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Pocket Watch – Performance Tables Update

Introduction

One of the most important legacies of the 2011 Wolf Review have been the emerging changes to the performance table system. In a word, Wolf reflected a concern that the system of equivalencies (comparing the relative worth of one qualification with another and attaching relative values accordingly) had become at best unclear and at worst distorted. Unsurprisingly therefore the first three of her 27 recommendations called for a clearer and simpler system. The DfE in response undertook a detailed consultation last year which resulted in new technical guidelines being developed for qualifications to be included in the headline measure. These guidelines were applied earlier this year to the listing of qualifications for the 2014 performance tables and this week, we've had two further announcements: one confirming the listing for the tables for 2015, the other announcing a similar process for 16-19 vocational qualifications

The 2015 tables

This listing applies to courses being taught from Sept 2013 which will then be included in the 2015 tables. The published list includes standard qualifications already recognised such as GCSEs and some level 3 quals such as AS levels used by some schools. It also includes many vocational qualifications already approved for the 2014 tables and carrying on but also now many more vocational qualifications that have been redeveloped to meet the new criteria and have now been added to the listing for 2015, a huge chunk of which are BTECs. Given that up to two non full GCSEs can be included in the formal headline measure and given also the continuing importance being attached to offering a balanced curriculum, last week's CBI Schools Report being just the latest example, this is obviously welcome news for many schools.

Schools will still be able to offer other approved qualifications, approved in the sense that they are on the Dept's (Section 96) listing of funded qualifications. Such qualifications will be included in the overall reporting of school performance but not included in the headline measures. This is not to detract from such qualifications, indeed the Dept is keen that schools chose the qualification most suited to their pupils' needs and of course, the headline measure is just one of a range of accountability measures being applied to schools at present

16-19 developments

At the moment details here are scarce with an announcement only made this week at the AoC Conference. In this, the Skills Minister confirmed that a consultation will follow "*in the coming weeks*" and that a similar approach to that adopted for 14-16 qualifications will be applied at 16-19. This suggests consultation on developing defining characteristics which at 14-16 included such features as qualification size, volume of external assessment and progression status and suitability. Much of this has already been set by Wolf's criteria for 16-19 Programmes of Study but the significant difference between 16-19 and 14-16 is of course the immediacy of the transition either to the labour market or further study. The Minister was therefore keen that provider performance should be judged not just on the basis of traditional 'academic' qualifications but also high quality vocational qualifications and 'occupation-specific' qualifications, potentially from 2014 on



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