Contents

Introduction
Rationale
How will the performance measures be affected by the early entry rules?
Which subjects will the early entry rules apply to?
Which qualifications will the early entry rules apply to?
What happens if the pupil took the qualifications before 29 September 2013?
How do you define the first entry date?
What happens when the exams for different qualifications but in the same subject are on the same day?
What happens if the pupil has been entered for a qualification but is unable to complete it (‘X’ grades)?
What happens if the pupil has been entered for a qualification but is unable to complete one component of the qualification?
What happens if a pupil moves schools in years 9, 10 or 11 and has already taken a qualification?
What happens if the pupil took a qualification before year 9?
What happens if a pupil sits a private early entry qualification?
How do these rules sit alongside the rules that govern qualifications ‘discounting’?
Introduction

New early entry rules for key stage 4 (KS4) qualifications have been introduced. On 29 September 2013 the Secretary of State announced that, from this date, only a pupil’s first entry to a KS4 qualification counts towards their school’s performance measures. The early entry rule will apply even where qualifications are taken with one exam board and then re-taken with another. 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.

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.

Pupils will still be able to use their best grade when citing their results, for example, for progression to post-16 education or employment.
Rationale

The Department for Education submitted evidence to the Education Select Committee in summer 2013 relating to multiple entry.\(^1\) Ofqual also published data on multiple entry in August 2013.\(^2\) The DfE research concluded that the overall performance of multiple entrants is worse than that of pupils who enter only once, even when controlling for prior attainment. Multiple entry increases the time spent preparing for and taking exams, leaving teachers with less time for high quality teaching to develop pupils’ understanding of a subject.

There is evidence that the number of pupils taking qualifications multiple times has increased in recent years. The proportion of GCSE mathematics entries from pupils with multiple entries increased from 47% in 2011 to 64% in 2012, an increase of 17 percentage points.\(^3\) Data published by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) in summer 2013 showed that in 2012/13 over 94,000 year 11 pupils (15% of year 11 candidates) took mathematics GCSE at least three times.

Multiple entry is closely linked to early entry, which has also increased in recent years. JCQ data showed that between 2012 and 2013 early entry in GCSE English and English language increased by 3 percentage points (to 11% and 10% of candidates respectively). Early entry in GCSE mathematics increased by 5 percentage points in the same period, to 23% of candidates.

Research carried out by the Department for Education,\(^4\) and a report conducted by Ofsted indicate the problems with early entry.\(^5\) The DfE research found that pupils who enter early do less well than those who do not enter early, even when taking account of resits. Ofsted’s report noted that while some schools use early entry effectively, others were doing so where there was no, or limited, evidence of a positive impact on standards.

Taken together, the research provides strong evidence that some schools have used early entry to improve their standing in performance measures by ‘banking’ C grades early at the cost of the pupil achieving a higher grade if they had been permitted to take the examination later on. On average, pupils who sit examinations early and achieve a C grade or above are much less likely to re-take this examination than those with grades below C. In 2012 only 42% of early entrants with an initial C grade or above in GCSE English retook their exams whereas 86% of pupils with an initial D-G grade took their exams again. The same trend is seen in GCSE mathematics where 50% of those with an initial C grade or above re-took their exams whereas 94% of pupils with an initial D-G grade took their exams again.\(^6\)

\(^1\) Memorandum to the Education Select Committee, Multiple Entry to GCSEs, July 2013
\(^2\) Multiple entry in GCSE/IGCSE English/English language and mathematics in summer 2012, August 2013
\(^3\) Memorandum to the Education Select Committee, Multiple Entry to GCSEs, July 2013
\(^4\) Early entry to GCSE examinations, 2011
\(^5\) Schools’ use of early entry to GCSE examinations, Ofsted, March 2013
\(^6\) Memorandum to the Education Select Committee, Multiple Entry to GCSEs, July 2013
How will the performance measures be affected by the early entry rules?

The early entry rules will be applied to all performance measures. This includes the percentage of pupils achieving at least 5 A*-C GCSEs including English and mathematics, and the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). They will also apply to the new progress and attainment measures when introduced in 2016.

Which subjects will the early entry rules apply to?

2014 only – there are limited subjects affected by the new early entry rules.

The early entry rules will only apply to English Baccalaureate subjects in 2014. These subjects are:

- English (English, English language, English literature)
- mathematics
- science
- history
- geography
- modern and ancient foreign languages

For all other subjects, performance measures will continue to count the best entry a pupil has in that subject.

2015 onwards – all subjects affected.

The early entry rules will apply to all subjects which count in performance measures.

Which qualifications will 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, 2015 and 2016 performance tables qualifications in same folder as this document on the RAISEonline library.

The rules also apply where a pupil takes a lower tier/level and then goes on to take a higher tier/level (e.g. 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 (e.g. AS qualification) before the end of KS4.

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

If a pupil has certificated a qualification before 29 September 2013, performance measures will record their best result from either their previous attempt(s) or from their first attempt at this qualification after 29 September 2013.

Science qualifications which do not count as part of the EBacc and do not have the same discount code as an EBacc science qualification will not be affected until the following year; for example applied science qualifications with discount code RA14.
If a pupil has not certificated a qualification before 29 September 2013, their first certificated grade will be 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 will be used to decide which qualification counts as the first entry. Examination dates for accredited level 1/level 2 certificates 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 will count in performance measures.

In cases where qualifications have no formal examination date, exam boards will provide an official ‘entry date’ for that qualification which will be used for performance measures. This is the case for some GCSEs in dance, performing arts, art and design, and PE. It also affects BTECs and OCR’s Cambridge Nationals. Details of the way in which the changes will apply to BTECs and OCR’s Cambridge National qualifications can be found on the BTEC website and the OCR website.

We aim to use existing dates, such as coursework deadlines, when setting these ‘entry dates’. Exam boards will make this information clear as part of the information supporting individual subject entries.

**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 will continue 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)?**

As is currently the case, ‘X’ grades do not count towards performance measures. Where a pupil has received an ‘X’ grade, this will be discounted and the next entry will count 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 will count 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 moves schools in years 9, 10 or 11 and has already taken a qualification?

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

If the school decides to re-enter the pupil, the grade from that attempt will be 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 will not apply. In most cases, this will apply to pupils in years 8 and below.

In these cases performance measures will 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 will continue to count in the performance measures for the school at which the pupil is on roll. Schools will need to engage pupils and parents in constructive discussions on this issue where they feel a private early entry is inappropriate.

This will also apply where a pupil sits an exam at an exam centre other than their school. That is, if a pupil sits an exam at another school’s exam centre, we will still count 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 guidance on the RAISEonline library, located in the same folder as this document.

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 would not be 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 will apply even in cases where the first certificated qualification does not count as a component part of headline performance measures.
Information on the new accountability measures can be found here:

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

English

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. 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 will not count, even if they are made before the entry to the literature exam.\(^8\)

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.

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

Mathematics

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.

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.

If a pupil entered for the GCSE methods in mathematics in November 2013 and GCSE mathematics in June 2014, then the pupil would be on the linked pair pathway and the GCSE mathematics would not count in performance measures. If the pupil did not enter for the GCSE in applications of mathematics then no grade would be entered for the mathematics component of the school’s performance measures.

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.

Science

\(^8\) 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 performance tables (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).
While there are more ‘pathways’ for science compared to English and maths, the discounting will work in the same way. The first qualification a pupil enters will determine the ‘pathway’ they are on. The science ‘pathways’ are explained in the diagram below. Subsequent entries to qualifications will not count in performance measures if they are from a different ‘pathway’.

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.

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 performance measures. If the pupil entered for biology and then subsequently for core science no grade would be entered for the science component of the performance measures.
- 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 would 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 will not count in performance measures. Only qualifications from the ‘other science qualifications’ column will count in such cases.
- The rules governing the EBacc are unchanged. Information on EBacc subjects can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-baccalaureate-eligible-qualifications

Please find further information on science pathways below.
### Pathway 1
**Individual sciences***
- Core, additional and further additional route

### Pathway 2
**Core, additional and further additional route**
- Core (RA1B)
- Additional (RA1C)
- Further Additional (RA1D)

### Pathway 3
**Double/combined science**
- Qualifications with an RA1E discount code:
  - Edexcel L1/2 Certificate
  - AQA Level 1/2 Certificate (from 2016)
- This pathway **discounts against pathways 1, 3 and 4.**

### Pathway 4
**Applied science qualifications with the same discount code as core science**
- 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 science qualifications – not a pathway
- All other science qualifications, including:
  - 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)

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* Computer Science and Computing GCSEs are classed as individual sciences and will 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 will be counted in performance measures.

**Pathways started before 29 September 2013.**

Any qualification taken before 29 September 2013 will not be used to start a pathway.

For example if a pupil took GCSE English language in summer 2013 and GCSE English in autumn 2013, and a GCSE English literature in summer 2014 then the best entry from either pathway would be included in the appropriate performance measures.