

Government Announcement: Performance Points

The Department for Education has announced new performance criteria that will be applied to qualifications approved for pre 16 learners to contribute to the School Performance tables. The full announcement is available via the following link,
<http://www.education.gov.uk/a00202885/performancejan12>.

The criteria will apply to all Awarding Organisations' qualifications that contribute to the Performance Tables that will be published from 2014 so if centres are starting 2 year courses this September then qualifications that no longer meet the criteria will not count for that year onwards.

NOCN has considered all its qualifications approved for pre 16 learners that currently carry performance points against the new criteria and as the qualifications are not graded, and most do not have an external assessment, they would not count in the tables in 2014 but, up until then, the current standing is that they will make a contribution.

NOCN qualifications for pre-16 teaching may still be offered to learners as they are accredited by Ofqual for pre-16 teaching, but will no longer count in Performance Tables. NOCN has focused its pre-16 qualifications on learners up to Level 1 within Foundation Learning for whom the traditional GCSE route is not applicable at this current stage in their development.

NOCN qualifications help to develop personal and social development skills which are vital in enabling learners to progress to further vocational or academic study or the world of work. Some of the qualifications, such as our popular 'Step Up' suite of qualifications, give learners the opportunity to undertake vocational tasters to help them to identify potential vocational routes for further study. Others are small Award size qualifications which may be used to motivate learners to progress further by accrediting 'bite-size' chunks of learning, especially important where learners have previously had little or no success at school.

All qualifications on the list of qualifications which count towards the Performance Tables must have a strong element of externally set and marked assessment and synoptic assessment which may be internally marked, but is externally set. Feedback from a large majority of our pre-16 providers has indicated that they do not want to move from the flexible internally set and marked assessment model, which applies to all NOCN QCF qualifications in the pre-16 market.

Although the NOCN qualifications for pre-16 learners will not appear on the 2014 Performance Tables, we firmly believe that they are high quality, trusted and reliable qualifications, valued by employers, teachers and learners alike for developing personal and social skills and preparing learners for the world of work.



It is anticipated that NOCN will undertake a further review to consider whether the qualifications could be amended to meet the criteria but at the forefront of any decision will be whether the changes would benefit or potentially disadvantage learners. For example if the objective of the qualification is giving learners personal growth and engagement in learning then it may not be appropriate to introduce a formal externally set and marked assessment.

An initial response from some of our centres is that they will continue to offer NOCN qualifications, such as the suite of Step-UP qualifications, regardless as to whether they carry performance points or not as they see the benefit of the qualification in terms of engagement, attainment and/or progression and the performance points have only made a nominal contribution to the Performance tables.

It should be noted that the Department of Education has stated that:

“Schools will remain free to offer any other qualification accredited and approved for study by 14- to 16-year-olds. Teachers will still be able to use their professional judgment to offer the qualifications which they believe are right for their pupils.”

The key criteria, therefore, regarding whether a qualification is approved for study for pre 16s is that it is approved by Ofqual for the age group and is approved on Section 96 (Learning and Skills Act) for the age group which can be checked by searching for the qualification via the following link <http://www.education.gov.uk/section96/search/search.cfm>.

Colleagues in our network of OCNs will be pleased to work with you to identify how NOCN qualifications may be used with learners who need to acquire the skills that will better equip them for life, further study and employment.

Should you require any assistance or want to give us your views please do not hesitate to contact us at nocn@nocn.org.uk .

