Modern Apprenticeship Statistics

User Guide

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Introduction

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) has been a producer of Official Statistics since December 2019. We produce and publish statistics in accordance with the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for Statistics and other relevant guidance. By doing this we endeavour to ensure public confidence in the statistics we produce, in terms of their quality, trustworthiness and value – the three pillars of the Code.

What is available

The following reports currently make up our suite of Official Statistics publications:

- Modern Apprenticeships
- Employability Fund
- Other skills initiatives
- Participation Measure

These are all available via our [corporate website](#), which is updated regularly and includes additional useful statistics, currently not classed as Official Statistics.

Modern Apprenticeships

Every quarter, SDS publishes key statistics relating to the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programme. The information within the reports includes the volume of:

- New Starts
- Leavers
- Individuals in Training
- Achievements
- % Achievement rates

The figures published in each report are for the **year to date** and are accompanied by additional, more detailed, breakdowns in separate supplementary tables.

In the main reports, data is presented for the whole of Scotland and is broken down by age, SCQF level, occupational grouping, and framework. We also publish some of this data at Local Authority level, available in our supplementary tables.

Equality

Published data is split by gender, disability, ethnicity, and care experience.

Ad-hoc Requests

Ad-hoc requests are reviewed routinely. Where there are regular queries for additional data, we will look to determine the possibility of publishing this, to ensure that the information we produce is of most value to users.

Data Sources

Official Statistics published by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) are derived from data in administrative systems hosted by SDS:

- Financial and Information Processing Systems (FIPS) – for any data on or after 1st April 2019 and
- Corporate Training Systems (CTS) – for any data prior to 1st April 2019.

Definitions

Starts

In 2019, revisions were made to MA start calculations and took effect on April 1st, that year. The changes primarily relate to the timescales for counting new starts and to accommodate any movement between frameworks:

- Timescales for counting re-entrants as new starts were extended to **three calendar years** from their previous leaving date, as opposed to eight weeks from their previous leaving date.
- MA progressions within three calendar years from their previous leaving date are now counted as a new start if the higher-level framework is **different** to the previous framework. All MA progressions were previously discounted from new start volumes if they had progressed within eight weeks of their previous leaving date.
- MA re-entrants to a **different** framework, within three calendar years of their previous leaving date, are now counted as a new start. All MA re-entrants were previously discounted from new start volumes if they had re-entered within eight weeks of their previous leaving date, regardless of the framework.

> These changes were made to accommodate a new way of working following the introduction of a new system. This allows Training Providers to manage their contacts with SDS more efficiently as they now have real time contract volume information. We are unable to quantify the impact of this change on the reported figures. Reports published prior to when the changes were implemented **have not** been retrospectively updated.

As of 1st April 2023, **all MA progressions** are now included as new starts.

Modern Apprentices are now counted as a **new start** if the following conditions are met:

1. The participant is a first-time entrant with no prior engagement in a Modern Apprenticeship
2. The participant is starting a different Modern Apprenticeship framework within three calendar years of leaving their previous Modern Apprenticeship.
3. The participant is starting a different and higher-level framework from their previous Modern Apprenticeship.
4. The participant is starting the same Modern Apprenticeship framework at any level greater than their previous Modern Apprenticeship.

Leavers

In 2019, revisions were also applied to MA leaver calculations. **All leavers are now counted**. Prior to April 1st, 2019, some leavers were excluded from calculations if the MA re-entered training within eight weeks of their previous leaving date, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Capturing Leaver data

Prior to 1st April 2019		From 1st April 2019	
Included	**Exceptions**	**Included**	**Exceptions**
MAs where a leaving date was entered within the stated period of the report and had not re-joined the programme in 8 weeks. An exception to the above rule was where an MA achieved and progressed to a higher-level MA. The leaver was counted regardless of re-start timescale.	Leavers with the following leaver reasons were excluded: • Maternity / Paternity • Redundancy • Business ceased trading • Death • Admin Error	Those who have completed the Modern Apprenticeship, have been awarded an MA Certificate and are recorded as a leaver Those who have not completed the Modern Apprenticeship and are recorded as a leaver.	Leavers with the following leaver reasons continue to be excluded: • Maternity / Paternity • Redundancy • Business ceased trading • Death • Admin Error

In Training

When we refer to Modern Apprentices who are in training, we mean any MA approved as a start, prior to the end of the current reporting period, where no leaving details have been entered.

Achievements as a % of all Leavers

The achievement rate is calculated by:

Number of achievements divided by the number of leavers

Note: There may be fewer leavers than achievements displayed against a few frameworks resulting in the current year achievement rate exceeding 100%. This occurs when leaver

information has been entered and counted in the previous financial year, but the achievement has only been approved and counted in the current financial year.

MA Frameworks and Local Authorities

Where there is an update to an MA Framework, only MAs registered on FIPS against the new MA framework are counted against this. In most cases, MAs will remain on the MA Framework they were originally registered against until completion. There are, however, a few exceptions to this rule.

The Local Authority is based on the trainee home address, as recorded by the Training Provider. Postcode information is checked as part of our data integrity phase prior to creating any reports.

Comparisons over time and between areas

MA reports are available from 2008/09, however, reported age groups and levels have changed over time, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: MA reports - available information

Year	Age Group	Levels
2008/09	16-19 and 20+	Level 3+
2009/10 to 2011/12	16-19 and 20+	Level 2 and Level 3+
2012/13 to 2017/18	16-19, 20-24 and 25+	Level 2, 3, 4 and 5
2018/19 to present	16-19, 20-24 and 25+	VQ level 3, 4 and 5 and SCQF level 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

The majority of VQs were aligned to SCQF levels in 2017/18, to support a transition to reporting MA statistics by SCQF level from Q1 2018/19. Through time, there will be no starts, in training, achievement or leaver data at VQ level as frameworks are fully transitioned to SCQF levels.

Data Quality

Pre-announcing Changes

All changes made to recording, definitions and methodology will be pre-announced on the SDS website at the earliest possible time and will include the date the change will come into effect. A record will then be kept, clearly stating the nature of the change and rationale for its implementation.
In addition, any changes will be clearly stated in the first published report, following implementation of the change, with relevant sections of the report highlighted to ensure transparency.

Financial and Information Processing System (FIPS)

FIPS is the system used by SDS to capture apprenticeship data.
All data is entered and maintained in FIPS by organisations contracted with SDS to deliver Modern Apprenticeships.

Activities include:
- Input of MA start information and records maintenance throughout period of training
- Claims processing
- Recording of leaving details

A number of controls are in place within FIPS to ensure the integrity of the data. These controls include but are not limited to:
- Rules to ensure that the apprentice is only on one programme and active on one assignment at any given time
- Rules to flag as New Starts, Progressions, Re-entrants – only new starts are currently counted within Official Stats (further manual checks are performed by the reporting team prior to signing off data sets)
- When a MA is approved on FIPS an e-mail is sent to the individual to confirm they have commenced an MA. This must be responded to within 30 days, or the assignment is rejected and the application on FIPS must be restarted.
- An e-mail is sent when an e-mail address is added or changed in FIPS and the individual must verify.
- There are many system controls in place to ensure accuracy (e.g. mandatory fields, links with SQA) and to ensure individuals have started and making progress. (e.g. e-mail validation)
- There are also business rules in the data warehouse to support accurate reporting and this is reviewed by the FIPS Reporting Team prior to utilisation within reports. Remove human error.

Data integrity checks are made by SDS on an ongoing basis. Final checks are completed, and any anomalies are investigated, prior to the production of the statistical reports.

Production of the statistical report

Following the completion of the data validation checks a small number of analysts are given access to the data to produce the quarterly statistical reports. SDS uses Power BI to automate the analysis process to minimise the need for manual calculations. Figures that are transposed from Power BI into the statistical report are then subject to a quality assurance process. This process includes quality assuring the tables and charts produced and ensuring the supported commentary provides value and insight to the user.

Pre-release

A short list of people is given privileged access to the report for quality assurance purposes 5 working days prior to publication. During this pre-release period further quality assurance checks are undertaken by those who have not been involved in the production process.

Data Limitations

Whilst the data produced goes through many levels of quality assurance there are several limitations which are beyond our control. For example:

- We are reliant on apprentices to accurately self-report equality characteristics

- We are also reliant on Training Providers inputting data promptly and accurately into FIPS

SDS aims to combat these limitations where possible. Measures and checks have been implemented to minimise the likelihood of incomplete data or erroneous data entry.

Disclosure

Whilst our aim for our statistical reports is to provide as much detail as possible to ensure that they have a high level of utility, it is also important that we ensure that apprentices cannot be identified from any published data or statistics.

To ensure confidentiality, disclosure control is applied where figures are less than 5 or where such small numbers can be identified through differencing.

As part of our ambition to continuously improve the integrity of our reported data and to best represent the diversity of apprentices, we regularly review how we present equality data in our reports.

At the start of 2021/22, to ensure that we enable apprentices to record their gender in the most appropriate way for them and to enable us to report this, we amalgamated responses against 'prefer not to say' and 'in another way' and have included them within figures and tables under the heading "Multiple". This has helped us to publish a complete dataset while protecting Modern Apprentices. Where gender breakdowns are provided in the report, apprentices selecting 'prefer not to say' or 'in another way' will be excluded until volumes are high enough to ensure that individual confidentiality is maintained. At the start of 2022/23, we have paused this practice to simplify the Modern Apprenticeship report for the user.

Revisions & Corrections

Revisions

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) aims to avoid the need for revisions to statistical releases unless they are deemed to be necessary. As our statistical releases are published in final form only, without provisional release stages, they are not subject to any scheduled revisions. However, where a revision is deemed necessary, we ensure that we effectively communicate this.

When dealing with revisions, SDS will

- Ensure that users are made aware of any revisions to our data and detail the reasons for, and the likely significance of, the change where applicable.

Corrections

All our reports go through multiple levels of quality assurance and whilst we do what we can to limit errors, they occasionally may occur. When errors in statistical releases are identified SDS will take the following action:

An assessment will be undertaken of the materiality of the error to the users' interpretation of the statistics.

1. If the error is deemed to be minor, and does not change the meaning of the statistics, the affected area will be clearly labelled at the front of the report and the error will be corrected as soon as possible by a re-issue of the release.
2. If the error is deemed to be more serious then, the necessary stakeholders will be notified, and a notification published on our website informing users of the error. The affected area will be clearly labelled at the front of the report and the error corrected as soon as possible by a re-issue of the release.

Enquiries

We welcome all feedback. Please contact user_feedback@sds.co.uk if you have any comments or questions regarding this document or our published reports.