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Pocket Watch – The Government consults on 16-19 accountability

Introduction

One accountability consultation down, that for secondary schools, one due to complete early next month, that for primary schools, this latest **consultation** launched last week for 16-19 learning follows a similar pattern by defining sharper performance measures that embrace a wider range of ability. It means for instance adopting a progress measure at level 3 and completion and attainment measures for level 2. It also means providers having to meet minimum standards, show how they are closing the attainment gap and how they are meeting the needs of learners with learning difficulties. Not all proposals are new, many build on existing developments including the new criteria for 16-19 performance tables, requirements on level 2 English and maths, the piloting of destination data and the development of a Tech Bacc

What's being proposed?

Broadly the proposals set out five "top line" measures (attainment, completion, combined attainment and completion, progress and destination) plus some additional measures such as completion rates on traineeships at L2 and AAB achievement in facilitating subjects at L3.

For Level 2, measures proposed include the numbers of learners taking 'substantial' vocational qualifications, completion and attainment levels, the numbers for whom this is a higher level of study and unknown, typically NEET, as well as known destination data. Additional measures include closing the gap, defined here as core achievement for those previously eligible for the pupil premium as well as English/maths attainment and attainment in other qualifications such as Traineeships

At L3, proposals include absolute attainment measures for academic and applied qualifications using the A level and BTEC grading scales respectively, a completion and attainment measure for those taking the new Tech levels, progress, completion and destination measures generally. Additional measures also include closing the gap, here defined as L3 attainment by pupil premium learners, the numbers achieving AAB in two and three facilitating subjects, and numbers achieving the Tech Bacc and a core, yet to be launched, L3 maths qualification

Points of interest

A number of points of interest stand out. First, the continued role of performance table criteria in prescribing qualification offers. This has already happened at 14-16 and at L3 and the Government confirms it will do the same here for L2 potentially for Sept 2015: "we plan to establish an approved list of level 2 substantial vocational qualifications." Second, the issue of closing the gap, a high profile priority at present and given a noticeably prominent billing here too at both levels 2 and 3. Third, destination data, reported in various forms currently but to include NEET numbers as well. Fourth, the use of a progress measure, proposed here for L3 to show progress between KS4 and KS5 but proving too difficult at this stage to include for L2. Fifth, the development of a new combined completion and attainment measure at L2, where average point scores will be used to compare performance with the national average in a similar subject area. Sixth, a continuing focus on the facilitating subjects at A level on AAB grade achievement rather than the current entry threshold of ABB. Finally, interesting to see two other areas of current interest both proposed for the first time: L3 maths and blended learning



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