

A Handy Guide to Key Stage 4 performance measures

Version 1.1, 17.6.15

There are significant changes ahead for school performance measures, both at Key Stage 4 and 16-19. This Handy Guide focuses on the Key Stage 4 changes, while a separate Handy Guide explains the changes for 16-19 students.

Over recent years an increasing amount of data has been published to report on school performance. The most important of these are designated 'headline measures', and within these measures one is used to set a minimum standard of performance or 'floor target'.

Some general principles

The key principles that apply at Key Stage 4 are:

- All full-course GCSEs are eligible to be included in performance measures.
- A maximum number of approved non-GCSE qualifications can be included; DfE publishes an annual list of those which meet their criteria. In 2015 the maximum number is two; in 2016 and 2017 it will be three.
- Most Level 1/2 Certificates count as GCSEs (until the new 9-1 GCSEs are introduced). However a few are treated as non-GCSEs – please refer to the lists mentioned above.
- Unaccredited IGCSEs or International GCSEs are not eligible for inclusion.
- AS levels are eligible for inclusion, but not A levels.
- All qualifications are allocated a discount code; if qualifications share a discount code only one of the results can be included. In some subjects such as science, mathematics and English there are additional discounting rules – guidance on discounting can be found in the RAISEonline document library.
- A 'first entry' rule applies across all qualifications; if a student has more than one result for qualifications that discount, then it is the result of the first qualification taken that will be used. Further guidance has been published by DfE.

Headline measures in 2015

The principal headline measure for 2015 will be the percentage of Year 11 students achieving **5 GCSEs (or equivalent) at A*-C, including English and maths**. Schools will need to achieve a score of at least 40% and demonstrate above median expected progress in English and maths to meet the floor target – those who drop below this threshold will be liable to intervention.

Other headline measures are:

- the percentage making expected progress in English.
- the percentage making expected progress in maths.
- the percentage achieving the English Baccalaureate. (To meet this measure, students must either attempt both English literature and English language, and achieve at least a C in English language, or achieve at least grade C in English; achieve grade C or above in mathematics; achieve grade C or above in double science or science and additional science, or attempt three separate sciences (including computer science) and achieve at least grade C in two of them; achieve grade C or above in a modern or ancient language; and grade C or above in either history or geography).
- the percentage achieving grades A*-C in English and maths GCSEs.

A new system of performance measures is being introduced in 2016 (see below). DfE gave schools the option of moving across to the new Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measures a year early, in 2015. Schools opting in will still have their 5A*-C results reported to enable comparisons to be drawn between schools, but will have their performance in relation to floor standards measured against the Progress 8 benchmark. (*See below for more information on this measure*).

Headline measures in 2016

In 2016 a new set of headline measures is introduced. The measure on which the floor standard is based will be **Progress 8**. This reports on the relative progress made by students between the ages of 11 and 16. A school's Progress 8 score is derived by first calculating another new headline measure – **Attainment 8**.

Attainment 8 reports on the achievement of students across a defined basket of 8 qualifications. The eight qualifications must include GCSEs, Level 1/2 Certificates or AS levels in mathematics and either English language or literature (or, in 2016 only, GCSE English). The points for mathematics are double weighted, as are the points for the better English result if both qualifications have been taken. (For 2016 only, points will automatically be doubled for students taking GCSE English.) This is both to reflect their importance and to encourage maximum achievement. There must also be any three of the subjects that count towards the EBacc measure (*see the section on headline measures in 2015*). The other three slots making up the eight can be any qualifications (GCSE or vocational) that are eligible for performance measures. (The second English result can count in this group if it is good enough.) Each result is given a point score, and the average attainment is calculated by dividing by 10 (it is 10 rather than 8 to reflect the double weighting for English and mathematics).

The table in Figure 1 gives points for current GCSEs and BTEC Firsts as they will be used in 2016, and how this will change from 2017 when new GCSE 9-1 qualifications are introduced. GCSE 9-1 qualifications will have a simple 'point per grade' scale, with grade 9 being worth 9 points, grade 8 worth 8 points and so on.

GCSE (BTEC) grade	2016 points	2017 points
A* (Distinction*)	8	8.5
A (Distinction)	7	7
B (Merit)	6	5.5
C (Pass)	5	4
D	4	3
E	3	2
(BTEC L1 Pass)	2.5	1.75
F	2	1.5
G	1	1

Figure 1 – Performance table points

It will be noted from this table that during the transition years 2017 and 2018 the points differential between grades is changed. In 2016 each GCSE letter grade is one point apart. In 2017 and 2018, higher grades (A*, A and B) are 1.5 points apart, while the lowest grades (G, F and E) are only half a point apart.

These points can be used to work out the Attainment 8 score for a hypothetical student in summer 2016:

Subject	Grade	Points	Weighted points
Geography	A*	8	8
English literature	A	7	14
BTEC Business	Distinction	7	7
Science	B	6	6
Mathematics	B	6	12
English language	B	6	6
Religious studies	B	6	6
Art	C	5	
BTEC Sport	Pass	5	
Additional science	D	4	4
<i>Total points</i>			<i>63</i>
<i>Average attainment</i>			<i>6.3 (B+)</i>

Figure 2 – Calculating a student's Attainment 8 score in 2016

The points for this student have been calculated as follows:

- The points for English literature and mathematics have been double weighted.
- Geography, science and additional science are included to meet the requirements of the EBacc group.
- The best 'other' qualification results are BTEC Business, English language and religious studies.
- The results for Art and BTEC Sport are not needed for this measure.
- The total point score of 63 is divided by 10 to get an average. 6.3 points is a little better than a grade B, so would be reported as B+.

An 'expected score' is also calculated for each student. This is the average attainment 8 score of each group of students nationally who were at the same level in the assessments taken at the end of Key Stage 2 (typically aged 11). A student's *Progress 8* score is worked out by looking at the difference between their actual Attainment 8 score and their expected score. This will indicate whether their progress has been in line with the national average, above it or below.

The student in the example above had an average attainment of 6.3 points. If all the other students in the national 16-year old cohort who had the same prior attainment at Key Stage 2 had an average Key Stage 4 achievement of 6.1 points, this student has made 0.2 of a grade better progress than the average.

To get the school's overall Progress 8 score, the individual student progress scores are added up and the average calculated. Schools where students' average progress is more than half a grade below the national average will be at risk of intervention.

As well as Attainment 8 and Progress 8, the other headline measures are:

- the percentage achieving a C grade or better in English and mathematics.
- the percentage achieving the English Baccalaureate (*see the section on headline measures in 2015*).

What if a student takes fewer than 8 qualifications?

DfE has advised that 'it may benefit some less able students to work towards good grades (and hence score more points) in fewer subjects, with the emphasis on doing well in English and mathematics, rather than take more subjects but achieve lower grades overall.' (*DfE: Progress 8 measure in 2016 and 2017 – February 2015*).

Taking fewer than eight subjects could make more time available for key subjects, allowing additional support in English and mathematics. Having more time available per subject could enable a student to be offered larger programmes in subjects which will interest and motivate eg BTEC.

Some students may be entered for eight subjects but fail to achieve a grade in one or more.

In all instances where the student has fewer than eight eligible results, the total points are still divided by 10 to get an Attainment 8 and Progress 8 outcome.

What happens to results achieved early when the new GCSEs come in?

Some students are ready to take GCSEs or equivalent qualifications before the summer of the year in which they turn 16. These results are not reported in the year they are achieved, but are carried forward and included when the student reaches 16.

In the transition from current A*-G GCSEs to the new 9-1 GCSEs, specific rules apply:

- No GCSE A*-G English or mathematics results can be carried forward; from summer 2017 the only GCSE results which will be eligible will be from the reformed 9-1 qualifications. The biggest risk here is for schools where students take English GCSEs in successive years – for example English literature in Y10 and English language in Y11. Students who start Y10 in September 2015 would take the current (A*-G) GCSE in 2016 and the reformed (9-1) GCSE in 2017. In this case, and for this year only, the English literature result from Y10 would not be eligible for performance tables.
- DfE originally announced that results of all other GCSE subjects could be carried forward. This has now changed (16 June 2015), and once the new 9-1 version is introduced A*-G results cease to be eligible. This means that for all subjects with 9-1 GCSEs starting in September 2016, the last assessment of the A*-G versions will be in summer 2017, and that is the last year that those results will be eligible for performance tables.
- The same rule applies to results for Level 1/2 Certificates (sometimes referred to as accredited IGCSEs). Like A*-G GCSEs, results cannot be carried forward in any subject once the 9-1 GCSE in that subject is available.
- AS results remain valid as an alternative to GCSE results.

Headline measures from 2018

DfE has announced that guidance will be reviewed before March 2016 in relation to Progress 8 for 2018.

References

[Progress 8 measure in 2016 and 2017; Guide for maintained secondary schools, academies and free schools](#) – Department for Education, February 2015

[Early Entry – Guidance for Schools](#) – Department for Education, March 2014

[Reforming the accountability system for secondary schools](#) – Department for Education, October 2013

[List of qualifications that count in the EBacc](#) – Department for Education, February 2015