



School performance reporting – early entry FAQs

Background

A change to the policy for Key Stage 4 school performance reporting for early entry from 2019 onwards was announced on 16 October 2017 by the Cabinet Secretary for Education. You can view the statement on the [Welsh Government website](#).

This Frequently Asked Questions document is intended to clarify the new policy and how it will impact on schools examination entry processes.

Currently, interim changes are being made to the accountability and performance arrangements as part education reform through Successful Futures. Working with the teaching profession, local government, consortia, unions and international experts, there is an ongoing review of the current accountability system. As set out in our action plan *'Education in Wales: Our National Mission'*, we intend to publish a new evaluation and improvement framework for the entire education system during autumn 2018.

What is the new policy and why has it been introduced?

From summer 2019, only the results of the first awarding of a complete qualification (including vocational qualifications) will count towards performance measures.

This change will encourage schools to enter learners when schools are confident they are ready to gain their best possible result. It does not prevent a learner resitting should a school or learner wish to attempt to improve their results, but the resit result would not count towards school performance measures, even if the outcome is higher.

When does this new policy come into effect and which learners does it affect?

This change will be implemented for the school performance reporting at Key Stage 4 in summer 2019. This means that the results of learners who are currently in Year 10 (and will be in Year 11 in the academic year 2018/19) are affected for

performance measures purposes. Therefore, results achieved by pupils in year 10 in the November 2017 series will count.

This change will not apply retrospectively to learners in the current year 9 and below who have already taken qualifications prior to the announcement of this policy in October 2017. However, for future years all early entries will count for all year groups.

Please note that this change is to whole school performance measures and should not affect decisions on choosing the correct path for individual learners based on their best interests.

Does the 'first entry counts' policy apply to modular/unitised qualifications? Learners are allowed to resit each module/unit once prior to 'cash in' – is this still the case?

The 'first entry counts' policy applies to modular/unitised qualifications, but schools should note that the policy applies for the final certification of the full award, not sat or re-sat modules/units before that final award. So, where qualifications are designed to be modular, the outcome of a single module does not count towards performance measures. Where the qualification specification permits learners to resit a module once, before the final award and 'cash-in' of the full qualification, resits of individual modules are not affected by this change in policy.

The 'first entry counts' rule only applies to the whole qualification once it is completed and 'cashed in' for a final overall grade. This also applies to whole qualifications contributing towards the Capped 9 performance measure.

As with other qualifications, this also applies to BTECs.

How will the policy affect the Welsh Baccalaureate?

The Welsh Baccalaureate is based on a Skills Challenge Certificate alongside Supporting Qualifications. The requirements of both the Skills Challenge Certificate and Supporting Qualifications must be met in order to achieve the overarching Welsh Baccalaureate.

At Key Stage 4, the supporting qualifications include two mandatory GCSEs; English language or Welsh Language, and Maths-Numeracy or Mathematics; in addition to a further three GCSEs.

Changes to the early entry policy will not affect learners' achievement of the Welsh Baccalaureate. The best results from either early entry or re-sits of the relevant Supporting Qualifications will count towards the awarding of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.

For performance measures, the first attempt at each Supporting Qualification (GCSE) will count towards performance measures, consistent with the changes to early entry performance reporting. The Welsh Baccalaureate will continue to be used as part of a suite of measures, alongside other measures such as Capped 9 and Level 2 inclusive.

How will the discounting policy be affected? Does the ‘first entry counts’ policy apply to individual qualifications or those within a discounting group?

First entries of qualifications will be determined for performance measures based on their Qualification Accreditation Number (QAN).

Where learners take a qualification with the same QAN multiple times only the first entry will count for performance measures.

Where learners take qualifications in the same subject at different levels and with different QAN codes within the reporting period, for example a GCSE and an AS or A level, the higher level qualification will be reported, in this case the AS or A level.

Discount codes will be applied after the first entry rule. Discount codes can be found on [QiW](#).

What about learners who are entered for different tiers of the same qualifications, for example Mathematics which has Foundation, Intermediate and Higher tiers?

The first entry for each qualification, irrespective of the tier of entry, will count to performance measures for summer 2019.

Some qualifications don’t follow the ‘normal’ entry pattern. There are non-GCSE qualifications where learners can attain increasingly higher levels outside of the normal academic timetable. How will these be treated?

‘Graded’ Qualifications e.g. in music awarded by ABRSM where pupils will progress through the available grades at very different rates, will be treated as an exception to the ‘first entry counts’ rule. This means that the highest level achieved for these types of qualifications during the valid reporting period will count in performance measures.

Some of our learners take qualifications outside of school. Will these still count in the same way?

These qualifications will still count in performance measures of the school which the learner attends, subject to the usual restrictions. They will also be subject to the ‘first entry counts’ policy, where the whole qualification is ‘cached-in’.

How will the policy affect short courses?

The first entry will still count towards performance measures. Schools will need to be mindful of the learner's best interests when deciding whether to enter learners for short courses or full courses.