Background

The Welsh Government is working towards the introduction of a new set of performance measures for learner outcomes, which can be applied consistently where learners are studying similar programmes in school sixth forms and further education colleges. We consulted formally on this at the beginning of 2017, and confirmed that there would be three measures:

- Achievement
- Value added
- Destinations

Over the last 18 months, we have issued a series of data reports on the new measures to schools and colleges. The first national statistics on two of the three measures were published in September 2018 (see ‘Useful links’ section below).

In November 2018, we held a series of regional engagement workshops with schools, colleges and local authorities to discuss the new post-16 consistent performance measures. The workshops were organised in partnership with the regional education consortia, and were held at the following venues:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central South Consortium</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERW</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAS</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GwE</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total attendees</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The workshops focused on the value added and destinations measures, but also provided an opportunity for delegates to ask questions about any of the new measures. Estyn representatives were at each of the workshops to contribute to discussions, and to answer any questions about how inspectors would use the measures.

This report summarises the feedback from delegates, and should be read in conjunction with the workshop presentations.

Achievement

- Many of the schools who attended had not seen the achievement data issued to them via DEWi, and of those who had, some were not aware that detailed backing data had been issued to enable them to reconcile their summary reports to their own systems.
- The General Education achievement measure is designed to reflect learners’ outcomes over two years of study, thus reflecting the intended journey for the majority of learners. Delegates identified various scenarios where learners would not ‘fit’ into this pattern, for example those who leave after a year of AS study to start a vocational course. It was noted, however, that the three performance measures need to be looked at together to give the full picture (in this instance, the AS completion would be recognised, and the learner counted in the destination measure).
- The current cycles for collecting, reconciling and analysing data means that the achievement measure is scheduled for publication in February for the preceding academic year, along with the finalised value added measure (provisional value added data is issued in October/November). Schools felt that this was too late, and asked for earlier data that could be used to undertake self-evaluation and plan for improvement. Welsh Government officials agreed to explore this, but explained that the timings of the Post-16 Collection and LLWR would have to be moved forward in order to produce analysis earlier.
- Delegates asked for clarification on the Welsh Baccalaureate measures. It was confirmed that the Welsh Government intended to publish contextual data alongside achievement, to show how many learners at the school or college were enrolled on the Welsh Baccalaureate. This would be purely for context, not a performance measure in itself. It was confirmed that the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate is treated as an A level equivalent in the General Education achievement measure.
- There was some discussion around the Post-16 Collection (the annual data collection on sixth form learning programmes and activities). Compared to 2017, there has been a very high proportion of schools who have not submitted their data on time, or whose data is incorrect. The Welsh Government is giving all schools the opportunity to resubmit, and is working closely with schools and local authorities to help ensure their data is accurate. It was apparent that many schools have not seen, or are not using, the validation reports provided to them to help with data checking prior to submission.
**Value added**

- The majority of delegates had seen the value added reports issued via Aspire Analytics, but some had not. Contact information was provided for the FFT helpdesk to request passwords or password resets (post16va@fft.org.uk).

- Many schools and colleges are using other value added products, and Welsh Government officials and Estyn representatives confirmed that they should continue to use what they find most useful in their self-evaluations. They do however need to understand the ‘official’ value added measure, which will be used in inspections. It can co-exist with other systems, and schools and colleges would benefit from triangulating data from a range of sources to inform their self-evaluations.

- In general, delegates felt that the Welsh Government’s value added reporting was useful, but there were pleas from schools for it to be available earlier in the academic year.

- Colleges welcomed the planned extension of the measure to include Level 3 learners aged 19-23, which would bring significantly more learners into scope.

- Delegates from schools and colleges close to the English/Welsh border were concerned about the omission of learners who have taken their GCSEs in England (because Welsh Government and FFT do not have access to individual-level English pupil data for matching). They requested that further consideration be given to this.

- There was strong support from delegates for a target setting tool, which schools and colleges could populate with learners’ prior attainment data in order to calculate predicted grades. This would need to come with appropriate health warnings, as results may be different from the ‘official’ performance measures based on final, verified data.

- There was some concern that schools and colleges would be penalised if they did not achieve their ‘Expected’ outcomes. Officials advised that the ‘Expected’ outcomes are not targets set by Welsh Government; they show the outcomes of similar learners in the same academic year and should be used as a starting point to assess performance, alongside the other measures and local information and intelligence. Officials agreed that careful consideration needs to be given to what and how data is presented publicly, and that clear guidance accompanies it to aid interpretation.

- Delegates suggested some potential improvements to Aspire Analytics, including:
  - Selecting the user’s school or college by default in the ‘Introduction’ screen, rather than requiring selection from a drop-down before the reports will appear.
  - Adding functionality so that users can print reports on all courses with one click, rather than having to print every course separately.
  - Reviewing the use of the term ‘value added’, particularly in relation to the Total Volume of Entries (TVE) indicator.
  - Clarifying guidance and FAQs on various issues around the cohort of learners included, resits and how prior attainment is calculated.

**Destinations**

- Delegates felt that the term ‘positive destination’ is problematic. The definitions used could overlook outcomes that are positive for an individual, such as volunteering or parenthood, but conversely, could capture less favourable outcomes (such as employment on a zero hours contract). The general consensus was not to use the term ‘positive’ in the measure.

- Many delegates were concerned that identifying destinations in the year after the learning programme would miss learners who have gap years, or a period of volunteering, before progressing on to further learning. It was noted that building up longitudinal data over a number of years would provide opportunities to better track these learners’ trajectories.

- There was a general consensus that the cohort for the measure should be based on terminated, rather than completed, learning programmes. Some delegates did not like the use of the word ‘terminated’ to describe learning programmes that have ended (either because they have been completed, or because the learner has dropped out), and asked if an alternative term could be used, such as ‘closed’. It was suggested that it would be helpful to calculate headline figures on the same basis as the UK Government, to enable comparison of Wales and England.

- There were mixed views on whether an immediate destination measure should be calculated, as well as sustained destination. Some delegates felt that this would be useful, and that it would be a better indicator of institutional effectiveness than sustained destination.

- Colleges, in particular, welcomed the new data on destinations and commented that it would be useful in evaluating learner outcomes. They felt that it would fill an important gap in the information previously available to them.

- Schools had mixed views on whether destinations should be a measure of institutional effectiveness, with some feeling that it was valuable while others thought that learner destinations were not within their control. There was some appetite for using destinations as a national, rather than an institutional indicator, but no consensus on this.

- Delegates recognised the current limitations of the data on employment, which does not distinguish between full- and part-time employment, or identify whether employment is relevant to the subject studied. They were keen to have more granular data in future, including analysis of earnings.
Suggestions on future reporting of destinations included:

- Providing information on learners who do not progress into education and/or employment, i.e., the percentage identified as being unemployed/economically inactive, and the percentage not matched to HMRC/DWP records
- Breaking down Year 12 (AS) and Year 13 (A2) learners separately
- Reporting on ethnic groups
- Reporting by local authority of learners’ domicile

Suggestions on themes for further analysis and research included:

- Progression and outcomes for learners studying through the medium of Welsh
- Learners from deprived backgrounds
- Seren participants
- Higher education outcomes for learners who have achieved the Welsh Baccalaureate
- Destinations of early drop-outs (learners who left in the first eight weeks)
- Learners going to their first choice of university

Conclusion

The events provided a valuable opportunity for the Welsh Government to engage with schools and colleges, answer questions about the new performance measures, and consult on aspects of the measures. Delegates gave detailed and useful feedback about the measures and their presentation, and also raised a number of concerns and ‘unintended consequences’ that need to be factored into the continued development of the measures.

The lack of awareness of the data that has already been issued to schools is a concern, given that information has been sent directly to headteachers as well as via consortia; this highlights the need for continued work with consortia to improve communications.

Delegates had some reservations about the planned publication of performance measures at school and college level to help inform learner choice, particularly schools’ difficulties in submitting accurate data via the Post-16 Collection. They were keen to ensure that the measures are appropriately caveated, and that guidance is available to help users interpret the data and understand its limitations.

Useful links

Statistical releases: achievement and value added; destinations
Consistent performance measures summary leaflet
Consultation on consistent performance measures

For all queries relating to the performance measures: post16quality@gov.wales

For Aspire Analytics passwords: post16va@fft.org.uk