

Briefing – Government reforms to Performance Tables

2nd December 2011

Background

Following consultation over the summer, on 27th October the Department for Education announced its reforms to Key Stage 4 performance tables. All qualifications will continue to be recognised at their current equivalences for the next 2 years. For the 2014 performance tables onwards a number of changes will be introduced.

“Through these reforms, therefore, we will help to establish a vocational education for young people in this country that has, and deserves to have, as high a status as more traditional, academic routes.” *(from Qualifications for 14-16 year olds and Performance Tables- DfE October 27th 2011)*

The Changes

First, Government will record and publish achievement in *all* qualifications taken at Key Stage 4 – meaning the achievement of any vocational or academic qualification will be recognised publicly in the school and individual student performance data.

Second, Government will introduce a list of vocational and academic qualifications that will contribute to the school’s headline measures including ‘5 GCSEs at A*-C (or equivalent)’ and ‘5 GCSEs at A*-C (or equivalent) including English and maths’. This list will be made available in January 2012, however at the same time they will also be opening up the Section 96 list so that virtually all non-GCSE qualifications will be funded and recognised in schools.

In order for qualifications to be on the list publishing in January 2012, and therefore recognised in the school’s headline measures, they must demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Be at least as big as a GCSE, 120 guided learning hours (GLH)
- Be graded (i.e. not just pass/fail)
- External assessment must contribute at least 20% to the final grade (very large qualifications have a slightly lower threshold)
- Include synoptic assessment
- Provide good progression, both in the same area and for broader study outside the area
- Have a proven track record (new qualifications which cannot demonstrate a track record, will be placed on the approved list then reviewed after the first cohort completes Key Stage 4)
- Have appropriate content which is suitable for 14-16 year-olds, includes the development of sector- or subject-specific understanding as well as transferable knowledge

The Government has announced that, after this round of changes, the list of headline measure qualifications will next be updated for the 2015 tables.

Third, the headline measures will change from assessing volume of achievement to assessing breadth of achievement. As such, these measures will report on 5 *different* subjects, meaning all qualifications will count as the equivalent of 1 GCSE, regardless of their GLH size.

Finally, no more than 2 non-GCSE qualifications will be able to count as 'equivalents' for one student in the school's headline measures.

These changes only affect the school's headline measures. For other school measures, and for individual students' achievement, all vocational and academic qualifications will continue to be recognised elsewhere in the performance tables.

What this means

This is very positive for BTECs and other vocational qualifications. The changes mean that both vocational and academic qualifications will continue to be recognised in the headline measures and the wider performance tables from 2014 onwards. We welcome this, since it means all Key Stage 4 students can have high quality vocational qualifications recognised alongside a core of GCSEs.

Whilst these reforms change the way that school performance is measured, the Government has been extremely clear that decisions about which qualifications to offer remain solely in the hands of individual teachers and schools. Indeed, the Government's response to the performance table reform consultation explicitly says that, 'where it is in a student's best interest, schools are encouraged to teach qualifications not on the list'.

In this vein, once the list of headline measure qualifications is published in January 2012, Section 96 – the list of qualifications permitted for pre-16s – will be opened up to include virtually all accredited qualifications.

A rounded curriculum is about equipping young people with the skills they need for the next stage of their life, be that university, further education or work. As such, we understand there is an important place in schools for smaller, flexible, skills-based or taster qualifications, which may not feature in the headline measures. We are committed to continuing to make these qualifications available to teachers and students.

However, at Pearson we understand that schools need to make sure that wherever possible, the hard work of staff and students is recognised through performance measures. For this reason we have been working with Government and the regulator for many months now to ensure that our BTECs and where appropriate our other vocational qualifications, continue to be included in the headline indicators after these changes have been introduced. To find out more about our BTEC developments, visit www.btec.co.uk/2012

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2nd December 2011

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Timeline for the changes

1. When do these changes come into force?

A: The reforms come into effect for the 2014 tables. This means that, generally speaking, it is the year group who begin year 10 in September 2012 (and take a qualification over 2 years) that will be the first whose performance is measured through the reformed league tables.

2. When you say 2014 league tables, do you mean 2 year courses starting in 2012?

A: Yes. The 2014 tables report on the 2-year Key Stage 4 courses starting in September 2012. The '2014 tables' are actually published in January 2015.

3. My school has a 3-year Key Stage 4 and I'm currently delivering BTECs to my year 9s. Do these changes mean that their BTECs won't be recognised in the headline measures when they reach the end of Key Stage 4, in 2014?

A: A: No – in most cases, we believe they will be recognised. Under the year's grace rule, the existing versions of qualifications will still be recognised in the headline measures providing they are as large as a GCSE (120 GLH), have an established track record, provide good progression opportunities, and the awarding body is developing a successor qualification. We don't know at this stage whether centres delivering existing BTEC to year 9s in one of the 8 subjects that are being redeveloped for 2012, will have to switch to the new qualification once it becomes available. We have raised this issue with the DfE and are waiting to hear back. As soon as we have this information, we will advise centres.

Because of the size requirements, the existing 90glh Level 2 BTEC Certificates will not fall within the year's grace rule and therefore won't be recognised in the headline measures for 2014. If they wish to attract recognition in the headline measures for 2014, centres currently delivering these qualifications to their year 9s will have to consider switching to a different BTEC. For those subjects that are not being redeveloped for 2012, centres might want switch to the

existing 180glh BTEC Extended Certificate, which should be recognised. For those 8 subjects that are being redeveloped for September 2012, centres may instead want to switch to the new 120glh BTEC Award, once it is accredited. We will advise centres which of these qualifications will attract recognition in the 2014 headline measure, once we have this information from the DfE.

4. I'm delivering an existing BTEC to year 9s in one of the 8 subjects that are being redeveloped for 2012. Will I have to switch to the new qualification, once it becomes available, in order to attract recognition in the 2014 headline measures?

A: We don't know at this stage. We have raised this issue with the DfE and are waiting to hear back. As soon as we have this information from the DfE, we will advise our customers. If centres do have to make this change, we will do everything possible to support you through the transition.

5. Can you explain what happens to GCSE and BTEC courses that year 10s finish in 2013?

A: As a general rule, learners' achievements are recorded in the Key Stage 4 performance tables for the year in which they turn 16. Results for year 10s who take GCSEs and BTECs in 2013 will therefore be included in the 2014 tables. Whilst all GCSEs are recorded in the headline measures, the way that BTECs are recorded in the performance tables and headline measures depends on a number of factors:

- if learners have taken a 90glh version the result will be recorded in the performance tables but not the headline measures;
- if learners have a 180glh or 360glh phase 2 qualification (those not being redeveloped for September 2012), it should count headline measures under the year's grace;
- if learners have a 180glh or 360glh phase 1 (those being redeveloped for 2012) qualification it will depend on whether DfE agrees to maintain the year's grace even though the new BTECs have started. (See answer to Q3 and Q4 above). We have raised this issue with the DfE and are waiting to hear back. As soon as we have more information we will publish it at www.btec.co.uk

6. The Government has introduced a year of grace for existing qualifications to be recorded in the headline measures. What does this actually mean?

A: Existing well-established qualifications that don't meet all of the new headline measure requirements (e.g. no external assessment), can count for headline measures for an extra year (i.e. in 2014 tables) if a revised version that will be compliant, is being developed.

We are still in discussions with the DfE as to whether the year's grace will lapse once new qualifications that meet the Government's headline measure requirements become available. This could mean that centres wishing to attract recognition in the 2014 headline measures, will have to switch to their current year 9s to the new BTEC Firsts, once they become available in September 2012. This only applies to the 8 those subjects which are being redeveloped by us for September 2012. As soon as we have more information on this we will advise our customers.

7. For subjects that aren't being redeveloped for September 2012, will BTECs still count in the headline measure of the 2014 league tables, for my current year 9s who have already registered on the existing qualification?

A: Under the DfE's year of grace, as long as the existing qualifications are 120glh or greater, these qualifications should be counted in headline measures in the 2014 tables. This is subject to final confirmation when the DfE publish the list of headline measure qualifications in January next year.

Because of the size requirements, the existing 90glh Level 2 BTEC Certificates will not fall within the year's grace rule and therefore won't be recognised in the headline measures for 2014. Centres currently delivering these qualifications to their year 9s should consider switching to the existing 180glh BTEC Extended Certificates if they wish to attract recognition in the headline measures for 2014.

Headline measures list

8. Do we know exactly which vocational qualifications will be recognised in the headline measures list?

A: Not yet, but the list of characteristics give us a good indication. For a number of months now we have been working with teachers, Government and the regulator to redevelop our BTECs to ensure that they continue to provide progression, a great learning experience and meet the requirements of the headline measures from 2014 onwards. We have now submitted the list of our qualifications that we expect to meet these new criteria for 2012 first teaching. These include the new BTEC qualifications in our first 8 subjects. In addition, we are also working to update our Diploma in Digital Applications qualification, and some of our Workskills qualifications to ensure that they will continue to attract recognition in the headline measures. The Government will evaluate the compliance of these qualifications and publish the first list of those qualifications meeting these new criteria (and therefore qualifying for recognition in the headline performance measures) in early 2012.

9. How will Level 1 qualifications be recognised in the performance tables?

A: Of the headline measures only the '5 GCSEs at A*-G (or equivalent)' includes Level 1 qualifications, since Level 1 achievement is equivalent to GCSE grades D to G. From 2014, only Level 1 qualifications on the newly-introduced list will be recorded in this measure. In order for Level 1 qualifications to appear on this list, they must either demonstrate all of the characteristics of headline measure qualifications, or alternatively demonstrate that they have a clear link to a specific Level 2 qualification which does meet the characteristics.

We understand that schools need to make sure that wherever possible, the hard work of staff and students is recognised through performance measures. For this reason we will be working with Government and our customers to ensure that, where appropriate, our Level 1 qualifications continue to be recognised in performance tables after these changes have been introduced.

10. Will we be able to teach qualifications that aren't recognised in the headline measures?

A: Yes. These changes only affect how qualifications are recognised in the headline measures, not what can be taught in schools. Government is very clear that teachers should continue to deliver the qualifications that best suit the needs of their students, with the recent consultation response explicitly saying that, 'where it is in a student's best interest, schools are encouraged to teach qualifications not on the list'.

Qualifications can continue to deliver crucial skills, an enriched curriculum and recognition from employers and education institutes, regardless of whether they are recognised in headline measures or not. Indeed, the guidance from the DfE is to ensure students are able to follow a 'balanced curriculum'. All student achievements will continue to be published and reported in the wider performance tables.

11. Will the smaller Edexcel qualifications stop being recognised in the 2014 headline measures?

A: To be recognised in the headline measures from 2014, qualifications have to be at least 120 GLH (equivalent to 1 GCSE) in size. Any qualifications smaller than this won't feature in the headline measures in the 2014 tables. They will continue to be reflected in the wider performance measures and those for an individual student. The new Level 2 BTEC First Award qualifications are 120glh and therefore will meet this new requirement.

12. Will short-course GCSEs be recognised in the headline measures from 2014?

A: No. Short course GCSEs are only 60 GLH in size. To be recognised in the headline measures from 2014, qualifications have to be a minimum of 120 GLH (equivalent to 1 GCSE). They will continue to be reflected in the wider performance measures and those for an individual student.

13. Will all of Edexcel's Level 2 vocational and skills qualifications be redeveloped so that they are recognised in the headline measures in future?

A: We are committed to working with our customers, Government and the regulator to explore ways that the development of crucial vocational and life skills can continue to be recognised. We do not think it appropriate that all of our qualifications are redeveloped to meet the characteristics necessary to contribute to the headline measure, but many qualifications certainly will be. As well as redeveloping our BTEC First and National qualifications, we are also committed to updating our DiDA and selected qualifications from our Workskills suite so they meet these new requirements and can continue to contribute to schools' headline performance measures.

We will keep you updated on any further redevelopments that are planned as soon as they are finalised.

14. Will DiDA be available and recognised in the headline measures from 2014?

A: We are revising the Level 2 Certificate and Diploma in Digital Applications to ensure that the achievements of DiDA learners can continue to attract recognition in the headline measures. We are redeveloping:

- Level 2 Certificate in Digital Applications – 120 GLH
- Level 2 Diploma in Digital Applications – 240 GLH

Our revised qualifications should be ready for first-teaching in September 2012. We will continue to update all our DiDA customers as the development progresses via email and at www.edexcel.com/dida.

15. Will you be redeveloping Level 1 qualifications so that they continue to be recognised in the 5 A*-G measure from 2014 onwards?

A: We are evaluating this at the moment. Level 1 qualifications would not necessarily need to be redeveloped, as they can feature on the list of headline measure qualifications even if they don't demonstrate all the characteristics, providing they offer progression to a specific Level 2 qualification which does meet the characteristics.

We are committed to working with Government and our customers to ensure that our Level 1 qualifications continue to meet the needs of the learners for whom they are designed, and that - where appropriate - they continue to be recognised in performance tables once the current reforms are implemented

As soon as we have this information on our Level 1 qualifications will publish it on our website at www.btec.co.uk

16. Will functional skills be recognised in the headline measures from 2014?

A: No – functional skills are pass/fail qualifications that are 45 GLH in size. To be recognised in the headline measures from 2014, qualifications need to be at least 120 GLH and be graded. Even though functional skills will not be recognised in the headline measures, their achievement will be recorded and published elsewhere in performance tables. Further to this, it is clear that functional skills still have an important role to play at Key Stage 4 – for example, as a way to recognise smaller steps of achievement once the linear GCSEs are introduced, within foundation learning and for students progressing to apprenticeships.

Wider performance tables

17. How will Government be publishing the results of all qualifications taken at Key Stage 4 from 2014?

A: We don't know yet. As soon as we have more information about how Government will be making this information public, we will publish it on our website, www.btec.co.uk.

18. We know that BTECs are worth one GCSE in the headline measures, regardless of their actual size. Is this the same for the other performance measures, such as the 'best of 8'?

A: We don't know yet. The recent announcement only affected what counts in the headline measures of '5 GCSEs or equivalent'. The Government has told us that all achievement will be reported in performance tables but we don't know the exact details of this yet. We will keep you updated and post any new information on www.btec.co.uk

19. When will we know which qualifications count in the other performance measures, such as 'Average Points Score'?

A: The DfE's response to the consultation stated that performance in **all** qualifications will be reported, whether or not they are included on the list for headline measures. However the Department is still considering the format of this wider reporting. As soon as we have this information from the DfE we will publish it on our website at www.btec.co.uk

20. Since the BTEC in Applied Science will be redeveloped so that it continues to contribute to the headline measures, does this mean it will also count towards the EBacc?

A: No. As the EBacc currently stands, only GCSEs and iGCSEs can count. The BTEC in Applied Science will continue to count in all other Key Stage 4 performance measures, including the headline measure of '5 GCSEs or equivalent'.

Changes to BTEC

21. What changes are you making to BTECs?

A: In 2012, we will be introducing new Level 2 BTECs in eight key subjects - Applied Science, Art & Design, Business, Engineering, Health & Social Care, Information & Creative Technology, Performing Arts, and Sport. Each of these will include appropriate external assessment and embedded English and maths. Whilst these are Level 2 qualifications for Level 2 students, they will also provide the opportunity for students' achievements to be recognised and certificated at Level 1, should they not meet the Level 2 standard. We will also introduce new Quality Assurance support to help teachers understand and assess the new qualifications. The remaining Level 2 and 3 BTEC qualifications will be redeveloped for September 2013.

All of this work has been focused on delivering the requirements outlined in the Wolf Review and confirmed in the Government Key Stage 4 performance table reforms, announced on 27th October.

For more information on the changes to BTECs, please visit www.btec.co.uk/2012

22. What if I want to teach a BTEC that isn't in one of the 8 subjects that are being redeveloped for 2012?

A: Don't worry – the existing 180 and 360 GLH versions of the other BTECs should still be recognised in the headline measures for 2014. Qualifications that awarding bodies plan to redevelop for first teaching in 2013 can still feature in headline measures in the 2014 league tables, providing they are as large as a GCSE, have an established track record and provide good progression opportunities. Our remaining Level 2 BTEC Firsts will meet all these criteria and have been included in our recent submission to the DfE. We are confident they will be published in the complete list of compliant qualifications that the Department is scheduled to make available in early 2012.

23. When will the specifications for the new BTECs be available?

A: We aim to make draft specifications of the first phase of new BTEC Level 2 qualifications available to centres in December 2011. These will be subject to Ofqual approval. We are hoping

to have accredited, final versions of the specifications in the spring term, ready for first teaching in September 2012.

24. Will the current Level 2 BTECs continue to be available?

A: We encourage all our customers to register learners onto the new BTEC Firsts as soon as they become available. These qualifications have been developed to provide today's learners with the rigour and progression that they deserve, and to meet the requirements outlined in the Wolf Review and confirmed in the Government's reforms to Key Stage 4 performance table.

However, we understand that some of our customers may want to take more time to make the transition to the new qualification. We are therefore committed to ensuring the existing QCF Level 2 BTECs remain available for registrations until at least December 2012, with certification possible until at least December 2014. We will shortly publish the accreditation and certification end dates for each of the existing QCF Level 2 BTECs on our website at www.btec.co.uk

25. Should schools and colleges in Wales switch to the new Level 2 BTECs, or continue to deliver the existing QCF, 2010 Level 2 BTECs?

A: Schools and colleges in Wales can either switch to the new 2012 NQF BTECs, or continue to deliver the existing 2010 QCF BTECs, which we plan to extend until the end of 2013. Initially there will be no Welsh language option for the 2012 BTECs. If centres want a Welsh language option they should offer the 2010 versions. We would consider the development of Welsh language options for the new BTECs, should the demand prove large enough.

26. Should schools and colleges in Northern Ireland switch to the new Level 2 BTECs, or continue to deliver the existing QCF, 2010 Level 2 BTECs?

A: Schools and colleges in Northern Ireland may continue to use the existing QCF, 2010 BTECs as an appropriate vocational qualification to meet the Entitlement Framework. We are planning to extend these qualifications until the end of 2013. Currently at Level 2 both the Extended Certificate and Diploma fit the minimum GLH, and at Level 3 the Subsidiary Diploma, Diploma and Extended Diploma fit. Schools may seek guidance from DENI directly regarding the eligibility of our Level 1 qualifications.

27. Should schools and colleges in Scotland switch to the new Level 2 BTECs, or continue to deliver the existing QCF, 2010 Level 2 BTECs?

A: Schools and colleges in Scotland can either switch to the new 2012 NQF BTECs, or continue to deliver the existing 2010 QCF BTECs which we plan to extend until the end of 2013.

28. What sizes will the new BTECs be?

A: Our new BTEC Firsts will be available in three sizes from September 2012: 120glh (Award), 240glh (Certificate) and 360glh (Extended Certificate). From September 2013 we will also launch a 480glh version. This range of sizes will mean that schools and colleges can continue to offer qualifications which meet their learners' wide range of needs and progression aims.

29. Will the external assessment in the new BTECs mean higher registration costs?

A: There are still some things that need to be clarified through the review of Vocational qualifications, before we can finalise prices for the new BTEC Firsts. However our fundamental principle is that we will be looking to keep as close as possible to the current fee structures and prices..

30. From 2014, regardless of size, one qualification will be equivalent to 1 GCSE in the headline measures. Does this mean schools can't offer larger BTECs to their 14-16 students?

A: No. These changes have no impact on what schools can teach, only how qualifications are recognised in performance tables. You will still be able to select the right qualifications for each individual student's aspirations.

Since the headline measures (including '5 GCSEs at A*-C (or equivalent) including English and maths') will change from assessing volume of achievement to assessing breadth of achievement, these will report on 5 different subjects, meaning all qualifications will count as the equivalent of 1 GCSE, regardless of actual GLH size. Schools will continue to be able to deliver BTECs that are larger than a GCSE and up to two of these will be recognised as 1 GCSE equivalent. Whilst this '1 for 1' equivalence affects the headline performance measures, it does not affect the value of the qualification to the individual student for progression purposes.

31. Will learners be able to retake BTEC external assessment?

A: Yes. We are in the process of finalising retake arrangements for the new BTECs and will publish these at www.btec.co.uk once we have done so.

32. Will BTEC still be able to have D* awarded?

A: Yes. The grading structure for the new Level 2 BTECs will still be Distinction*, Distinction, Merit, Pass. In addition to these grades, the new BTECs will also provide the opportunity for learners' achievements to be recognised and certificated at Level 1 Pass, should they not meet the Level 2 standard.

Vocational education at Key Stage 4

33. Will there be a limit on the number of vocational qualifications a student can take at Key Stage 4?

A: No. These changes only affect how qualifications are recognised in headline measures, not what can be taught in schools. Government is very clear that teachers should continue to deliver the qualifications that best suit the needs of their students.

To learn more about these changes call our BTEC Helpline on 0844 576 0026