Department for Education

Condition Funding Allocations: how the models meet the Aqua Book guidance on producing quality analysis for government

This document provides information on the quality assurance processes applied to the models used to calculate the School Condition Allocations, and on how these processes meet the guidelines set out in the Aqua Book guidance on producing quality analysis for government.

Model names Description

School Condition Allocations – SQL and spreadsheet calculations.

Description

The purpose of the models is to calculate annual allocations School Condition Allocations (SCA) to bodies responsible for school buildings ('responsible bodies').

The allocations for local authorities, voluntary-aided partnerships, multi-academy trusts and sponsors, non-maintained special schools and specialist post-16 providers, together with funding allocated to academies and sixth-form colleges through the Condition Improvement Fund, are made via School Condition Allocations. In February 2015, indicative allocations totalling £1.2bn a year for each of 2015–16, 2016–17 and 2017–18 were announced. This year's models update the allocations for 2017–18 based on new and closed schools and those school moving between responsible bodies.

The School Condition Allocation consists of three strands:

1. A core condition component based on pupil numbers. These are taken from the January school census or the Individualised Learner Record (adjusted to reflect type and location of schools);
2. A high condition need component reflecting that some responsible bodies have disproportionately high condition needs (as identified by the Property Data Survey), given their size based on pupil numbers; and
3. A floor protection so that no responsible body received less than 80% of the funding it received in the 2014–15 maintenance allocations in 2015–16; and any reductions in 2017–18 will be the result of changes to the schools which the body is responsible for e.g. closures, opening schools, academy conversions.

The models are SQL based and moderately complex. They incorporate data from a range of sources, including a number of unpublished administrative sources.

Why models are business critical

They distribute capital funding totalling £1.2bn for 2017–18.

Published: April 2017

Summary of quality assurance

The development was overseen by the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) and the quality assurance process was overseen by the analytical assurer. There were the following strands to the quality assurance:

- Policy decisions and assumptions: *e.g.* The SRO signed off the decision/assumptions log and the model technical specifications and the analysts demonstrated where each decision was applied in the model;
- Data inputs: *e.g.* data inputs were sense checked and assurance was provided by the relevant senior civil servant (or explicitly delegated to another responsible official);
- Validation: Analysts talked through the whole models with the policy leads to show the methodology was applied correctly; changes in the allocations since last year were checked; and an independent analyst performed sense checks on the models to ensure that they reflected the intended methodology;
- Verification: The lead analyst undertook a variety of technical checks to ensure the models work as intended. An independent analyst built their own models based on the technical specifications and the results were checked against the original models to ensure that identical allocation amounts were obtained; and
- Sign-off meetings: This included meetings with the project SRO, analytical assurer, Director General, Chief Analyst and relevant directors to scrutinise our approach.

The models were not externally peer reviewed by someone from outside of the Department for Education. However, the second model was built by a senior modeller from outside of the allocations team.

Neither the model nor the QA plan were subject to a formal internal/external audit. However, the QA Plan drew heavily on the equivalent from another capital allocation – basic need - which had previously been subject to review by Internal Audit, the outcome of which was the top rating – adequate and effective

Approach to Quality Assurance

Element of quality assurance	Undertaken
Developer Testing	Yes
Internal Peer Review	Yes
External Peer Review	No
Use of Version Control	Yes
Internal Audit	No
Quality Assurance guidelines	Yes
External Audit	No
Governance	Yes
Transparency(published results)	Yes
Periodic Review	Yes