

Medr statistics

Quality and Methodology: Consistent performance measures for post-16 learning: Achievement, August 2023 to July 2024

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Summary: Quality and methodology information on the production of the statistics contained in the Consistent performance measures for post-16 learning: Achievement statistical release.

Theme: Further education, sixth forms

Source: Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR), Post-16 data collection, Welsh Examinations Database (WED)



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Data Sources

Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)

Contains data on further education, work based learning and adult learning. It's collected on a 'rolling' basis throughout the year with regular statistical freezes. It is the official source of statistics on learners in further education institutions (colleges) in Wales.

All data for further education institutions comes from [LLWR](#).

Post-16 Data Collection

Every October, all maintained schools with sixth forms and middle schools with pupils in years 12, 13 and/or 14, are required to report all learning programmes and activities undertaken by pupils in the previous academic year.

Welsh Examinations Database (WED)

Contains data on examination entries and outcomes collected from a number of awarding organisations.

For schools, learner data is from the Post-16 data collection, and qualification attainment data is taken by matching learners to WED.

Rounding

All figures are rounded to the nearest 5. Numbers less than 5 are suppressed. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Percentages based on a denominator of less than 23 are suppressed.

Differences between values are calculated using unrounded values, so there may be small discrepancies when compared with the rounded figures.

Key Quality Information

This section provides a summary of information on this output against five dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability and Coherence.

Relevance

The measures set out in this publication are used:

- by Medr to monitor providers' performance;
- by Estyn, to inform inspection judgements on standards; and
- by providers themselves, as a management tool to measure their own performance and benchmark themselves against sector averages, as part of their self-assessment cycles.

The measures are also used both within and outside Medr to monitor educational trends and as a baseline for further analysis of the underlying data. Some of the main users are:

- officials in Medr;
- Cabinet Secretaries, Ministers and officials in the Welsh Government;
- Members of the Senedd and researchers in the Senedd;
- other government departments;
- local authorities and regional education consortia;
- students, researchers, and academics;
- schools and further education institutions;
- citizens, private companies, and the media.

Accuracy

The figures in this release reflect the final position for the academic year in the release.

A standard reconciliation cycle was undertaken for colleges to improve the quality of the data collection.

Some schools reported learners as studying a Welsh Bacc or the Skills Challenge Certificate, but not both. The Welsh Bacc and Skills Challenge Certificate cannot be taken separately, so in the measures learners who studied one were assumed to have studied the other. If the Welsh Bacc was completed, it was assumed the Skills Challenge Certificate was completed because it is a necessary component of the Welsh Bacc. If the Welsh Bacc entry was missing, it was assumed the learner had withdrawn.

There are known data quality issues with the vocational measures in school sixth forms. The success rate of vocational programmes in school sixth forms was 31% in 2023/24, and it has been low in previous years. The courses started and completed are recorded by schools in the Post-16 data collection, and are then matched onto grade outcomes in the Welsh Examination Database which contains data from examining bodies. There are many instances where courses in the Post-16 data collection can't be matched to the Welsh Examination Database, and vice versa. Schools have been contacted about individual extreme cases, and a variety of causes have been identified. In one case, a school recorded learners under an old course code which had been replaced by a new type of course. Some causes are not data quality issues - another school was enrolling learners on courses that they were unlikely to complete but that the school believed

would still benefit the learner. School sixth forms make up less than 1% of vocational programmes taken, and the overall impact on the measures is minimal. If schools were excluded from the measures, the overall vocational programme success rate would be unchanged in 2023/24.

Table 1: Early dropouts by measure, and academic year, 2022/23 and 2023/24

Measure	2022/23	2023/24
General education programmes	3%	3%
Vocational education programmes	11%	9%
Welsh Bacc	5%	7%

Data can be found in Table 1.1, Table 2.1, and Table 3.1 of the accompanying workbook

Learners who drop out of a programme without completing it within the first 8 weeks, are excluded from the main measures, but are reported separately. The early dropout rate for vocational programmes was much higher than the early dropout rate for general education programmes.

Timeliness and punctuality

The data in this release refers to the 2023/24 academic year ending in July / August 2024. The LLWR data goes through a reconciliation process from August to December after the academic year is finished. A final 'freeze' of LLWR data was taken in March 2024. The Post-16 Data Collection was finalised in March 2025.

Accessibility and clarity

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the [Statistics section of the Medr website](#).

The release is published as an accessible format PDF (PDF/A), alongside a workbook available in an open data format (ODS). Both the release and the workbook follow accessibility guidelines.

Comparability and coherence

Due to the changes in how grades were awarded in 2020 and 2021, and the disruption to learning caused by the pandemic, the Welsh Government did not produce its usual performance measures for schools or post-16 learning in 2019/20 or 2020/21. Instead, special reports were produced on [Outcomes for learners in post-16 education affected by the coronavirus \(Covid-19\) pandemic](#). Those statistics are calculated using different methodologies and cannot be compared with this report. For example, the general education measures are calculated on a one-year basis.

2021/22 and 2022/23 were transitional periods for learners. Some support remained in place for learners, and for general education courses and some vocational courses. Learners were given a wider choice of questions, and Qualifications Wales set results broadly midway between 2018/19 and 2020/21. The statistics for these years should be understood in that context.

2023/24 saw a return to pre-pandemic approaches. Statistical protection was put in place during the awarding process to prevent results from falling significantly below pre-pandemic levels.

We do not advise comparing statistics on the 2016/17 academic year with later years, because several providers were excluded in this first year due to data quality issues. The data quality has improved since, and all post-16 providers have been included for 2017/18 and 2018/19. These two years can be compared, as the changes in methodology have been minor.

Independent Living Skills were excluded in the measures from Entry Level vocational programmes from 2018/19. Creative Solution programmes were excluded before 2018/19.

The underlying cohort and methodology of the achievement consistent measures are different to previous performance measures, and they cannot be compared.

The Welsh Government Examination Results statistical release has statistics on A level outcomes for 17 year olds in schools. These are not comparable with these achievement measures because:

- the examination results are one-year measures, whereas the achievement measures are a two-year measure looking at the progression of learners from their AS programme
- the examination results report on 17 year olds, whereas the achievement measures report on learners on all ages in post-16 education
- the examination results only report on schools, whereas the achievement measures report on learners at schools and further education institutions.

The Learner outcome measures for work based learning and adult learning previously contained statistics on learner outcomes for further education in further education institutions. The statistics are not comparable with the achievement measures, but they provide a time series on previous learner outcomes at further education institution.

The Department for Education publish [A level and other 16 to 18 results](#) outcomes for schools, as well as [16 to 18 destinations measures](#) which covers the destinations into employment and learning, earnings and the progression of learners.

General education programmes

Full-time learners enrolled on AS level learning programmes in the previous academic year are the base cohort for the general education programmes measures. The learners who complete their AS programmes are then matched to learners starting an A2 programme in the next academic year.

The learner's achievement over the full two-years is taken for calculating whether the learner achieved three A levels (or equivalents) at particular grades.

The achievement measures include only those qualifications approved or designated for use in Wales. An examination is discounted when a learner achieves a higher grade or a higher level qualification in the same subject group. If a qualification is discounted, then it does not count towards the statistics published in this release. Qualifications of comparable size and value to A level are counted towards the general education

achievement measure. This includes BTEC subsidiary diplomas and the Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate, for example.

Vocational programmes

The base cohort for vocational programmes is full-time learners on vocational programmes that ended in the current academic year. This is to account for the range of lengths of vocational programmes.

Providers report which qualifications in a learner's programme are considered to be main qualifications. This can be different depending on the learner. The measure only includes Access to Higher Education qualifications and qualifications approved or designated for use in Wales.

The success rate is then calculated as the number of main qualifications achieved, divided by the number of main qualifications undertaken. A learner can have multiple main qualifications in one programme. The Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate is included.

Learners not included in the analysis

Learners on apprenticeships and learners taking adult learning provided directly by local authorities are not included in the measures. They are included in the [Learner outcomes measures for work based learning and adult](#) learning report.

Learners on Junior Apprenticeships, Independent Living Skills programmes, Innovation programmes, those using Personal Learning Accounts and those who died during their learning are also not included in the measures.

Level 3 Welsh Baccalaureate and Skills Challenge Certificate

The base cohort is learners starting a Level 3 Welsh Baccalaureate in the previous academic year. The learners are then matched to the second part of the Welsh Baccalaureate and Skills Challenge Certificate in either the current or the previous academic year.

Protected characteristics

The release includes statistics on gender/sex, age, and the deprivation of a learner's home neighbourhood (LSOA) according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, the learner's ethnic background, and Free School Meal eligibility. The accompanying workbook also contains information on the impairments of learners in colleges.

Gender and sex are not collected consistently across the data sources used for this release.

The Lifelong Learning Wales Record, which collects data from colleges, records the gender of the learner. The learner indicates the gender that should be recorded and has the option to record themselves as not associating with a binary gender identity of female or male.

The Post-16 Data Collection, which collects data from sixth forms, records the sex of the learner as recognised in law. This data item was collected as 'gender' prior to 2023/24 but with the same binary categories of female and male, and a small number of pupils

may have had their gender identity recorded. Updated guidance was issued alongside the change to the variable name in 2023/24.

These two data sources are combined in this analysis to provide a full picture of general education, vocational and Welsh Baccalaureate outcomes between females and males. Users should note the differences in the variables collected when interpreting the analysis.

For learners in school sixth forms, the ethnic background information was sourced from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC).

A learner was categorised as being “ Ever eligible for Free School Meals” if they were eligible for Free School Meals at any point in secondary school. Information on Free School Meal eligibility is calculated by matching learners back to their secondary school Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) record via the Matched Education Dataset.

This means the status of learners who were not educated in Wales is unknown. Additionally, for some learners who moved to Wales during secondary school, there will be less information. Some learners will be unable to be matched to their PLASC record even if the PLASC record exists.

Information on impairments was only available in the Lifelong Learning Wales Record and could not be produced for sixth form learners. We will continue to explore ways to create a consistent measure across sixth form and college learners.

Learners undertaking multiple learning programme with the same provider

Where a learner undertakes more than one general education or vocational programme with the same provider during an academic year, the most recent learning programme undertaken is counted in the performance measures (for example changing from a four AS level programme to a three AS level programme). If a learner took a vocational and a general education programme in the same year, then that learner will show up in each measure unless it was a valid transfer.

Transfers

From 2022/23, learners who enrol on a learning programme and then transfer to another programme are not included in the measures for their first programme if:

- the programme they transferred to could be identified
- and was in the same academic year
- the programme was full time or work-based learning
- and the learner transferred to a programme of any level within the first 8 weeks, or they transferred after the first 8 weeks to the same or higher level programme
- if the transfer was to another provider it must take place within 21 days

In previous years, transfers to other providers were treated as non-completions. Transfers within providers were counted as non-completions if the transfer was to a different level, or between general and vocational education.

From 2023/24, a similar method to 2022/23 has also been applied to course transfers. Transfers are treated as a neutral outcome and are not included in the measures if:

- The course is listed as a transfer (LA31 = '4')

- It's part of a programme that met the programme transfer rules
- Or the learner has another course which did not end in a transfer:
 - a. At the same provider
 - b. Which began after the last activity ended
 - i. Or within 7 days before the end, as long as that is still after the start date
 - c. Which started within 21 days after the original activity ended
 - i. Or within 126 days (18 weeks) if the transfer was to the same reference code in the following academic year
 - d. Which was the same level or higher
 - i. Unless the transfer happened within the first 8 weeks of the original activity
 - ii. A2 to AS transfers are not allowed
 - iii. Qualification levels are based on the [Qualifications in Wales](#) dataset if available, LA22 if not. If the new activity doesn't have a defined level, the old activity must also not have a defined level
 - iv. For multi-level courses, the most generous interpretation is taken (lowest level for the original activity, the highest level for the new activity)
 - e. And if the original activity was assessable, the new activity must also be assessable
 - i. Unless the transfer happened within the first 8 week of the original activity
 - f. And if the original activity was a "main" or "core" activity (LA47 = '05' or '04') the new activity must also be a main activity.
 - i. Unless the transfer happened within the first 8 week of the original activity
- If an A level course was transferred in the second year, it is only a neutral outcome for the 2-year measures (A2 completion and grade outcomes). It would count as a non-continuation from AS to A2.
- Course transfers would also be treated as neutral in the success rate calculation for the vocational programme measures if they meet the above rules. Previously all course transfers were treated as neutral in the programme success rate.
- If a learner has been recorded as taking the same activity multiple times in a year at a provider, the activity with the latest end date will be taken. The earlier versions of the activity will be removed from the measures, whether or not they were listed as transfers.
- Transfers from multiple activities to a single activity is permitted and will be monitored closely.
- Course transfers that are treated as neutral outcomes will be monitored, in the same way as programme transfers.

The 2021/22 statistics in this release do not use the new transfer methodology and the 2022/23 course statistics do not include the new course transfer methodology.

Future work

Although these statistics are no longer labelled as experimental / in development, we will continue to improve the measures. There are known data quality issues around how school sixth form vocational data is recorded (see [Accuracy](#) section).

You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards. Feedback can be provided by email to statistics@medr.cymru. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.

Further details

This release is available at: medr.cymru

Background information on post-16 consistent measures is available from the [Hwb](#) website.

For the glossary, please refer to the main report.

Other statistical outputs using the LLWR underlying the release

- [Further education, work-based learning and community learning](#) - Statistics on enrolled learners and their activities.
- [Learner outcome measures for apprenticeships](#) – Statistics on the success and completion of apprenticeships by level of study, type of learning aim, sector, and learning characteristics.
- [Consistent performance measures for post-16 learning \(learner destinations\)](#) – Statistics on the destinations of post-16 learners in the year following their post-16 learning programme.
- [Apprenticeship learning programme started](#)
- [Progression from Year 11 to tertiary education, August 2017 to January 2025](#)

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