



Department
for Education

2016 16 to 18 Performance Tables Discounting Guidance for Schools and Colleges

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Introduction

Discounting is an important part of the performance tables as it defines when the performance points of a qualification are discounted against another qualification.

This document is an introduction to the subject of discount codes and families. It does not provide a comprehensive list of discount codes and families for all qualifications, nor does it consider the background to the development of the coding system.

From 2014, due to reforms to the secondary performance tables, the discounting process for key stage 4 and 16 to 18 performance tables differs. This document only contains guidance on qualification discounting for the 16 to 18 performance tables. A similar guidance document is available for key stage 4.

The performance points are only used to measure the performance of schools and colleges in England. The discounting system affects the performance measures of a school or college in the performance tables, but does not affect the awards an individual student has achieved.

Discount codes may be updated at any time during the year to improve the quality of discounting. This can affect the current cycle without prior notice.

Why we need discounting

Discounting is primarily about ensuring that where a student has taken more than one qualification in the same subject area, the performance tables only give credit once for teaching a single course of study.

Discounting may be required in a number of situations:

- a. A student resits a qualification before the end of advanced level study, possibly with a different awarding organisation. Discounting then ensures that only the best result is counted in the performance tables.
- b. A larger qualification incorporates several smaller qualifications within it. Many of the vocational qualifications are structured in this way. Discounting ensures that only the overarching (largest) qualification counts toward the school or college performance measures.
- c. The school or college provides a single course of study but then enters the students for two or more very similar qualifications. Discounting ensures that the achievement from this course is counted only once.

Can a student do several qualifications which discount?

Discounting only applies to schools and colleges, not to the qualifications achieved by students. There are a number of educational reasons why a student might undertake several qualifications which discount each other. A common one would be in order to recognise their progression through a course of study, for example taking an AS level before progressing to an A level in the same subject.

Which qualifications discount?

Discounting is only applied to those qualifications which count in the performance tables. From 2016 the vocational qualifications which are included have been restricted to high value qualifications which meet pre-defined characteristics. The lists of vocational qualifications that will count in the 2016 performance tables can be found here: [vocational qualifications for 14 to 19 year olds](#). The qualifications are split in to two categories; tech levels and applied generals.

Two qualifications will discount if they are in the same discounting family and have the same discount code. They will not discount if they have the same discount code but belong to different discounting families. Discounting can occur across categories, for example if a tech level and an applied general have the same discount code and are in the same discounting family. Further information and examples can be found in the Discounting section of the Technical Guidance.

Due to new allocation rules in the 2016 performance tables, outcomes will be reported against one, two or three providers, reflecting the study and achievements with the provider in that year. Discounting will only be applied to the qualifications taken within each provider rather than across providers if the student has moved. However there will be no changes to the way discounting is applied to local authority and national averages¹.

In previous years discounting only took place across results from the latest two years. However from 2016 performance tables, discounting will take place across results from the latest three years.

On occasion, additional discounting is required to deal with more complex combinations of subjects. This is known as Exception Discounting.

¹ Discounting at local authority level will take place across providers in the same local authority, not across local authorities.

Discounting families

The discounting family describes the nature of the qualification; for example whether it is an A level, a vocational qualification or an International Baccalaureate Diploma. Qualifications in different discounting families do not discount against each other.

[Annex A - 16 to 18 performance tables discounting families](#) shows the six discounting families for 16 to 18 performance tables.

Discount codes

A qualification is assigned a discount code on the basis of the subject area it covers. The purpose of a discount code is to gather qualifications with similar content together and compare them to the other qualifications with that code.

Only qualifications that contribute to the performance tables are allocated discount codes. Qualifications at level 4 and above are not given discount codes as they fall outside the scope of the performance tables.

From 2014, there are distinct discount codes for key stage 4 and 16 to 18 performance tables. This is due to reforms to the secondary performance tables and will result in some qualifications, such as AS levels, having one discount code for key stage 4 and another for 16 to 18.

Principles of discounting

Once two or more qualifications are known to have the same discount code and belong to the same discounting family the following principles are applied to determine which one is discounted.

- i. Where a larger qualification incorporates another (e.g. has modules or units in common), the smaller is not counted (even if the larger qualification has less points). For example, where a student has gained an AS en route to an A level, in the same subject, only the A level result will count. However, if a student fails to obtain a pass grade at A level, an AS pass grade would be reported.
- ii. Where a student has more than one qualification of the same size and level, credit will be given to the one with the highest point score.
- iii. If there are still two or more qualifications that could be counted one is selected randomly; however, please also see paragraph [Discounting for A level cohort indicators](#).

Exception discounting

There are, on occasion, situations where assigning discounting families and discount codes are not sufficient to achieve accurate discounting. In these circumstances rules about specific qualifications are applied. This is referred to as exception discounting.

Exception discounting applies in the following circumstances:

- Use of Mathematics and Free Standing Mathematics Qualifications
- GCE AS and A level Mathematics qualifications
- International Baccalaureate and IB components

The information below provides a basic overview of the exception discounting process. If you require more detailed information for a specific situation then please use the contact details under the section [Where to get more information](#).

Use of mathematics and Free Standing Maths Qualifications (FSMQs)

The AS and A level Use of Mathematics is made up of a combination of level 3 FSMQs and core units that are not qualifications in their own right. Therefore, if the Use of Mathematics qualification is positively graded then the FSMQs will be discounted. The FSMQs will only count in the performance tables if the AS/A level Use of Maths qualification is unclassified; the AS/A level size will be counted in the 16 to 18 performance tables but the points will be taken from the FSMQs

GCE AS and A level mathematics qualifications

In the 16 to 18 performance tables the following AS qualifications will be discounted if they were achieved en route to an A level in General Mathematics: Maths (Mechanics), Maths (Pure), Maths (Discrete), Maths (Applied) and Maths (Statistics). Maths (General) is already discounted under the normal discounting rules.

International Baccalaureate and IB components

In the 16 to 18 performance tables, if the International Baccalaureate is a pass, all components are discounted on both size and points and only the baccalaureate is counted.

If the International Baccalaureate is a fail, then the baccalaureate points are discounted and the size counted, and the points for the components are counted and their sizes discounted.

If there is no International Baccalaureate result then the component results and sizes are counted.

For more information on how discounting works for these qualifications please use the contact details under the section [Where to get more information](#) .

The International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme (IBCP) is made up of a core consisting of four components, a career-related study and a minimum of two IB Diploma courses. The career related qualification can be taken with any awarding organisation. Where more than one career related qualification has been taken by a student we are unable to confidently identify qualifications which should count towards the IBCP. For this reason only the results of accredited component qualifications within the IBCP are reported, rather than the certificate itself.

Discounting for A level cohort indicators

For the introduction of a new group of A level-only cohort indicators in the 2012 16 to 18 performance tables, a new discounting approach was introduced to avoid a Pre-U discounting an A level result. Qualification discounting normally takes place within the same subject area and within the same family of qualifications. As A levels are in the same discounting family as the Pre-U qualification, it would have been possible for a Pre-U to discount an A level. The new discounting method prevents this.

Where to get more information

If you require further information about specific scenarios, please contact the department at [contact us helpline](#). It is helpful if you can provide as much information about the qualifications as possible, including the 8 digit alpha-numeric qualification number. This can be found on Ofqual's 'Register of Regulated Qualifications' website: [regulated qualifications register](#).

Some 'Frequently Asked Questions' are given below.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1 What is the impact of discounting on a student's results?

A1 The discounting system described here has no impact on any student – it is about measuring the performance of the school or college. If qualifications do discount each other this will reflect on the school or college's score in the performance tables but does not affect the qualifications the student has achieved.

Q2 How do I find out the discount code and discounting family for a qualification?

A2 Discount codes and discounting families for 16 to 18 performance tables have been published on the [performance tables website](#). Please note that discount codes are not published for qualifications reported prior to 2018 performance tables. Please use the contact details under the section [Where to get more information](#) quoting the qualification number for discount codes prior to 2018.

Q3 Two qualifications in the same subject area require different skills or knowledge, why do they discount?

A3 The purpose of discounting is to prevent double counting of qualifications. When dealing with vocational qualifications, those awards whose units contribute to a larger award have been gathered together and allocated the same code as the larger qualification where this seems reasonable to do so. This means that schools and colleges will correctly receive the points for the largest qualification and not for all the smaller awards as well. By making sure that the largest appropriate qualification has been claimed the school or college will receive recognition for the teaching they have delivered.

Q4 The specification from the Awarding Organisation (AO) has a classification code on it. Is this the same as the discount code?

A4 Discount codes are determined by the Department for Education and while the code given on the AO specification may match the discount code allocated this is not a formal record of the code. To check whether two qualifications discount please contact the department using the contact details under [Where to get more information](#).

Q5 Two qualifications have different Barring Classification Codes on the Ofqual Register, but they have discounted in the 16 to 18 performance tables.

A5 Diploma Barring Classification Codes and discount codes are two different things, although they may look similar. Barring Codes are about whether a student can use a qualification to claim their Diploma. Discount codes reflect whether a school or college should be awarded performance tables points for their teaching of the two qualifications. The performance tables are derived only from discount codes, which are not currently available on the Register.

Q6 Can a subject discount code change?

A6 Yes, the department reserves the right to make changes to individual discount codes without prior notice to improve the quality of discounting. Such changes can take place during the current cycle.

Annex A – 16 to 18 performance tables discounting families

General	General Vocational	AEA	Vocationally related	Free Standing Maths	Other General
GCE A Level	Applied GCE A level Double Award	Advanced Extension Award	VRQ Level 3*	Level 3	International Baccalaureate
GCE AS level	Applied GCE A level		BTEC Diploma		Other General qualifications L3
Diploma Extended Project	Applied GCE AS level Double Award		BTEC Certificate		
Pre U Diploma	Applied GCE AS level		BTEC Award		
Pre U Principle Subject	Applied GCE A level / AS combined		OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Certificate		
Pre U Short Course Subject			OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Diploma		
Principal Learning (Diploma) Level 3			OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Extended Diploma		
Core Maths (Level 3)			OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Introductory Diploma		
			OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Subsidiary Diploma		

*Please note that Level 3 VRQs can be of a variety of sizes and may therefore be equivalent to or smaller than other qualifications in the same discounting family.



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