completed but result not known	Yes (but see note below)	No
8	1 st September 2009	5 th June 2010	5 th November 2009	Transferred	No	No
9	5 th November 2009	5 th June 2010	10 th December 2009	Withdrawn	No	No
10	1 st September 2009	1 st July 2010		Continuing	Yes	No

Note re learning aim 7 – in future all unknown results will be included and counted as failures, as they are for FE. However in 2008/09 there were large numbers of unknown results that skewed the success rates, and so unknown results were excluded entirely from the calculations

- 10 In this case, 5 learning aims count as a start, 2 as achievements. The Academy's success rate is 2 out of 5 = 40%.
- 11 The key differences between success rates and achievement / attainment measures are:

- a Success rates do not differentiate graded outcomes. As long as the learner passes and achieves the qualification, it doesn't matter if they get an A grade or an E grade
- b Both year 12 and year 13 data is included in calculations, irrespective of whether the learner is staying on for another year
- c Achievement and attainment measures focus solely on entry and achievement data provided by awarding bodies, and so learning aims withdrawn from before a learner is entered for an exam do not count in these measures. For success rates, both the retention and achievement elements are considered
- d All types of learning aims are included in success rates, whether at level 1, 2,3 or 4²

Data used for calculating success rates

- 12 Data used for calculating success rates is provided to the YPLA by DfE. It is made up of termly census data provided by Schools, Academies and awarding body data. These two datasets are matched together by DfE suppliers (Fisher Family Trust). The datasets are matched together through 'fuzzy matching' techniques which rely on accurate recording of:
- First name
 - Last name
 - Date of birth
 - Home postcode
 - Qualification Accreditation Numbers (QAN)
 - Discount codes
- 13 Given the method DfE has chosen to collect success rates data, it is key that data in these fields is filled in accurately. If, for example, schools record the wrong QANs in their census return, it is likely Fisher Family Trust will be unable to match records together. The result will be that the learning aim's outcome will be recorded as unknown, irrespective of whether the learning aim has been achieved, and as such will be counted as a failure in success rates calculations.
- 14 It is also important that academies record accurate start and end dates, and keep the 'status' field in the census up-to-date.
- 15 The main census used for calculating success rates is the Autumn census for learning aims completed in the previous academic year – so for example for the 2010/11 success rates, the Autumn 2011 census will be used. It is therefore essential that Schools and Academies follow DfE instructions and record all learning aims completed in summer 2010 in this census return.
- 16 The summer census is also used to pick up any aims completed / withdrawn from before the summer term, so the summer 2010 census is also used in the 2010/11 success rate calculations.

² Although currently Key Skills and Functional Skills are excluded

Recommended reading

17 Information on the success rates methodology, and why the measures are being used, can be found on the Information Authority, Data Service and Department websites:

- <http://www.theia.org.uk/harmonisingsuccessrates/>
- http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/statistics/success_rates
- <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.home&sid=3&pid=233&lid=698&ctype=Text&ptype=Single>

Contacts

18 For help completing the schools census, please contact the DfE helpdesk:

- DSG.Helpdesk@dfes.gov.uk

19 For success rate queries for 2008/09 please contact the list below:

Region	Contact	Email
Academies (Coventry)	TBC - Refer to contact named in letter	
Academies (Darlington)	TBC - Refer to contact named in letter	
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Annex A – why do these aims count in the way they do?

Learning aim	Does it count as a 'start'?	Does it count as a 'achievement'?	Notes
1	Yes	Yes	Aim due to be completed this year and successfully done so
2	Yes	Yes	As per 1 - it doesn't matter that the learning aim was completed later than expected as long as it is completed in the same academic year (so any time up until the end of July)
3	Yes	No	Aim due to be completed this year but failed
4	No	No	Aim due to be completed last year and so isn't included in this year's calculations. It would have been treated as a fail in the 2008/09 success rates
5	No	No	Aim not due to be completed until next year so excluded
6	No	No	As per 5 – it will count as a success in 2010/11 success rates, even if it is completed a year early
7	Yes	No	Unknown outcomes will be treated as failures from 2010/11 onwards
8	No	No	Transferred so not counted
9	No	No	Withdrawn from within 6 weeks so excluded
10	Yes	No	Even though the aim is not yet complete, it is due to be completed this year and so is counted as a failure. Even if the aim is subsequently achieved next year, it will always be treated as a failure

Note that if an AS-level is not 'cashed' by a learner then the learning aim is counted as a failure (as the exam result is unknown – as per example 7). For an AS to be cashed, the awarding body needs to be told to physically certificate and award the AS level. In the past, many schools have chosen not to cash their AS levels until the following year.