

Revisions to Skills for Life Volumes in the December 2009 Statistical First Release

Date of issue 17 December 2009

Publication intent PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Background

Table 5 of the December 2009 Post -16 Education & Skills Statistical First Release (SFR) reports learner volumes for participation and achievement in Skills for Life qualifications for the years 2005/06 to 2008/09.

In this release, the volumes reported for 2005/06 to 2007/08 are substantially revised from those reported in the October 2009 SFR. This revision is due to clarifying the definitions used to count Skills for Life qualifications. Each of these clarifications is discussed in detail in this paper.

Additionally, table 5.2, which reports accumulated achievements in qualifications that count towards the 2010 Skills for Life target, has been revised in line with the revised definitions discussed in this paper. A separate paper has been published explaining how the Skills for Life 2010 target has been calculated. This document can be found at [http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/5DCCC3EB-024D-40EF-8E2C-0E63A443615D/0/Skills for Life 2010 SFR Target business definition.pdf](http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/5DCCC3EB-024D-40EF-8E2C-0E63A443615D/0/Skills_for_Life_2010_SFR_Target_business_definition.pdf)

Issue 1. Work-based Learning (WBL) Participation & Achievements

In tables 1.2, 2.2 and 3.2 of the December SFR Apprenticeship achievements are reported for each year by counting frameworks achieved within the academic year. The date a learner completes the framework is used to ensure only frameworks finished within each academic year are reported for each year. Learners participating in apprenticeship programmes are counted accurately for each year by ensuring the framework learning aims were reported as 'in learning' for any period of the academic year.

Achievements in Skills for Life qualifications in WBL are counted from the non-framework aims that make up apprenticeships programmes e.g. NVQs, key skills and basic skills etc. These qualifications are not necessarily achieved in the same

year as the full framework but all components of the framework are recorded in the ILR for each year as the framework continues.

Skills for Life volumes in SFRs published prior to December 2009 did not ensure that all the aims reported in each WBL ILR collection were achieved or participated in the actual academic year of the collection. This means previously reported volumes of participating and achieving learners were exaggerated by counting each Skills for Life learning aim in each year it was reported in the ILR, regardless of whether it was active for each year.

Note – This concept only applies to WBL programmes and it is not necessary to check that learning aims recorded in the FE, ACL and Ufl collections actually participated/achieved in the relevant year. They would not be recorded in the ILR if they had not.

The December 2009 SFR reports WBL volumes Skills for Life volumes with the additional condition that each participating and achieved aim was actually participating in or finished during the academic year.

The effect of this change is to reduce the number of participating and achieving learners reported for 2005/06 to 2007/08. Each participating aim and achievement is now only counted for the relevant year. The scale of this revision compared to volumes reported in the October 2009 SFR is shown in Table 1 of this paper.

Table 1 Effect on SfL Learner Volumes due to WBL revision

	Learner Volumes				
	Participation	% decrease of Oct 09 SFR		% decrease of Oct 09 SFR	
		Total	Achievement	Total	
2005/06	-27,800	1.9%	-31,100	3.0%	
2006/07	-36,900	2.8%	-38,300	4.5%	
2007/08	-39,900	3.0%	-40,500	4.8%	

This section has focused on the effect of this change in table 5. The Skills for Life rows of tables 1-3 of the December SFR have also been revised to include this change.

The 2008/09 WBL Skills for Life volumes reported in table 5 of the October SFR were reported correctly and have not been affected by this revision.

Issue 2. Achievements in Literacy and Numeracy at Levels 1 and 2

In addition to overall volumes of learners participating and achieving in Skills for Life learning aims, table 5 of the December 2009 SFR also reports the volume of these learners by level (entry, level 1 and level 2) and Skills for Life type (numeracy, literacy and language).

GCSE achievements in literacy and numeracy may be regarded as level 1 or level 2 according to the grade achieved. A learner achieving a grade A* - C is classed as a level 2 achievement. All other achievements should be classed as level 1.

Note – this distinction in the grade achieved does not affect how GCSEs are reported for participation – all are counted as level 2.

The volumes of learners reported as Level 1 and Level 2 literacy and numeracy achievements in the October 2009 SFR have been revised in the December 2009 SFR to consistently reflect this definition.

This revision can be summarised by the following:

- Reporting GCSEs in Maths/English Language at grades D-G as level 1 numeracy and literacy achievements.
- Only reporting GCSEs in Maths/English Language at grades A*-C as level 2 numeracy and literacy achievements. Although previously some GCSEs at grades D-G were included as level 1, they were also double counted as level 2 achievements.
- Changing the way grades are classified to include all possible variants of A*-C (including double award GCSE grades etc.) so that no eligible grades are missed out.

The Data Service intend to publish the complete syntax used to produce the December SFR and this will include the implementation of these definitions.

The classification of GCSEs is handled in a separate way in 2005/06 collections as the field used to identify Basic Skills type includes a separate value for GCSEs achieved at grade A*-C to those achieved as lower grades. Therefore this revision has only been applied to the years 2006/07-2008/09. The scale of this revision compared to volumes reported in the October 2009 SFR is shown in Table 2 of this paper. This revision is independent to the WBL revision described earlier in this paper and mostly applies to FE and Learner Responsive provision.

Table 2 1 Effect on L1/L2 Literacy and Numeracy Learner Volumes due to definition change

Achievement - Learner Volumes				
	Level 1 Numeracy	% increase of Oct 09 SFR Total	Level 2 Numeracy	% increase of Oct 09 SFR Total
2006/07	+15,800	7.5%	-15,700	-8.7%
2007/08	+16,100	7.4%	-15,800	-8.1%

	Level 1 Literacy	% increase of Oct 09 SFR Total	Level 2 Literacy	% increase of Oct 09 SFR Total
2006/07	+500	0.2%	-10,000	-4.4%
2007/08	+500	0.2%	-10,100	-4.2%

Summary

In summary, there are two distinct changes made to the way Skills for Life volumes are counted in the December 2009 SFR.

Work-based learning participation and achievement volumes have been revised downwards to ensure all included learners participated or achieved in the year of reporting.

Volumes for achievements in levels 1 and 2 of literacy and numeracy have been revised with a clarified definition for GCSEs.

These revisions are the final revisions to these statistics for 2005/06 to 2007/08.

The count of accumulated achievements in qualifications that count towards the 2010 Skills for Life target has also been revised following an evaluation of the methodology used.

Further technical information has also been published, describing in full the methodology used to count Skills for Life volumes. More information can be found at <http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/statistics/>