



Department
for Education

Early Entry

Guidance for schools

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Introduction

1. New early entry rules for key stage 4 qualifications were introduced in 2013. On 29 September 2013 the Secretary of State announced that only a pupil's first entry to a key stage 4 qualification counts towards their school's performance measures. The early entry rule applies even where qualifications are taken with one exam board and then re-taken with another or within the same series. Although this new rule does not prevent schools from entering pupils for examinations before the end of key stage 4, it aims to focus attention on whether pupils have been sufficiently prepared to achieve the very best possible outcome in that subject. Pupils can sit an examination more than once but it will be their first certificated grade in that subject that will be used for performance measures.
2. Performance data calculated on this basis will be used in RAISEonline. Ofsted will also have access to a range of data beyond the headline performance measures.
3. Pupils are still able to use their best grade when citing their results, for example, for progression to post-16 education or employment.

Reformed GCSEs in key stage 4 performance tables

4. The following bullets apply to new reformed GCSEs (Grades 9-1)
 - new GCSEs in English and mathematics will be taught from 2015 (first award 2017); in most English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and some other subjects¹ from 2016 (first award 2018); and in remaining subjects from 2017 (first award 2019)
 - as they are introduced, only the new reformed GCSEs will be included in the key stage 4 performance tables and measures
 - if pupils subsequently enter either the reformed GCSE when it is available or progress to a higher level qualification, such as an AS qualification, these results will count in the key stage 4 performance tables
 - early entry rules only apply to qualifications which count in key stage 4 performance tables, therefore an entry to an unreformed GCSE, once a reformed version has been introduced, will not count as a first entry and will not be included in performance measures
5. For further information of which academic year subjects are to be reformed please see [GCSE Reform Guide](#).

¹History, geography, chemistry, biology, physics, computer science, double science, Spanish, French, German, classical Greek, Latin, art and design, citizenship studies, dance, drama, food preparation and nutrition, music, physical education, religious studies.

Frequently asked questions

How are the performance measures affected by the early entry rules?

The early entry rules are applied to all performance measures. This includes the percentage of pupils achieving at least 5 A* to C GCSEs including English and mathematics, and the EBacc. They will also apply to the new Progress and Attainment 8 measures in 2016.

Which subjects do the early entry rules apply to?

From 2015 the early entry rules apply to all subjects which count in performance tables.

Which qualifications do the early entry rules apply to?

The changes apply to all qualifications that count in key stage 4 performance measures. You can find a list of 2014 - 2018 performance tables' qualifications under the [Methodology and technical guides section](#) of the performance tables website.

The rules also apply where a pupil takes a lower tier/level and then goes on to take a higher tier/level (eg foundation then higher tier GCSE or level 1 certificate followed by level 2 certificate).

The rules do not apply where a pupil takes a level 2 qualification and then proceeds to a level 3 qualification (eg AS qualification) before the end of key stage 4.

What happens if the pupil took qualifications before 29 September 2013?

If a pupil has certificated a qualification before 29 September 2013, performance measures record their best result from either their previous attempt(s) or from their first attempt at this qualification after 29 September 2013 (providing the qualification is on the list of qualifications which count in the year the pupil reaches the end of key stage 4).

If a pupil has not certificated a qualification before 29 September 2013, their first certificated grade is used for performance measures.

How do you define the first entry date?

The date of the first (or only) examination in a qualification is taken as the entry date. These dates are used to decide which qualification counts as the first entry. Examination dates are available from the respective exam boards. In cases where exams in the same subject are scheduled for different days in the same series, only the qualification with the earlier exam counts in performance measures.

In cases where qualifications have no formal examination date, the certification/award date or coursework deadline date is used as the examination date. Further information on these dates can be obtained from the respective exam boards.

What happens when the exams for different qualifications, but in the same subject, are on the same day?

Where examinations in the same subject are scheduled for the same day, the best result continues to count. Schools will want to think carefully about whether entering their pupils for examinations in the same subject on the same day, is in the best interests of their pupils. The Department for Education will review data on the practice of simultaneous multiple entry.

What happens if the pupil has been entered for a qualification but is unable to complete it ('X' grades)?

'X' grades do not count towards performance measures. Where a pupil has received an 'X' grade, this has been discounted and the next entry counted as the first one.

Typically, 'X' grades are awarded when pupils enter, but fail to sit for or complete the components of the qualification.

What happens if the pupil has been entered for a qualification but is unable to complete one component of the qualification?

In most cases where a pupil is unable to complete one component of the qualification, a grade is still awarded. Where a grade other than 'X' is awarded for the qualification, the entry counts towards the school's performance measures. In such cases, schools may wish to discuss with the relevant exam board whether certification is appropriate.

What happens if a pupil moved schools in years 9, 10 or 11 and had already taken a qualification?

If a pupil has previously certificated a qualification whilst enrolled at another school this grade is not counted in performance measures unless the school chooses not to re-enter the pupil.

If the school re-entered the pupil, the grade from that attempt is counted, regardless of whether it is higher or lower than the previous attempt.

What happens if the pupil took a qualification before year 9?

If a pupil has certificated a qualification more than three years before the end of key stage 4, the first entry rule does not apply. In most cases, this will apply to pupils in years 8 and below.

In these cases performance measures count either the best grade achieved either from before the three year cut-off point or the first entry after the cut-off point.

What happens if a pupil sits a private early entry qualification?

Where a qualification is certificated privately, this continues to count in the performance measures for the school at which the pupil was on roll. Schools should engage pupils and parents in constructive discussions on this issue where they feel a private early entry is inappropriate.

This also applies where a pupil sits an exam at an exam centre other than their school. That is, if a pupil sat an exam at another school's exam centre, this will still count in the results in the performance measures for the school where the pupil is on roll.

How do these rules sit alongside the rules that govern qualifications 'discounting'?

Qualifications are grouped together based on their subject content and skills. Discount codes are applied when qualifications have been grouped under the same subject area. The first entry in any group of qualifications that discount against each other will be the one that counts in performance measures. For more information on discounting please refer to the discounting guidance in the [discounting section](#) of the performance tables website.

Discounting in performance measures is also used to avoid giving credit for pupils taking sets of qualifications which cover the same material. For example, if a pupil enters for GCSE chemistry, physics and biology as well as core science (which covers all three subjects in less detail) the core science is not counted within the performance measures. These qualifications are in different subjects so do not have the same discount code and therefore fall under the exception discounting policy outlined at the above link.

The early entry rule applies even in cases where the first certificated qualification does not count as a component part of headline performance measures.

Information on the accountability measures can be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure

English

6. Pupils can either take GCSE English or two GCSEs in English literature and English language. The first qualification that is entered in the English suite of qualifications determines the 'pathway' a pupil is following.

7. For example, if a pupil sits GCSE English language early, this determines that the pupil is on the language and literature 'pathway'. Entries to GCSE English made after this point do not count, even if they are made before the entry to the literature exam.² This applies both within and over exam series. Where a student is entered for English literature they must complete the pathway by entering English Language in order for the result to be double weighted in progress 8 and count in the EBacc.

8. If a pupil sits GCSE English language in year 10 and GCSE English in year 11, the language qualification counts as the first entry. Given there is no corresponding entry for literature no grade will be entered as the English component for the school's performance measures.

9. Equally if a pupil sits GCSE English literature in year 10 or year 11 and then GCSE English in year 11, the literature qualification counts as the first entry. Given there is no corresponding entry for language no grade will be entered as the EBacc English component for the school's performance measures.

10. Under the new accountability measures (from 2016), the same logic applies. If a pupil entered for literature, then subsequently for the combined award, and did not enter for a language exam, the literature result would count in the Progress 8 measure but would not be double weighted.

11. The new reformed English language and English literature GCSEs will be the only English GCSEs that count from 2017. Early entry to unreformed English GCSEs (English literature, English language or English) in 2016 (or earlier) will not contribute towards any of the English measures in 2017 or beyond.

Mathematics

12. Pupils can either take GCSE mathematics or the linked pair GCSEs in methods in mathematics and application of mathematics. With the early entry rules it is still the case that the higher grade from either the methods in mathematics or applications of mathematics GCSE counts towards the mathematics component of the school's performance measures.

² Note that because of the way 'pathways' combine with the accountability measures here, if a pupil sat for literature then the combined award then language, the language result would count as the English component of the EBacc (because the language/literature pathway is the first one and within that the language grade counts as long as there is an entry for literature).

13. The GCSE linked pair qualification discounts against GCSE mathematics. The first qualification that is entered in the mathematics suite of qualifications determines the 'pathway' a pupil is following.

14. If a pupil entered for the GCSE methods in mathematics in November 2014 and GCSE mathematics in June 2015, then the pupil would be on the linked pair pathway and the GCSE mathematics does not count in performance measures. If the pupil did not enter for the GCSE in applications of mathematics then no grade is entered for the mathematics component of the school's EBacc measure.

15. Qualifications in additional mathematics, further mathematics and statistics do not discount against GCSE mathematics or the linked pair GCSEs, and early entry rules will not change this.

16. If a student enters only one qualification of the linked pair this will count in the mathematics slot in progress 8.

17. The new reformed mathematics GCSEs will be the only mathematics GCSEs that count from 2017. Early entry to unreformed mathematics GCSEs (methods in mathematics, application of mathematics and mathematics) in 2016 (or earlier) will not contribute towards any of the mathematics measures in 2017.

Science

18. While there are more 'pathways' for science compared to English and mathematics, discounting still works in the same way. The first qualification a pupil enters determines the 'pathway' they are on. The science 'pathways' are explained in the diagram at Annex A. Subsequent entries to qualifications do not count in performance measures if they are from a different 'pathway'.

19. Some science qualifications are not included in these 'pathways'. These are explained in the last column. This means that while they will still discount against other qualifications with the same discount code they will still count in performance measures even if taken subsequently to other science qualifications.

20. Key points are:

- for individual sciences to be counted in performance measures the first entry has to be made in one of the three separate sciences; chemistry, biology or physics. The pupil will then be on the individual science 'pathway' and all three sciences must be certificated to be used in the EBacc measure. If the pupil entered for biology and then subsequently for core science no grade will be entered for the science component of the EBacc measure however biology would count for one of the EBacc slots in progress 8

- entry to core science defines the pupil's pathway as 'core/additional science'. Once a pupil is entered for core science the only subsequent science qualifications that will count in performance measures are additional science and/or further additional science. If a pupil entered core science and then subsequently for biology, the biology grade will not be entered into performance tables
- if pupils enter for the BTEC Principles of Applied Science or the Cambridge National Certificate in Science, subsequent qualifications in any of the other pathways do not count in performance measures. Only qualifications from the 'other science qualifications' column count in such cases
- the rules governing the EBacc are unchanged. Information on EBacc subjects can be found under the [Methodology and technical guides section](#) on the performance tables website. Please find further information on science pathways at Annex A

21. Only the new GCSEs in biology, chemistry, physics and double science will count as science in the performance measures from 2017. Early entry to unreformed science GCSEs in 2017 (or earlier) will not contribute towards any of the science measures in 2018.

Annex A

Pathway 1 Individual sciences	Pathway 2 Core, additional and further additional route	Pathway 3 Double/combined science	Pathway 4 Applied science qualifications with the same discount code as core science	Other science qualifications – not a pathway All other science qualifications, including:
Physics (RC1) Biology (RH3) Chemistry (RD1) This pathway discounts against pathways 2-4	Core (RA1B) Additional (RA1C) Further Additional (RA1D) This pathway discounts against pathways 1, 3 and 4.	Qualifications with an RA1E discount code: Edexcel L1/2 Certificate AQA Level 1/2 Certificate (from 2016) This pathway discounts against pathways 1, 2 and 4.	Qualifications with RA1B that are not core science: Pearson BTEC Level 1/Level 2 First Award in Principles of Applied Science OCR Level 1/2 Cambridge National Certificate in Science This pathway discounts against pathways 1-3.	Other applied science qualifications (discount code RA14), for example: BTECs, such as the Pearson BTEC Level 2 Diploma/Extended Certificate in Applied Science OCR Level 2 National Award/Certificate in Science Applied science GCSEs Any other science qualifications, such as a GCSE in Environmental Science (QA3)

Computer science and computing GCSEs are classed as individual sciences and count towards the EBacc. GCSEs in computer science or computing do not discount against any other science qualifications. For example if a pupil takes computer science and then core, additional and further additional, all four science qualifications count in performance measures.



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