

Statistical Analysis Team
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Bangor
BT19 7PR

29th April 2026

Dear Principal

SUMMARY OF ANNUAL EXAMINATION RESULTS (SAER) 2025/26

The Statistical Analysis Team is starting the SAER process, which is a statistical exercise that aims to provide consistently compiled school performance data for benchmarking purposes and inclusion in school prospectuses. It reports on the performance of year 12 pupils and those pupils in the final year of an A-level or equivalent course of study for the first time (usually year 14). The performance data will be collected by the Department in September, once results are available.

The first stage of the SAER process is to identify those pupils who will be ineligible for inclusion in the return. Pupils can only be removed from the annual school performance data under two conditions.

Condition A. The pupil is ineligible for inclusion in the return under one of the eight permitted reasons.

Condition B. A pupil does not meet the criteria to be included in the 2025/26 academic year return but will be (or should have been) included in the return in a different academic year.

These conditions are unchanged from last year and more detail is provided in Appendix A. The Department is aware that issues have been raised about the range and application of ineligibility criteria. These will be discussed and reviewed considering the overarching End-to-End Reviews of school improvement and of SEN, which are currently underway. It is hoped that any agreed changes should be put in place for next year's SAER.

Fee paying students should not be included in this data collection.

Required actions:

- If any of your pupils are ineligible for inclusion, or fail to meet the criteria for this return, they must be identified as such on the attached excel files. All other year 12, 14 and 15 pupils recorded on the annual School Census in October 2025 will be included in the SAER return later in the year.
- Please complete and return the attached Excel files (Year 12 pupils and Post 16 pupils, if relevant) by **Thursday 28th May 2026**. Please ensure they are carefully checked for accuracy, and an electronic signature is added by the Principal to the Excel tables. The Excel files should be emailed to saer@education-ni.gov.uk **even when no pupils are being removed**.
- Please retain a copy of your return for your own information.
- Your school should retain any evidence which supports the reason for each pupil's removal from the SAER return. This may be requested at a future date, by either the Department or ETI, to validate the removal of pupils from statistical returns.

Please note that ineligibility reasons 2 and 7 are only options where a student was "...unable to sit any formal examinations" in the Summer 2026 season. Following receipt of pupil-level examination results data for 2025/26 the Department will review any students removed from this SAER to verify compliance with Departmental guidance.

To facilitate the first stage of the SAER process, the names and UPNs of all year 12 and year 14/15 pupils enrolled at your school on Census day (October 2025) are provided in the attached Excel tables. These lists also include any pupils who your school informed us did not meet the criteria for inclusion in last year's SAER return and were identified to be included in a subsequent return. An example of how to complete the tables is included in the attached document "SAER guidance on form completion of Ineligibility return 2025_26.pdf" for reference purposes.

If you have any issues with the creation of the tables, please contact a member of the SAER team at saer@education-ni.gov.uk or on the telephone numbers below.

- Rosie O'Neill – 02891 858015
- Phill Billsborough – 02890 378559

Thank you for your continuing co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Rosie O'Neill

Statistical Analysis Team

Appendix A

Condition A: Pupil Ineligibility

Pupils can only be deemed ineligible for inclusion in the examination return for the following eight reasons:

1. A pupil has died.

2. A pupil, either through serious illness (including mental health issues) or pregnancy, was unable to sit any formal examinations. If a pupil has undertaken 1 or more examinations in the Summer 2026 examination series, they must be included in performance returns.

In the case of pregnancy, please indicate if the pupil was referred to the School Age Mothers programme.

3. A pupil has transferred to another school or has emigrated.

Please provide details of the school the pupil has transferred to or the country to which they have moved.

4. A pupil is in a Specialist Provision in Mainstream class approved by the Education Authority.

5. A pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Schools should exercise discretion in assessing the ineligibility of each statemented pupil on an individual basis i.e., having a statement does not automatically exclude a pupil from the cohort.

6. A pupil has been placed in EOTAS.

Please note that only pupils placed in EOTAS through the Education Authority referral service can be deemed ineligible.

7. A pupil has serious welfare issues that have culminated in the inability to sit any formal examinations. If a pupil has undertaken 1 or more examinations in the Summer 2026 examination series, they must be included in performance returns.

Please indicate in the return if the pupil was referred to the Education Authority or any other agency for support.

8. A pupil has left the school system. Please note that if a pupil was recorded on your school census in October 2025 and was entered for any qualification(s) in your school in the Summer 2026 examination series, regardless of whether the entry was made as an internal or external candidate, the pupil must be included in SAER returns.

Please provide in the return the date the pupil left the school system.

(DE Circular 2024/13 provides advice on the removal of a pupil from the school register).

Condition B: Pupils do not meet the criteria to be included in the 2025/26 SAER return

Pupils may also be removed from the return if they fail to meet the criteria to be included. This includes:

9. Pupils who have already been included in the SAER return in a previous academic year. For example, a pupil in year 15 who is in the final year of an A-level for the second time and would have been included in last year's return.

10. Pupils who will be included in the SAER return in a future academic year. For example, this includes pupils who, based on their age, would typically be expected to be in Year 12 but are not in the final year of a Level 2 course, or pupils who, based on their age, would typically be expected to be in Year 14 but are not in the final year of a Level 3 course.

In the event that a pupil is being removed from the performance return on the basis that they do not meet the criteria, it is necessary to indicate on the attached form the academic year in which this pupil should have been/ will be included in the return.

Note carefully: Should you indicate that a pupil will be reported on in 2026/27 and this pupil does not return to school for the 2026/27 academic year or leaves school in 2026/27 prior to the completion of the 2025/26 SAER data collection process, you must inform the Department when the data is requested in September 2026. In such cases, please provide details of all final Level 2/ Level 3 qualifications this pupil has achieved on leaving school. The Department can then determine if it is appropriate for this pupil to be included in the SAER return.

Fee paying students should not be included in this data collection and will be noted on the SAER return as Reason 11.