



Department
for Education

A world-class education system:

The Advanced British Standard
consultation





A world-class education system: The Advanced British Standard consultation

**Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for Education
by Command of His Majesty**

December 2023

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Foreword by the Secretary of State for Education

Education has a unique power to transform lives. Every child has potential, but not all have the opportunity to unlock it. Education levels that.



Every phase of a child's education is key. Support by a brilliant nursery to develop early language, for example, can help a child start school ready to learn. A great primary school teacher who helps that child master mathematical concepts and learn to read through phonics paves the way for secondary study. A broad and balanced curriculum at GCSE gives that young person a strong foundation of knowledge, in turn building skills.

And the right options at 16-19, building on the knowledge and teaching that have come before, mean that a young person can fulfil their potential and progress into adult life. As the last stage of compulsory education, 16-19 study is crucial to ensuring all young people gain the right breadth and depth of knowledge and skills to lead successful, fulfilling lives.

Which is why we are launching this consultation on the Advanced British Standard, a new baccalaureate-style qualification framework for 16-19 year-olds. These reforms will build on our progress of the past decade, delivering clearer options for all students, with more teaching time, greater breadth of study and a strong core of English and maths.

I know first-hand the power of exploring options you didn't know were open to you. My life course changed when I was taught technical drawing and engineering by a wonderful teacher, even though girls could not take these subjects in my school at that time.

This curiosity to know more, to understand different things, makes us flexible. A skill especially vital when the world is changing so fast.

New technologies – from artificial intelligence to quantum technologies – will transform our economy and society in ways we cannot yet predict. Our pursuit of a net zero economy, determination to make the UK a science and technology superpower and focus on growing creative, advanced manufacturing and life sciences industries will generate demand for individuals with a range of skills up and down the country. My experience in business affirmed the age-old saying: the only constant is change.

It is vital therefore that our education system is set up to support the future success of the country. More than that: it is vital that every young person, regardless of background, has access to the high-quality education that will unlock their potential.

The Advanced British Standard will build on our success so far in reforming education and raising standards. We have transformed the way we train school teachers and leaders at every stage of their career and reformed A levels to make sure they are rigorous and knowledge-rich. We have rebuilt technical education, working with thousands of employers to raise standards and deliver the skills that they need, creating 5.6 million apprenticeships¹ since 2010 and 18 new T Levels². We have invested in our schools and colleges, with 89% of schools³ and 92% of colleges⁴ now rated good or outstanding by Ofsted.

And the results are clear. Our pupils aged 9 and 10 are now the best readers in the Western World, ranking fourth out of 43 countries that assessed children at the same age⁵, while our 15 year-olds are also among the highest performers, scoring above the OECD average in reading, maths and science⁶. A third of our national productivity growth over the last two decades is explained by improvements in skills levels across the workforce.⁷ Economic value per learner completing adult apprenticeships and further education (FE) courses was 7% higher in 2020/21 compared to 2012/13.⁸

But we are ambitious to go further. We must take a step back and be bold about raising standards at that crucial age before compulsory education ends, and ensure we are equipping young people with the knowledge and skills they will need to thrive.

Through the Advanced British Standard we will address some of the challenges that remain in 16-19 education so that they no longer hold our young people back.

We will bring ‘academic’ and ‘technical’ study into a clearer, high-quality menu of options from which young people can choose. We will go further to simplify choices and focus on subjects which support progression, rather than seeing ‘technical’ and

¹ [Apprenticeships and traineeships, Academic year 2022/23 \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics)

² [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education annual report and accounts 2022 to 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk)

³ [Ofsted, State-funded schools inspections and outcomes as at 31 August 2023 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

⁴ [The Annual Report of His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills 2022/23 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

⁵ [PIRLS 2021: national report for England \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk)

⁶ [PISA 2022: national report for England \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) – for full statistics and detailed methodology

⁷ [Skills and UK productivity research report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk)

⁸ [Further education skills index, Academic year 2021/22 \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics)

‘academic’ as entirely distinct. All subjects will be rigorous, high-quality and rich in the knowledge that builds skills relevant to next steps.

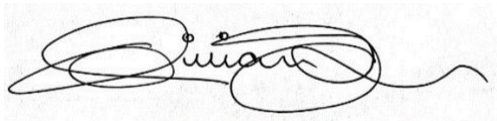
We will ensure students benefit from more time with great teachers, regardless of what path they take, bringing England closer in line with other countries.⁹

We will enable young people to gain knowledge and skills across a broader range of subjects, supporting their flexibility in the future labour market. This will include everyone studying maths and English, raising expectations in these core subjects that are fundamental in life.

Change on this scale takes time and is about much more than the qualifications students take. It is about designing an education system that supports our young people to thrive: great teachers and leaders, delivering great curriculums, in great institutions.

We will need to support the system to prepare for this change, taking time to build the workforce and provision essential to delivery. That is why we are consulting now – the first step in working through this change with students, parents, schools, colleges, further education, higher education, employers and awarding organisations.

I look forward to working with you all to deliver these plans as effectively as possible, and seeing the positive change we can offer our young people: equal opportunity, great options, fulfilled potential.



Gillian Keegan

Secretary of State for Education

⁹ Table 5 of Analytical annex to ‘A world-class education system: the Advanced British Standard consultation’

Introduction

We need our 16-19 education system to be the best in the world. We need to make sure that every young person – no matter their circumstances or where they live – can reach their potential and leave education with the knowledge and skills to thrive in a world-leading economy. We need to build on the work of the past decade to be yet more ambitious in improving outcomes. This is why, in October, we announced proposals to introduce the Advanced British Standard (ABS), a new baccalaureate-style qualification framework at 16-19.

Thanks to the work of teachers and leaders across colleges and schools, we have made enormous progress in driving up outcomes for students of all ages. Our pupils aged 9 and 10 are now the best readers in the Western World, ranking fourth out of 43 countries that assessed children at the same age.¹⁰ PISA 2022 shows England has significantly outperformed the international average and, while the pandemic affected the study, has risen from 17th for maths in 2018 to 11th in 2022 and from 27th in 2009, demonstrating our success in driving up standards. England also meets the OECD's definition of 'highly equitable countries', meaning the effect of socio-economic status on performance is less strong than the OECD average.¹¹

This progress has been underpinned by core evidence-based principles: the most important in-education determinant of pupil outcomes is the quality of teaching they receive¹²; skills are the accumulation of knowledge; and a broad education is a good education. At 16-19 these principles have already led us to improve the quality of qualifications on offer, ensuring both technical and academic options are rigorous and rooted in the specific knowledge and skills valued by universities and employers. Again, we are making progress. A third of our national productivity growth over the last two decades is explained by improvements in skills levels across the workforce.¹³ Economic value per learner completing adult apprenticeships and further education (FE) courses was 7% higher in 2020/21 compared to 2012/13.¹⁴ But the way our system is currently set up is limiting our ambition.

Every phase of education is key: by improving education outcomes at each stage, we are giving children the strong foundations on which they can progress. As the last stage of compulsory education, the 16-19 phase is our final opportunity to do this: to ensure young people gain the right breadth and depth of knowledge and skills to progress, and

¹⁰ [PIRLS 2021: national report for England \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

¹¹ [PISA 2022: national report for England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) – for full statistics and detailed methodology.

¹² J. Hattie (2008), 'Visible Learning'

¹³ [Skills and UK productivity research report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

¹⁴ [Further education skills index, Academic year 2021/22 \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

the broad and balanced education that is valuable for its own sake. Through the ABS we will address some of the remaining challenges in 16-19 education so they do not hold our young people back.

We will create a simpler menu of high-quality options and expectations, for the first time breaking down the divide between 'academic' and 'technical' study. We will make it easier for young people to make choices that support their aspirations, with everyone able to build a programme that stretches them to their fullest potential. We will increase the amount of time young people spend with a teacher or educator in 16-19 education and use this time to ensure all young people gain knowledge and skills across a broader range of subjects, including maths and English.

In doing so, we will ensure more of our young people – regardless of background – can progress into skilled work, apprenticeships or high-quality further and higher education (HE), maximising talent and growing the economy.

We will continue to be ambitious for students who complete their education under the current system. To lay the groundwork for the ABS, we will continue to roll out our prestigious T Level courses and wider reforms to technical education. Students will be encouraged to choose from these, A levels and other high-quality options, all of which will in time form the backbone of the ABS.

These reforms are about more than just the qualifications students take. Our ambition is to transform education and outcomes for young people between 16-19. Central to delivering this are great teachers and leaders, using evidence-based practice. We recognise that we need to work with the system to prepare for this change, taking time to grow a highly skilled workforce, and to build the wider capacity required.

That is why we are launching this consultation: the first step of a consultative process and which will inform a White Paper to be published next year. We want to consult as widely as possible and hear the views of all those who will be affected. We invite views on the design of the ABS, but also the support needed across the system – particularly for the workforce – to deliver these ambitions. We made our commitment to education clear through the downpayment of over £600m that we [announced in October](#). This is focused on: improving the recruitment and retention of teachers in shortage areas; supporting students who do not achieve standard passes in English and maths GCSE at 16 to gain these fundamentals; and improving the quality of maths teaching and our wider evidence base on what works. We will set out further details here in due course.

We know that there remain immediate pressures which schools and colleges are supporting students with: COVID-19-related impacts on attainment, growing mental health needs, absence rates and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). We will continue our focus on these areas and want to invite views on how we can support students to ensure the ABS is designed to help young people succeed.

At the same time, we will not let a focus on resolving immediate challenges hold back our ambition for students in the longer-term. We will continue to raise standards in our pre-16 education system, so that every young person can benefit from the opportunities the ABS will afford. This means continuing the momentum of school improvement pre-16, with a broad and balanced curriculum and brilliant teachers delivering it. It means holding firm in our ambition to transform 16-19 education.

About this consultation

This consultation makes proposals and seeks views on the design of the ABS. In particular:

- Aims and purposes of the ABS (chapter 1)
- Design of the ABS (chapter 2), including:
 - Structure and coverage (section 1)
 - Subjects, employability, enrichment and pastoral (EEP) activities and the industry placement (section 2)
 - English and maths (section 3)
- Assessment, grading and awarding (chapter 3)
- Supporting 16-19 education providers (chapter 4)
- Supporting students and the wider system (chapter 5)

The information that is gathered will inform policy design and the content of the future White Paper.

Who this is for

This consultation is for anyone with an interest in 16-19 education in England. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Students
- Parents and carers
- Headteachers and principals
- Teachers and the wider education workforce
- Awarding organisations
- Schools and colleges
- Further and higher education providers
- Employers and employer representative bodies
- Researchers and education experts
- Careers professionals
- Apprenticeship providers
- SEND organisations

- The general public

Issue date

The consultation was issued on 14 December 2023.

Enquiries

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the team by emailing: ABS.consultation@education.gov.uk.

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by email: Consultations.Coordinator@education.gov.uk or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the [DfE Contact us page](#).

Additional copies

Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from [GOV.UK DfE consultations](#).

The response

The results of the consultation and the department's response will be [published on GOV.UK](#) in 2024.

Respond online

To help us analyse the responses please use the online system wherever possible. Visit [DfE consultations on GOV.UK](#) to submit your response.

Other ways to respond

If, for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may request and complete a word document version of the form.

Please note the section 'List of Consultation questions' at the end of this document provides more detail on confidentiality – please ensure you understand and are content with it before you submit a response.

By email

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In British Sign Language

Please contact us at ABS.consultation@education.gov.uk to discuss how to submit your response.

Deadline

The consultation closes on 20 March 2024.

What needs to change



One quarter of young people have not achieved the equivalent of a standard pass in their GCSE English and maths (grade 4 or above) by age 19.



Our 16-19 year-olds study fewer subjects than their international counterparts.



Our 16-19 year old students get approximately a third less teaching time than some other countries.

There are too many qualifications, making it confusing to decide between them.

Technical routes are still less well-understood than traditional academic pathways.



With the ABS, students will have



A single high-quality qualifications framework.



More time with a teacher, closing the gap with international counterparts.



All students taking English and maths to 18.



A simple menu of all subjects students can choose from.



A greater breadth of study.

Chapter 1: Aims and purposes of reform to 16-19 education

This chapter sets out the case for change for reforming 16-19 education in England by introducing the Advanced British Standard (ABS). It invites views on how to shape the aims of this reform and the purposes of the ABS to deliver the outcomes we want for students and the economy.

Background

Education unlocks potential at every level. The success of our education system is profoundly personal, determining the opportunity every child and young person is afforded to reach their full potential – especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is also writ large in the competitiveness of our economy and the skills held in our labour market.

We cannot predict all of the changes in the labour market in the next year, let alone in the coming decade. But we do know that the best way to equip our 16-19 year-olds for the future is to give them a rigorous, high-quality education, with sufficient breadth to encourage flexibility. This is particularly important as it is the last phase of compulsory education – the last opportunity to equip young people with the knowledge and skills they will need to thrive, building on the education they have received to that point.

Yet despite many strengths, the data is clear that we have further to go in creating a world-class education system.

A substantial number of young people leave compulsory education without high-quality qualifications to support their career progression:

- In 2022, 83% of young people achieved Level 2 by age 19 and 63% also achieved Level 3¹⁵ (Level 2 is GCSE or equivalent standard; Level 3 is A level, T Level or equivalent standard). This matters because the level that students attain by age 19 can affect their onward destinations.
- For some students, that Level 2 achievement will have supported them to progress into the labour market or further study. But just two thirds (65%) of Level 2 students leaving 16-18 study had a sustained education, apprenticeship or employment destination, compared with 89% of Level 3 students.¹⁶

¹⁵ [Level 2 and 3 attainment age 16 to 25, Academic year 2021/22 \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

¹⁶ [16-18 destination measures, Academic year 2021/22 \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

More specifically, many young people are leaving compulsory education without the essential numeracy and literacy needed to get on in life and work:

- One quarter of young people have not achieved the required standard in English and maths by age 19 (although this is an improvement since 2010/11).¹⁷
- This matters for both the individual and the economy, for example there is clear evidence that a good grasp of fundamental maths and English knowledge unlocks higher lifetime earnings.¹⁸

This is particularly true for disadvantaged students and students with SEND:

- Only 42% of disadvantaged students achieve Level 3 by age 19, compared with 67% of their non-disadvantaged peers. 57% of disadvantaged students achieve Level 2 in both English and maths by age 19 compared with 81% of their non-disadvantaged peers.
- For students with SEND, 31% achieve Level 3, 54% achieve Level 2 and 40% achieve Level 2 in both English and maths by age 19. This compares with 66%, 86% and 81% respectively of students without SEND.¹⁹
- As a result, disadvantaged students and students with SEND are less likely to have a sustained education, apprenticeship or employment destination when leaving 16-19 education.²⁰

These factors combined mean there is significant potential left for us to unlock. If we can improve outcomes, especially for those further behind, we can level up opportunity for young people up and down the country and boost the UK economy.

No single change will improve this picture; rather, we need to be ambitious about all aspects of 16-19 education. We need to ensure young people are gaining the right breadth and depth of knowledge and skills by age 18 to support them to lead successful and fulfilling lives. Most importantly, we need to ensure that opportunity is evenly shared, and every student is stretched to achieve their potential. There are four key features of our current system that we want to change:

¹⁷ [Level 2 and 3 attainment age 16 to 25, Academic year 2021/22 \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

¹⁸ [Oscar Marcenaro Gutierrez, Anna Vignoles and Augustin de Coulon \(2007\), 'The Value of Basic Skills in the British Labour Market' \(www.cep.lse.ac.uk\)](http://www.cep.lse.ac.uk)

¹⁹ See footnote 17.

²⁰ [16-18 destination measures, Academic year 2021/22 \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

Clearer options

For some, options at post-16 are overly complex and reinforce a distinction between 'technical' and 'academic', which can be challenging to decide between at a young age.

Since 2010 we have gone a long way to ensure 'technical' and 'academic' options are equally high-quality. We have reformed A level content and assessment to be rigorous and knowledge-rich, better preparing young people for the demands of employment and further study. We have introduced 18 prestigious new T Levels²¹ that offer a route into skilled employment and higher education, and created 5.6 million apprenticeships²², with over 690 high-quality, employer-led occupational standards²³.

We have made significant progress in simplifying the qualifications landscape over the past decade, removing many duplicative and low-quality qualifications. There were over 12,000 qualifications at Level 3 and below in July 2018²⁴, and since then we have removed over 5,000²⁵. This reform process will continue, ensuring that, for example, we do not have over 100 different Level 3 Business qualifications²⁶ left for students to choose from. But we will still be left with a very long list of qualifications in the system, even once the existing qualifications reform processes are complete. We need a simple, shorter, easy to understand menu of options for students, with every option offering high-quality content that supports progression.

Ensuring qualifications have a clear purpose is hugely important. An aspiring engineering technician needs a specific combination of knowledge and skills to start work, just as an aspiring historian needs a depth of knowledge and ability to write critically to progress to HE. However, clarity of purpose does not mean students should feel they must choose between two menus labelled 'academic' and 'technical'. Our definition today of what is 'academic' and 'technical' is sometimes unhelpfully blurred, with, for example, subjects that are similar appearing variously on either side of the divide, the same subject appearing as both, and also the same subject appearing numerous times. Our current qualifications reform programme will streamline this, rightly focusing on ensuring that qualifications have a clear purpose. The ABS will build on this, ensuring students choose from a much clearer, simplified menu of options, all high-quality and only categorised differently where purposes are fundamentally different.

²¹ [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education annual report and accounts 2022 to 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

²² [Apprenticeships and traineeships, Academic year 2022/23 \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

²³ [Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education \(www.instituteforapprenticeships.org\)](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org)

²⁴ [Students and qualifications at level 3 and below in England \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

²⁵ [Lewis and Wilson \(2023\), 'The reform of level 3 qualifications in England', House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](https://parliament.uk)

²⁶ [List of qualifications approved for funding \(education.gov.uk\)](https://education.gov.uk)

More teaching time

Young people in England do not spend as much time with their teachers as their international peers, though we know great teaching is key to improved outcomes.

We have revolutionised the training and support teachers and school leaders receive at every stage of their career. Our school [teacher development reforms](#)²⁷ create a 'golden thread' of high-quality evidence underpinning the training, support and professional development available in schools. In FE, we are improving teacher training standards through the development of a new employer-led occupational standard for FE teaching, which will become the basis for all publicly funded Initial Teacher Training qualifications from 2024/25. These reforms will establish strong professional development cultures within individual settings and across the country, improving the quality of teaching and ultimately, pupil outcomes.

This is crucial given the value we know a great teacher provides: students gain almost half a GCSE point per subject from teachers in the 75th compared to the 25th percentile of effectiveness²⁸ and pupils with more effective teachers are likely to earn more in their lifetime²⁹. Yet our 16-19 year-olds are benefitting from significantly less time with teachers than their international peers.³⁰ Young people in England spend around 10 fewer hours per week being taught than in France or many US states.³¹

This particularly affects disadvantaged students, who are less likely to have the space, equipment or time for independent study³², which we are more reliant on under our current system.

Greater breadth

Young people's ability to navigate and be resilient within the future labour market risks being constrained by a narrow post-16 education.

²⁷ Reforms to teacher development: [Reforms to teacher development \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

²⁸ Slater, Davies and Burgess (2009), '[Do teachers matter? Measuring the variation in teacher effectiveness in England](http://bristol.ac.uk)' (bristol.ac.uk)

²⁹ [Farquharson, C., McNally, S., Tahir, I., \(2022\), 'Education Inequalities', IFS Deaton Review of Inequalities \(www.ifs.org.uk\)](http://www.ifs.org.uk)

³⁰ Table 5 of Analytical annex to 'A world-class education system: the Advanced British Standard consultation'

³¹ (France) [Teaching and learning in general upper secondary education \(europa.eu\)](http://europa.eu) & [Teaching and learning in vocational upper secondary education \(europa.eu\)](http://europa.eu); (US) [Table 1.1. Minimum number of instructional days and hours in the school year, minimum number of hours per school day, and school start/finish dates, by state: 2020 \(ed.gov\)](http://ed.gov)

³² [EEF, 'Homework' \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)

The introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) at key stage 4 in 2010 has encouraged schools to prioritise the core GCSE subjects that are most likely to open doors for pupils in the future. Our reforms to the National Curriculum – introduced in 2014 – have restored knowledge to its heart and embedded breadth in the pre-16 curriculum. Yet post-16, young people in England study a narrower range of subjects than many international comparators. The majority of A level students only take 3 A levels³³, for example, whereas across the OECD students typically study around seven subjects³⁴. For students pursuing an occupational specialism, this naturally takes up significant teaching time. However, other countries still often mandate a common core of subjects for these students. For example, students in Germany and Italy on technical and vocational pathways continue to study compulsory general subjects, in addition to courses on their chosen specialism.³⁵

The mix of occupations and sectors which are most prominent within the labour market will continue to shift in the future. There is evidence that those with the breadth of knowledge and skills necessary to switch between jobs and sectors see greater pay growth than those who stay put.³⁶ Alongside a continued focus on lifelong learning for adults, encouraging more 16-19 year-olds to develop a broader range of knowledge and skills will help them develop the tools to be resilient in, and reap the benefits of, a changing labour market.

A core of maths and English

This breadth of knowledge is particularly important when it comes to maths and English, where achievement can transform life chances. But too many of our students are still leaving education without these core foundations.

Since 2010, we have focused on raising attainment in maths and English from a young age through promoting evidence-based teaching approaches such as mastery-based maths and phonics for reading. This is producing encouraging results. According to Ofsted, “a resounding, positive shift in mathematics education has taken place in primary schools” over recent years, with “notable improvements” in secondary.³⁷ Schools supported intensively by our English Hubs outperformed other schools by

³³ [Ofqual \(2023\), 'Infographics for A level results' \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/infographics-for-a-level-results)

³⁴ [Stronati, C. \(2023\), 'The design of upper secondary education across OECD countries: Managing choice, coherence and specialisation', OECD Education Working Papers, No. 288, OECD Publishing, Paris \(www.oecd-ilibrary.org\)](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/working-papers/the-design-of-upper-secondary-education-across-oecd-countries-managing-choice-coherence-and-specialisation).

³⁵ (Germany) [Vocational and further training in Germany - Federal Foreign Office \(diplo.de\)](https://www.diplo.de) and (Italy) [Teaching and learning in vocational upper secondary education \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)

³⁶ [N Cominetti, R Costa, A Eyles, T Moev & G Ventura, Changing jobs?: Change in the UK labour market and the role of worker mobility, The Economy 2030 Inquiry, May 2021 \(resolutionfoundation.org\)](https://www.resolutionfoundation.org)

³⁷ [Ofsted \(2023\), 'Coordinating mathematical success: the mathematics subject report' \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coordinating-mathematical-success-the-mathematics-subject-report)

around seven percentage points, when comparing the change in Phonics Screening Checks results between pre-pandemic and 2022.³⁸ Yet despite progress, many students – particularly the most disadvantaged – are leaving education without these core foundations. One in four young people have not achieved both English and maths GCSE at grade 4/C and above (or equivalent Level 2) by age 19 (including 6% who have achieved Level 2 in English but not maths, 5% who have achieved Level 2 Maths but not English, and 13% who have not achieved Level 2 in either).³⁹

This matters for both the individual and the economy. The 9 million working-age adults in England with either low basic numeracy or literacy⁴⁰ are likely to have lower wages⁴¹ and are significantly more likely to be unemployed⁴². And there is clear and compelling evidence that a good grasp of fundamental maths and English knowledge unlocks higher lifetime earnings.⁴³ Students who achieved GCSE maths at grade 4/C earn 5% more than those who fall just below grade 4/C. For GCSE English, the equivalent increase in lifetime earnings is around 3%.⁴⁴ There is also recent evidence that further study of maths post-16 supports broader cognition and shapes a key brain region that supports learning and higher-level cognition.⁴⁵

Many young people who achieve GCSE maths and/or English at grades 9-4 (i.e. Level 2) opt not to continue studying these subjects post-16. Among the cohort of young people who turned 19 in 2021, only 21% who achieved Level 2 in English by the end of key stage 4 went on to study English and 25% of young people who achieved Level 2 in maths by the end of key stage 4 studied maths at 16.⁴⁶ Yet more advanced skills in English and maths are transformative. Individuals with a maths A level are estimated to earn 7-10% more than those without one, but who are otherwise similarly educated.⁴⁷

³⁸ [Early analysis of English Hubs phonics attainment: 2021 to 2022 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

³⁹ [Level 2 and 3 attainment age 16 to 25, Academic year 2021/22 \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

⁴⁰ [Małgorzata, Field and Windisch \(2016\), 'Building Skills for All: A Review of England', OECD \(www.oecd.org\)](https://www.oecd.org)

⁴¹ [Kerr \(2021\), 'Paying the price: The cost of very poor adult literacy', Pro Bono Economics \(www.probonoeconomics.com\)](https://www.probonoeconomics.com)

⁴² [Parsons and Bynner \(2005\), 'Does numeracy matter more?' National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy \(www.core.ac.uk\)](https://www.core.ac.uk)

⁴³ [Oscar Marcenaro Gutierrez, Anna Vignoles and Augustin de Coulon \(2007\), 'The Value of Basic Skills in the British Labour Market' \(www.cep.lse.ac.uk\)](https://www.cep.lse.ac.uk)

⁴⁴ Estimated based on [GCSE attainment and lifetime earnings \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) – Estimated using figures from Table 4 and Figures 6-6 and 6-7 from supplementary tables

⁴⁵ Zacharopoulos, Sella & Kadosh (2021) ['The impact of a lack of mathematical education on brain development and future attainment', Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Vol 118, No 24 \(www.pnas.org\)](https://www.pnas.org)

⁴⁶ Tables 3 and 4 of Analytical annex to 'A world-class education system: The Advanced British Standard consultation'

⁴⁷ [Dolton, P. J., and A. Vignoles, 'The Return on Post-Compulsory School Mathematics Study', *Economica*, vol. 69, no. 273, 2002, pp. 113–41. JSTOR](https://www.jstor.org)

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) skills shortages cost UK employers c.£1.5 billion a year with a particular gap at Levels 3-5.⁴⁸ We know that English proficiency will underpin many of the anticipated essential skills for the labour market of the future, such as communication skills and information literacy.⁴⁹

Proposal

Aims and principles

It is important we are clear on the aims of this reform: this is not just about the ABS as a qualification framework, but about the opportunity to rethink our 16-19 system. We want to build consensus on where we are heading and why, so that a single set of shared assumptions inform our offer for young people. Building on the above, there are several overarching aims that should drive our next reforms to 16-19 education. We want to:

- **Help more young people gain the right breadth and depth of knowledge and skills by age 19 (e.g. those valued by employers and universities).**
This will...
- **Ensure more young people progress into skilled employment, apprenticeships, or high-quality further study by age 19, and**
- **Narrow the disadvantage gap at 16-19.**
Together, this will...
- **Ensure we have the workforce to grow key industries, and**
- **Help every young person, especially the most disadvantaged, reach their full potential.**
Together, this will...
- **Grow the economy and increase the UK's competitive advantage.**

To achieve these aims, we propose resolving the four features of our current system which are holding young people back. These form the underpinning core principles for how we want to design the ABS so that it delivers the necessary change. We will:

- **Bring academic and technical study into a clearer, high-quality menu from which young people can choose – going further to simplify student choices**

⁴⁸ [STEM Learning, 'STEM Skills Indicator' \(www.stem.org.uk\)](http://www.stem.org.uk)

⁴⁹ [Dickerson, A., Rossi, G., Boccock, L., Hilary, J. and Simcock, D. \(2023\). An analysis of the demand for skills in the labour market in 2035. Working Paper 3. Slough: NFER.](#) The paper identifies communication and 'information literacy' (skills related to gathering, processing, and using information) as two of the six 'essential employment skills' most in-demand by employers in 2035. Reading and written comprehension, as well as oral comprehension and oral expression, were all projected to be among the top 20 'most utilised' skills in 2035.

and focus on subjects with high-quality, rigorous content which support progression, building on the best of A levels and T Levels.

- **Increase the amount of time young people spend with a teacher in 16-19 education** – aligning with international best practice and maximising students' opportunities to benefit from excellent teaching.
- **Encourage young people to gain knowledge and skills across a broader range of subjects while maintaining sufficient depth of understanding** – enabling young people to thrive and be resilient within the future labour market, and keeping progression options open for longer for most students.
- **Ensure all young people study maths and English up to age 18, as part of a strong core underpinning all study programmes** – equipping young people with the fundamental knowledge and skills needed to thrive in life and work.

Question 11:⁵⁰ We propose several overarching aims and principles that should underpin the introduction and design of the Advanced British Standard. To what extent do you support these proposed aims and principles?

Purposes

Our new ABS qualification framework will serve several purposes, and having a clear understanding of these will help inform design decisions. We will develop these purposes in further detail and Ofqual will consult separately on the specifics in due course, but we are interested in your early views. At a high level, the ABS will:

- Enable students to develop depth and breadth of knowledge, skills and expertise to support their progression into and success in future study, apprenticeships and skilled work, and life.
- Provide a range of information to support decision-making, including for:
 - admission and selection purposes for FE and HE;
 - recruitment and selection purposes for work and employment, including apprenticeships; and
 - accountability purposes to strengthen the quality of 16-19 education.
- Support student engagement in and decision-making about their education, both in the 16-19 phase and beyond.

Question 12: What do you think is the most important thing that the Advanced British Standard could achieve?

Question 13: If you have further views on the aims, principles and purposes of the Advanced British Standard, or anything else covered in Chapter 1, please

⁵⁰ Questions start with number 11 in this document as the first 10 questions cover personal respondent information (see 'List of consultation questions' section at end of document)

share below.

Chapter 2: What students will study in the Advanced British Standard

This chapter makes proposals and invites views on how to design the structure and content of the Advanced British Standard (ABS), specifically:

1. The ABS programmes that students will study and what these will look like.
2. The design of the component parts of the ABS: majors; minors; employability, enrichment and pastoral (EEP) activities; and industry placements.
3. How best to support students to develop maths and English knowledge and skills to thrive in life and work.

Section 1: Advanced British Standard programmes that students will study

Background

Through our reforms to A levels, the introduction of T Levels, and the ongoing reforms to Level 3 and below qualifications⁵¹, we have already done much to improve the quality of what 16-19 year-old students study. Through the introduction of the ABS, we will go further to ensure all students' needs and aspirations are met.

This section sets out and invites views on proposals for the structure and coverage of different ABS programmes.

Proposal

The ABS will be a new qualification framework for state-funded 16-19 year-olds in schools and FE providers in England. Our ambition is that it will be adopted by all 16-19 providers in England. It will also be available for others (including overseas markets) to adopt. The ABS will be taken by 16-19 year-old students who would currently take Level 3 programmes of study (such as A levels, T Levels or Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs)) and we are also exploring what options look like for students at Level 2, and Level 1 and below (Level 1 is equivalent to GCSE grades 3, 2, 1).

Students will be able to follow different programmes of study, depending on their aspirations, progression goals and readiness to access the subject content – with high expectations of and high support for all students. All students – regardless of their

⁵¹ [Reforms to post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/reforms-to-post-16-qualifications-at-level-3-in-england)

programme – will study a combination of larger and smaller subjects (called ‘majors’ and ‘minors’), including English and maths to 18, and participate in EEP activities.

Students who access the ABS will have varying levels of prior attainment and unique individual circumstances – whether, for example, they are young carers or have SEND. The ABS will be designed to support these students to achieve their potential and thrive in later life and work, with a focus on high expectations and rigorous, knowledge-rich content that supports progression.

Level 3 Advanced British Standard programmes

These programmes will typically be completed in two years by students who would currently move straight from GCSEs into a full A level, T Level or equivalent programmes. Once completed, students will typically transition to further study at Level 4 and above⁵² (including in HE), skilled employment or an apprenticeship.

Students will select one of two types of programme: Advanced British Standard or Advanced British Standard (occupational). All students will select subjects from a simplified menu which will cover those subjects currently deemed to be academic, alternative academic and technical (see Chapter 2, section 2 for further detail). We anticipate that, once rolled out, the ABS qualification framework will supersede the current, varied landscape of, for example, A levels, T Levels and AAQs. This simplified offer will be accompanied by information and guidance to support young people to make informed choices.

Students will receive more guided learning hours (GLH) than the current 1,280 average, with a minimum of 1,475 GLH over the course of their ABS programme, though we are interested in views on the right number of increased hours and the balance within them (see section 2). This simplified offer will be accompanied by information and guidance to support young people to make informed choices.

Advanced British Standard

This programme will be for those students working at Level 3 who want to develop the knowledge and skills that will leave a range of future progression options open to them. Table 2 in the Analytical Annex sets out the proportion of 16 and 17 year-olds working towards different qualifications currently. Based on students’ current choices, we expect the majority of Level 3 students will choose the Advanced British Standard programme.⁵³ These students will study:

⁵² You can find more information on qualification levels at [GOV.UK – What qualification levels mean](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-qualification-levels-mean).

⁵³ Table 2 of Analytical annex to ‘A world-class education system: The Advanced British Standard consultation’

- A minimum of three ‘majors’ at Level 3 in subjects that directly support progression into employment, apprenticeships or further study at Levels 4-6, including Higher Technical Qualifications and university degrees. These will be based on subject content drawn from A levels, T Level core content and subjects approved to be offered as AAQs, and taught for the duration of the programme.
- A minimum of two ‘minors’ at Level 3 in subjects different to the majors that offer further knowledge, skills and breadth. Where appropriate, subject content will be drawn from existing qualifications and subjects will be taught for the duration of the programme.
- Maths and English, at either major or minor level. While students will be supported to work towards Level 3 in maths and English, we propose introducing additional flexibility for the minority of students for whom attaining or consolidating Level 2 standard in maths and English is more appropriate (see Chapter 2, section 3 for further detail).
- EEP activities over the course of the ABS programme. These will be designed to support students’ personal growth and wider skill development.⁵⁴

A small minority of students with particularly high prior attainment who wish to cover an even greater depth and/or breadth of subjects may choose to replace one of their minors with an additional major or take an additional minor. This will deliver stretch for the most able students.

Advanced British Standard (occupational)

This programme will be for those Level 3 students who are clear that they want to specialise in one subject area, and are preparing for direct employment in an occupational specialist area, apprenticeships or further study at Levels 4-6. Based on students’ current choices, we expect a smaller proportion of Level 3 students will choose to study the Advanced British Standard (occupational) programme compared to the Advanced British Standard programme.⁵⁵

Students will receive the same minimum guided learning hours as in the core ABS, and the total hours will be decided after consultation. Given the additional time involved with industry placements, our initial work suggests students on this programme may have a higher total number of hours, e.g. the region of 1,725 hours. We ask further question on this in Chapter 2, Section 2. Students will study:

⁵⁴ Employment, enrichment and pastoral time can be used for activities organised at the discretion of the school or college. More detail can be found in our Employment, Enrichment and Pastoral section.

⁵⁵ Table 2 of Analytical annex to ‘A world-class education system: The Advanced British Standard consultation’ sets out the proportion of 16 and 17 year olds working towards different qualifications, which provides some indication on the type of ABS programme students may choose to pursue.

- One ‘major’ at Level 3 in a core subject directly focused on their chosen sector (e.g. a major in health, for someone specialising in adult nursing). These subjects will directly support progression and be based on subjects covered by T Levels or approved to be offered as AAQs. In some cases, providers may choose to start by teaching the major and then proceed onto the double major, following the sequential delivery approach of T Levels.
- One ‘double major’ at Level 3 in a specialism related to the core subject that will support progression into skilled employment or further specialist study at Level 4-6, including Higher Technical Qualifications and university degrees. For the most part, they will be based on subjects covered by T Levels and subjects approved to be offered as large AAQs and Technical Occupational Qualifications (TOQs).
- Two ‘minors’ in maths and English. While students will be supported to work towards Level 3 in maths and English, we propose introducing additional flexibility for the minority of students for whom attaining or consolidating Level 2 standard in maths and English is more appropriate (see Chapter 2, section 3 for further detail). Subject content will be drawn from approved qualifications (where they exist) and taught for the duration of the programme.
- Students who select a double major which develops and assesses occupational entry competence will need to complete an industry placement in the relevant employment sector. Some students choosing this programme will not need to complete an industry placement, for example, those preparing for specialist HE courses in subjects currently approved to be offered in non-T Level areas.
- EEP activities, which will be designed to support students’ personal growth and wider skill development. We will explore the content and time appropriate for EEP on this programme, given the industry placement component will cover large aspects of preparation for employment.

Question 14: We propose two main programmes at Level 3: Advanced British Standard and Advanced British Standard (occupational). Each will contain a range of separate components to support students. To what extent do you support the proposed design for the Level 3 Advanced British Standard programmes?

Level 2 programmes

Our reforms to 16-19 education must include a clear offer for students studying below Level 3. We want to design Level 2 programmes that support students to achieve their maximum potential and benefit from great progression opportunities, improving on what is currently a varied landscape.

A thread of common principles will run through both our Level 3 and Level 2 offer. Most importantly: all students will be entitled to additional teaching hours, with a clear commitment that Level 2 students will receive the same number of hours as Level 3

students (at least 1,475 hours, over two years, or equivalent time period). This parity in time will be key in driving the best outcomes for this cohort. Like students taking Level 3 programmes, Level 2 students will:

- Study English and maths. Students at Level 2 are already required to continue studying either towards GCSE or FSQs in English and maths where they have not secured a GCSE pass at grades 9-4 at age 16. Our reforms will build on this and guarantee all students study English and maths at least at minor size (therefore with a minimum number of teaching hours) over the course of their programme. This will help them to consolidate, further develop and secure the maths and English skills they need to thrive in later life, study and work.
- Study an appropriate breadth and depth of subjects to enable onward progression. Our ongoing review of Level 2 and below qualifications⁵⁶ will strengthen the qualifications available to ensure they best support students to progress to work or further study, and – as for the Level 3 cohort – build a clearer menu of options from which to select. We propose that these subjects will not be structured or sized as majors and minors, as evidence of good practice in designing Level 2 programmes⁵⁷ is clear on the need for some flexibility.
- Undertake EEP activities over the course of their programme. We anticipate this will at least mirror the Level 3 offer in terms of hours, recognising that some students may need additional support.

This will be the minimum programme offer for all students, raising standards through more time with a teacher and a strong focus on English and maths. Above and beyond this, there are two more open questions about how we construct high-quality programmes at Level 2.

First: the above would leave some additional capacity within the 1,475 minimum total hours for a two-year programme. Offering providers some flexibility over how these are used would allow for decisions that best meet students' needs and support their progression. For example, it might be appropriate to focus even more time on maths and English, or to use it to progress towards occupational competence in an area of interest. We are interested in views and evidence about how best to use this additional time, affording greater flexibility but still with sufficient structure that Level 2 students access programmes that are as coherent as their Level 3 peers.

Second: we propose that the duration of Level 2 programmes should vary to a greater degree than Level 3 ABS programmes. We need programmes that support those who want to move quickly onto Level 3 ABS study, as well as those who want to take focused Level 2 qualifications that support progression in the labour market. At present,

⁵⁶ [Review of post-16 qualifications at level 2 and below \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

⁵⁷ Ofsted (2018) - [Level 2 study programmes](#)

we understand that most students doing a Level 2 programme study a one-year qualification, and then move on to an apprenticeship, a Level 3 programme or another Level 2 qualification. However, a significant minority also drop out of education after one year.⁵⁸ Our programmes must be designed to support this cohort to continue to engage in education. We therefore propose two clear routes for students at Level 2, which will typically last one to two years (depending on the programme chosen, students' starting point and future ambitions) and will support students to access Level 3 and above study, apprenticeships, or employment:

- **Level 2 occupational programme**, aimed at supporting progression into work, or work-based training such as an apprenticeship in their chosen occupation. This could take one or two years, depending on the occupation. The qualifications taken will be based on employer-led standards, with standardised guided learning hours and assessment approaches. This programme will include maths and English, EEP and potentially some kind of work experience, though this may depend on availability and requirements.
- **One-year transition programme**, aimed at supporting progression onto a Level 3 ABS programme. Students will study maths and English, other subjects to support progression to Level 3 ABS, and participate in EEP activities. We anticipate this programme will be selected by students who have the ability, prior attainment, interest and motivation to progress to a Level 3 ABS programme within one year, which they would then complete by age 19. We have already introduced the T Level foundation year and are piloting an Academic Progression Programme, from which we will draw lessons.

There is also a range of options on the branding of the Level 2 programme. For example: these students might also receive an ABS award upon completion, with some differentiation in grading approach; we could use different branding to denote that these students achieved a Level 2 programme rather than a Level 3 ABS; or we could use an alternative approach. We are interested in your views.

Question 15: We propose two main programmes at Level 2: transition and occupational. Each will contain a range of separate components to support students. To what extent do you support the proposed design for the Level 2 programmes?

Question 16: If you have views or evidence on how additional teaching hours at Level 2 could best be used to benefit students, please share below.

⁵⁸ [Participation in education, training and employment age 16 to 18, Calendar year 2022 \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

Question 17: If you have views or evidence on how a transition year could best be structured to support progression to Level 3, please share below. This could include reflections on the existing T Level foundation year.

Question 18: In branding terms, how do you think the Level 2 programmes should be considered in relation to Level 3 Advanced British Standard?

Level 1 and Entry Level programmes

The ABS will not cover students studying at Level 1 or Entry Level due to the specific and diverse needs of this cohort. We have already committed to ensuring that students aged 16-19 studying at Level 1 and below (c.5% of 16 and 17 year-olds⁵⁹) will have the option to benefit from increased teaching hours as part of the introduction of the ABS reforms. It is crucial these students – who are disproportionately more likely to have special educational needs and disabilities – have access to the same teaching hours and support. We are keen to invite views on how students at Level 1 and Entry Level would most benefit from additional teaching hours to ensure that the study they undertake post-16 is appropriate and in line with their needs and aspirations. We propose that this should include the continued study of English and maths to support in later life and work.

Question 19: To what extent do you support the proposal for Level 1 and Entry Level students?

Question 20: If you have views or evidence on how students at Level 1 and Entry Level would most benefit from additional teaching hours, please share below.

16-19 apprenticeships

The ABS will not cover 16–19 year-olds who are undertaking an apprenticeship but this route will continue. Apprentices will continue to benefit from high-quality employer-led standards – those which will also underpin the ABS Occupational qualifications – and support to achieve appropriate English and maths qualifications. We will explore whether and how to extend access to the same number of taught hours for English and maths to 16-19 year-old apprentices as their classroom peers.

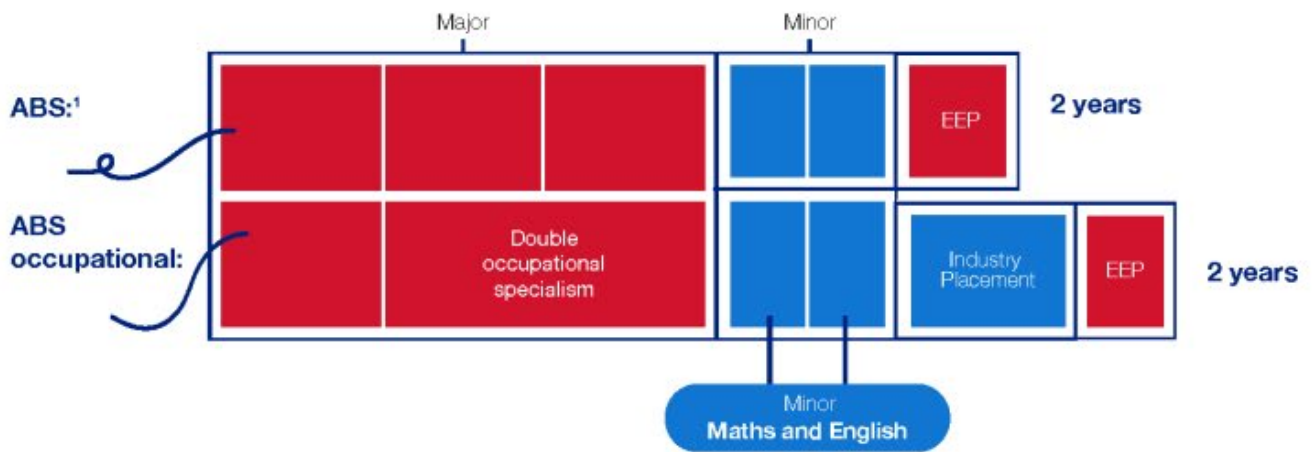
⁵⁹ Table 2 of Analytical annex to ‘A world-class education system: The Advanced British Standard consultation’

What ABS might look like for **Level 3** students

How students might spend their time on the different programmes

ABS: for students working at Level 3 who want to leave with a range of progression options open to them.

ABS occupational: for those who want to specialise in one subject area, in preparation for direct employment, apprenticeships or further specialist study.



This compares to current Level 3 programmes, for example



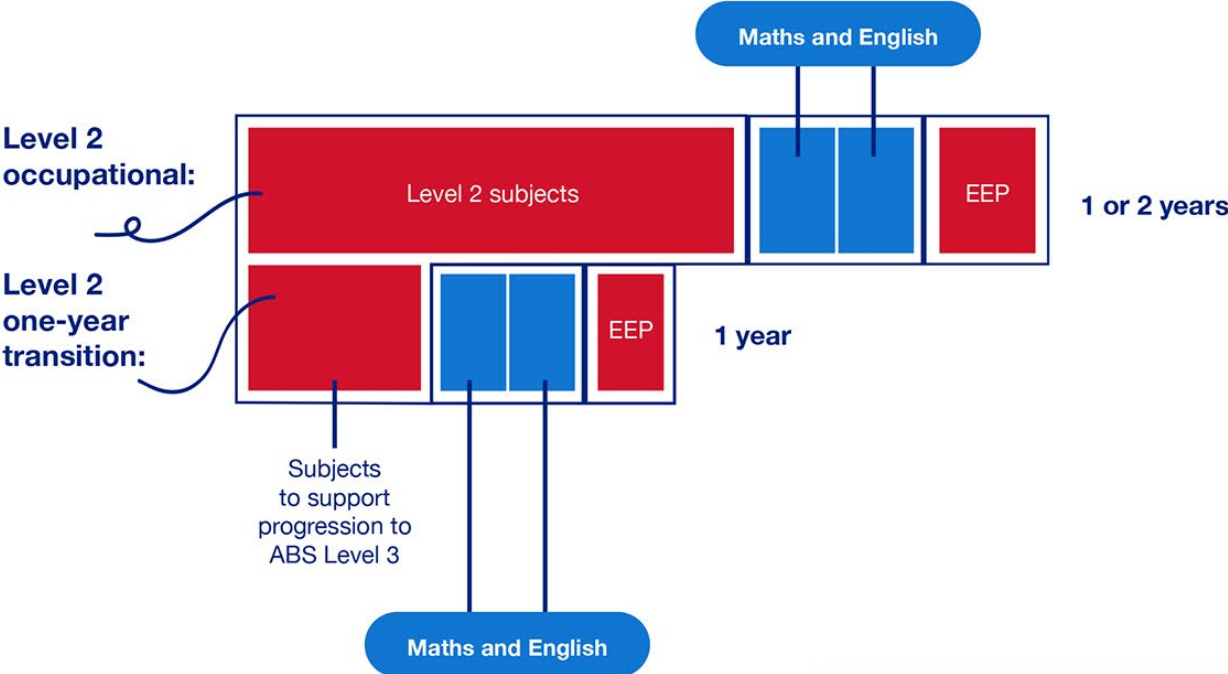
1. Students may choose to replace one of their minors with an additional major, or take an additional minor

What ABS might look like for **Level 2** students

How students will spend their time on the different pathways

Level 2 occupational: for those who wish to progress to employment or an apprenticeship.

Level 2 one-year transition: for those who want to transition to Level 3 ABS.



Section 2: Design of ABS components

Background

Through our reforms to A levels, the introduction of T Levels and ongoing reforms to Level 3 and below qualifications⁶⁰, we are ensuring that each subject qualification has a clear purpose, is genuinely needed, is high-quality and leads to good outcomes.

In developing the subject content for majors, minors and double majors, we have a further opportunity to make sure each subject and component will meet the needs and aspirations of students and will equip them with the knowledge and skills needed for the future.

This section sets out and invites views on proposals for the design of the component parts of ABS study programmes.

Proposal

Subjects: Overview of principles

As part of these reforms, we will build on the progress we have already achieved to ensure that students have access to a simpler menu of high-quality and distinct subjects, each with a clear purpose. Alongside this, we will put in place guidance and support to help young people make informed decisions to reach their intended education and employment destination. Once rolled out, we anticipate that the ABS qualification framework will supersede the varied landscape of, for example, A levels, T Levels and AAQs.

The ABS qualification framework will, for the first time, offer a single menu of options covering Level 3 majors and minors, with subjects not labelled according to ‘academic’ and ‘technical’ qualifications. Occupation-specific subjects, which ready students for employment or employment-based training and are necessarily designed differently, will exist separately and be on offer through double majors. There will also be a clear list of Level 2 equivalent components.

We propose that the framework of subjects, together, should meet the following overarching principles. It should:

⁶⁰ [Reforms to post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

- Allow students to pursue a broad range of careers and address the immediate, emerging and future needs of the economy.
- Be appropriate and viable for 16-19 year-olds to study in the majority of classroom based settings.
- Support clear progression to a wide range of high-value:
 - Level 4-6 courses (Level 3 courses for those achieving at Level 2); and/or
 - Skilled occupations, either employed directly or as an apprentice.
- Be discrete and of a similar standard, so whichever subject a student studies they can be confident their choices will be well regarded by HE providers and employers.

Question 21: Once rolled out, we anticipate that the Advanced British Standard qualification framework will supersede the varied Level 3 qualification landscape for 16-19 year-olds (including A levels and T Levels etc.). If you have views on this, please share below.

Subjects: content

To deliver a clear offer that meets these principles, we will aim to ensure there is just one subject, where currently there are different qualifications offering similar versions of the same subject with significantly overlapping content. For example, where currently there may be a subject both offered as an A level and an AAQ, under these reforms there will (in the majority of cases) be just one subject available. The same subject may be available as a major and minor, and some subjects may exist separately at both Levels 3 and 2, while others will only be available at a single level, as appropriate. We will also review which subjects are most suitable for study at age 16 to support progression into employment or further study.

In developing the content for subjects, where there is more than one version available, we will draw on a range of evidence sources to determine which subjects are offered and their content, including data on progression and priority knowledge and skills needed for the economy. We will work closely with employers, HE providers and subject experts to that subject content is fit for purpose and supports progression.

Where there is significant overlap and duplication in existing content, we will not assume that one version of a subject is 'better' than another and it may be determined that both versions come together to form the basis of rigorous content in that subject. As part of this wider analysis, and in collaboration with employers, HE providers and subject experts, it may be determined that some subjects should not be taken forward within this new qualification framework and that new subjects should be developed, for example, to plug emerging skills gaps.

Subject criteria: overview

As is the case for A levels and T Levels now, the content for subjects will be based on high-level content specified by the Department for Education (DfE) and the occupational standards specified by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE).

We propose using defined criteria to determine which subjects are offered as majors, minors and double majors. We are seeking views on these criteria, including whether they will help to meet the overarching principles above.

Criteria for Level 3 subjects

All subjects will:

- provide for stretch and challenge whilst being deliverable within the guided learning hours specified for the subject;
- be suitably knowledge-rich (this may mean theoretical and/or applied knowledge, as appropriate to the subject);
- provide levels of specialisation that are appropriate for 16-19 year-olds studying at Level 3 and provide for a similar level of rigour; and
- have clearly distinct titles and content except in exceptional cases where subjects overlap.

In addition to the criteria for all subjects, subjects selected as majors will:

- provide knowledge, skills and understanding of comparable depth and rigour to existing A levels and T Levels;
- enable progression onto a broad range of Level 4-6 courses; and
- where appropriate, provide the underpinning theory, contextual understanding and core skills needed to support achievement in an associated double major.

In addition to the criteria for all subjects, subjects selected as double majors will:

- be based on occupational standards⁶¹ and provide the occupation-specific knowledge and skills needed to ensure students develop occupational 'entry' competence sufficient to enter employment directly, including as an apprentice at

⁶¹ Occupational Standards included on the [Occupational maps / Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#).

Level 4⁶² and above, or in approved specialist subjects⁶³ with progression as above.

In addition to the criteria for all subjects, subjects selected for minors will:

- provide high-quality and rigorous content for study in roughly half the time available for a major, facilitating greater breadth of study.

Question 22: To what extent do you support the proposal for how subjects will be selected to be included in the Level 3 Advanced British Standard programmes?

Criteria for Level 2 subjects

Subjects will:

- support progression to Level 3 and above study or skilled employment, including apprenticeships;
- where appropriate, provide the relevant occupational specific knowledge and skills, being based on occupational standards⁶⁴;
- provide students with the opportunity to develop knowledge, skills and levels of specialisation that are appropriate for 16-19 year-olds studying at Level 2; and
- have clearly distinct titles and content and in exceptional cases where subjects overlap, provide for a similar level of rigour.

Question 23: To what extent do you support the proposal for how subjects will be selected to be included in the Level 2 programmes?

Question 24: If you have further views on how subjects will be included in these reforms at either Level 2 or Level 3, please share below.

Subjects: size

We are a significant international outlier in the amount of time we offer our 16-19 year-olds with a teacher. On average, we fund 16-19 providers for about 640 hours of structured time per year (1,280 hours over two years) – around a third less teaching time than some other countries⁶⁵. A core principle of the ABS is that we will increase

⁶² We acknowledge Level 3 Accelerated Apprenticeships will be the norm for certain occupations; where the apprenticeship has an extended duration e.g. 48 months.

⁶³ In subjects approved by DfE, in current non-T Level subjects not designed to offer occupational entry competence; typically subjects currently approved for large AAQs.

⁶⁴ Occupational Standards included on the [Occupational maps / Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#)

⁶⁵ Table 5 of Analytical annex to 'A world-class education system: The Advanced British Standard consultation'

the amount of time students spend benefitting from great teaching, which we know can transform outcomes. Under the ABS, 16-19 year-olds will benefit from at least 1,475 hours of structured time with a teacher over the course of their programme.

We want to invite views on how to balance the hours associated with ABS study programmes, so increased teaching time accommodates the increased breadth of the ABS and its focus on English and maths, without compromising on depth of knowledge and skill.

Balance of guided learning hours vs self-directed study

We expect students to undertake a large amount of independent study currently, and also offer less time with a teacher. We understand schools and colleges expect A level students, for example, to spend the same amount of time studying independently as they are taught (so 360 hours over a two-year programme on top of the 360 GLH traditionally associated with A levels). Students undertaking a large full-time technical programme, such as T Levels, might spend a bit less time than this on independent study, given a significant proportion of a student's week is spent developing and practicing skills through activity such as industry placements.

The ability to study independently is important to build, especially to pave the way to further and higher education. We also know, though, that disadvantaged students are more likely to struggle with the space and equipment for independent study⁶⁶, and are also more likely to benefit from a great teacher⁶⁷. We therefore propose that through the ABS we should increase the ratio of GLH compared to self-directed study, with more taught time to improve outcomes – especially for disadvantaged students.

Question 25: To what extent do you support the proposal for increased teaching time relative to self-directed study? We particularly welcome any evidence of how this is balanced currently.

Total size of subjects

Decisions on the exact amount of time per subject (both GLH and self-directed study) should be led by decisions on content. We propose, however, that:

- Majors need to cover sufficient depth of content to support onward progression, which includes, for example, covering at least 90% of the content covered by A levels now. The GLH associated with majors may therefore need to be in the region of 300-350 over the course of a programme, only slightly less than the 360

⁶⁶ [EEF, 'Homework' \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](https://www.eef.org.uk/eef-projects/eef-projects-2017-2020/eef-projects-2017-2020-10/eef-projects-2017-2020-10-10/eef-projects-2017-2020-10-10-10)

⁶⁷ J. Hattie. Visible Learning. 2008. and [EEF, 'High-quality teaching' \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](https://www.eef.org.uk/eef-projects/eef-projects-2017-2020/eef-projects-2017-2020-10/eef-projects-2017-2020-10-10/eef-projects-2017-2020-10-10-10)

normally associated with A levels. They would need to be at the upper end of this range if we are to rebalance toward more teaching time.

- Minors should be smaller in size, while still offering rigour and high-quality content. If they were roughly half the size of a major, the GLH would be 150-175. They would need to be at the upper end if we rebalance to more teaching time, and we are interested in evidence about whether this would be a sufficient minimum amount of time for students to spend on English and maths (which all will be taking, to at least a minor level).
- Double majors need to cover sufficient depth to support students who are specialising or who are reaching for occupational competency. If they were double the size of majors, the GLH would be 600-700.
- Level 2 subjects should provide students with the skills they need to transition effectively into the workplace or into further study. At Level 2, building on the current qualifications reform work, we expect around 300 total GLH for the study of subject(s) other than English and maths in most one-year programmes, and up to around 900 hours for the study of subjects other than English and maths in most two-year programmes. This could, for example, mean students at Level 2 taking one larger subject of roughly 600 GLH, alongside another subject of roughly 300 GLH, plus English, maths and EEP.

We will also need to decide how far we should standardise the hours associated with subjects of the same size and level, e.g. for Level 3 majors or occupational double majors. Standardising would help students mix and match different subjects to build a manageable study programme, meaning choice is not led by associated hours and programmes do not become too large to be manageable. It would also mean, however, reducing content in some areas, including that which has been set to meet employer-led occupational standards: for example, the scope of content for T Level core components (which would become a single major under the ABS reforms) typically varies between 500 and 680 GLH depending on the occupational area (compared to our proposed size for majors of 300-350 GLH). It may be possible for some rebalancing between the double major and single major on the ABS occupational programme (i.e. between the current T Level “core” and occupational specialist content), to deliver consistency. However, the total content of some T Levels would still exceed these hours.

Question 26: If you have views on the appropriate size of subjects, including whether we should standardise associated hours, please share them below. We particularly welcome any evidence of GLH delivered currently.

Employability, enrichment and pastoral activities (EEP)

EEP activities are an important part of current post-16 study programmes. They enable students to develop personally and prepare for future education, employment and life.

Currently this time can be used for activities organised at the discretion of the school or college, including: employer, university, and volunteering visits; tutorials; work experience; one to one support; English language support where a student is a non-native English speaker and does not yet have English skills of a level high enough to study for English qualifications; mentoring and coaching; preparation for work; and enrichment activities, like sport and creative activities. International examples of similar activity include the requirement for upper secondary students in France⁶⁸ and Italy⁶⁹ to take civic education, and timetabled guidance and support in the French baccalaureate's vocational pathways, which can include employment preparation⁷⁰.

We propose that EEP activities as part of these reforms are based on the following principles:

- they enrich students' wider personal development, health and wellbeing;
- they prepare students for future life, study and work; and
- they support the development of students' study skills.

We anticipate that most students will participate in at least 150 hours of EEP activities over the course of their programme. This is in line with the duration currently specified for two-year 16-19 study programmes currently and means students can access on average two hours per week of EEP time.

As now, some students may participate in fewer hours and some more, depending on their needs and the wider demands of their programme. Effective EEP is important for all programmes, although this is particularly true for students at Level 2, who may require specific support to ensure that they are able to successfully progress at the end of their course. This activity will not be assessed, but we are interested in views on whether there are aspects of EEP activity that should be included for all students.

Question 27: If you have views or evidence on how time for employability, enrichment and pastoral can best be used, please share below. We particularly welcome views and evidence about how to support students with additional challenges, e.g. lower prior attainment or the most disadvantaged.

Industry placements

Industry placements, currently delivered through T Levels, give students the opportunity to practice the skills they have learnt in the classroom in a real-world environment, building their confidence to move into work at the end of their course. They also give employers the chance to see what a student is capable of over a sustained period of

⁶⁸ [Teaching and learning in general upper secondary education \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/european-council/en/teaching-learning-general-upper-secondary-education)

⁶⁹ [Teaching and learning in general upper secondary education \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/european-council/en/teaching-learning-general-upper-secondary-education)

⁷⁰ [Teaching and learning in vocational upper secondary education \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/european-council/en/teaching-learning-vocational-upper-secondary-education)

time, which can lead to permanent job offers and employers securing a pipeline of talent.

We envisage industry placements will form part of the Level 3 ABS occupational programme, specifically for those who select a double major designed to develop and assess occupational entry competence. That means not all students on the occupational programme will take an industry placement, depending on whether their programme is designed for occupational entry competence or progression onto further study. The industry placements will be based on the same principles⁷¹ as in T Levels, including that they take place in the working environment which is relevant to the occupation, follow a minimum specified duration (at least 315 hours) and are accessible to students with SEND.

Building on what we have learned through offering industry placements for T Levels, and the flexibilities which have been introduced since their inception, we are seeking views on how we should ensure students have access to high-quality placements whilst being deliverable to large numbers of students.

Question 28: If you have views on how we can encourage employers to offer industry placements and what further support education providers will require, please share below.

⁷¹ [T Level industry placements delivery guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Student journeys

These journeys demonstrate how different students will take different pathways through the Advanced British Standard (ABS) depending on their needs and their intended destinations.



Alice

Alice got mainly grades 9 to 4 at GCSE, including English and maths.

She is taking
ABS occupational at Level 3

Majors

Design,
Surveying and
Planning for
Construction

Double:

Civil
Engineering

Industry Placement with
a construction employer

Minors

Maths

English

Alice wants to work in construction as a civil engineer, through a degree apprenticeship.

Fatima

Fatima got mainly grades 9 to 4 at GCSE, including in English and maths.

She is taking
ABS at Level 3

Majors

Media,
Broadcast &
Production

English
Literature

History

Minors

Maths

Music

Fatima wants to study English Literature at university.



Embry

Embry got mainly grades 9 to 4 at GCSE, including in English and higher grades for maths and science.

He is taking
ABS at Level 3

Majors

Chemistry

Biology

Maths

Minors

English

Physics

Embry wants to train to become a doctor.



In all examples, students will have time to take part in **Employability, Enrichment and Pastoral** activities.



Adam

Adam got mainly grades 5 to 2 at GCSE, including a 3 in English and a 2 in maths.

He is taking
Level 2 occupational programme

Social Care –
Adult Care Worker

Maths

English

Adam wants to work
in the care sector.



Emily

Emily got mainly grades 5 to 2 at GCSE, including a 3 for English and a 4 in maths.

She is taking
Level 2 Transition Programme

Digital

Maths

English

Emily wants to move onto a L3 occupational ABS to become an IT support technician.

Section 3: A strong core of maths and English

Background

Under these reforms, each student will be required to study both maths and English to age 18, either as a major or minor subject, receiving a minimum teaching time of 150-175 hours per subject over the course. This will give our young people the skills they need to thrive in both work and life, improving their lifetime earnings and outcomes.⁷² It will also bring us into line with many countries such as Norway, South Korea, Estonia, Sweden, USA, Germany, Finland, Italy and Japan, where pupils continue to study maths and their native language throughout upper secondary education^{73,74,75}. In most cases, other countries⁷⁶ teach their native language as a standalone subject, though in France, students on general programmes are required to study French until their penultimate year, and then philosophy in their final year⁷⁷. Most countries focus on a combination of developing reading, writing and communication and national literature.⁷⁸

As these subjects will be compulsory for all students, there will be a much wider range of prior attainment than for other subjects, as well as a wider range of destinations. Currently, for young people who turned 19 in 2021, 36% studied English at 16 (25% at Level 2 or below and 11% at Level 3). At age 17, 25% (15% at Level 2 or below, 10% at Level 3) studied English. For maths, it was similar albeit from a higher base – 43% studied maths at 16 (27% at Level 2 or below and 16% at Level 3) and 32% at 17 (18% at Level 2 or below, 14% at Level 3).⁷⁹

⁷² Estimated based on [GCSE attainment and lifetime earnings \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/gcse-attainment-and-lifetime-earnings) – Estimated using figures from Table 4 and Figures 6-6 and 6-7 from supplementary tables

⁷³ [Stronati, C. \(2023\), 'The design of upper secondary education across OECD countries: Managing choice, coherence and specialisation', OECD Education Working Papers, No. 288, OECD Publishing, Paris \(www.oecd-ilibrary.org\)](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/working-papers/288)

⁷⁴ [Jobs are changing, so should education | Royal Society](https://royalsocietypublishing.org/journal/rsos/10/20/200000)

⁷⁵ Majority of US states – [High School Graduation Requirements 2023 - Education Commission of the States \(ecs.org\)](https://ecs.org/high-school-graduation-requirements-2023)

⁷⁶ For example, Japan, Finland, Sweden, The Netherlands, and Italy. Also see footnote 72; [\[Germany\] https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/germany/teaching-and-learning-general-upper-secondary-education](https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/germany/teaching-and-learning-general-upper-secondary-education); [\[USA\] High School Graduation Requirements 2023 - Education Commission of the States \(ecs.org\)](https://ecs.org/high-school-graduation-requirements-2023)

⁷⁷ [Teaching and learning in general upper secondary education \(europa.eu\)](https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/germany/teaching-and-learning-general-upper-secondary-education)

⁷⁸ See footnote 73

⁷⁹ Table 3 and 4 of Analytical annex to 'A world-class education system: The Advanced British Standard consultation'

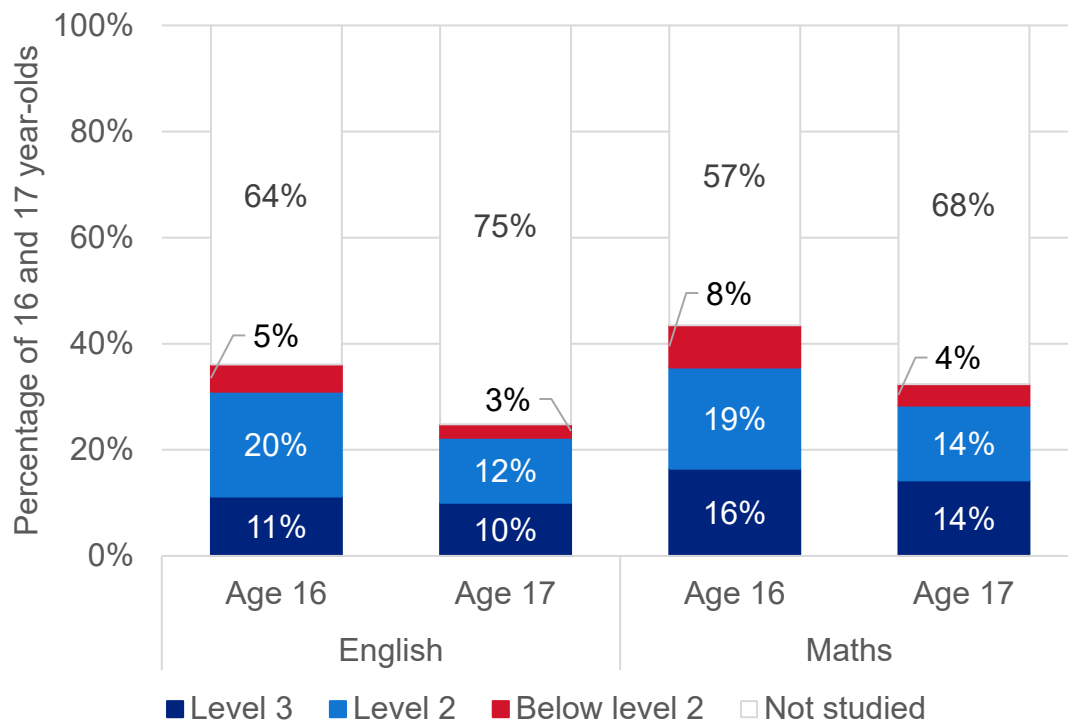


Figure 1: Young people age 16 and 17 studying English and maths

We will therefore design a system that ensures every student is able to access English and maths study that is sufficiently stretching and gives them the knowledge and skills they need to get on in life and work. There will be a clear set of English and maths options which reflect the diverse needs of the 16-19 cohort while supporting students to achieve to the highest possible level.

This section sets out and invites views on the design of maths and English as part of the ABS.

Proposal

Principles

We propose constructing a maths and English offer around the following overarching principles:

- **Content:** should be stretching and rigorous, giving all students the maths and English knowledge they need to get on in further study, life and work, and through that accumulated knowledge the skill to think critically, solve problems, collaborate with others and communicate effectively within these subjects.
- **Breadth:** study of maths and English should deliver curriculum breadth for students, recognising the cultural value of English as well as its practical use and recognising the importance of numerical knowledge and skills in life.

- **Number of options:** the number and purpose of options available should reflect the diverse needs of the 16-19 cohort, while ensuring that the choices available to students are sufficiently easy to understand and that providers are able to deliver them in practice.
- **Aspiration:** students will be supported both to consolidate their maths and English knowledge and skills and to develop them beyond what they achieved at age 16. Our ambition should be for students to take the highest level of these subjects that they can access.

Question 29: We propose that we develop the English and maths offer within these reforms around certain principles. To what extent do you support these principles?

Subject content

We want to seek views on the knowledge and skills for maths and English that should be prioritised to meet these principles and wider aims.

Building on the advice of the Expert Advisory Group on Maths to 18 and initial engagement with English teachers, academics, employers and FE associations, we propose that maths and English as part of the ABS should deliver on the following aims as a minimum. These are set out at a high level for now to understand wider views before more detailed content and curriculum design begins. We recognise in particular that we are earlier on the journey of articulating core knowledge and skills for English than maths, and welcome views.

- Each student should further consolidate, develop and build on the mathematics and English knowledge gained at key stage 4 and be able to apply as part of their wider programmes (or if they did not manage to achieve their Level 2 in key stage 4, give them further opportunities to do so).
- Each student should, at a minimum, have a good understanding of the fundamental mathematics and English knowledge needed for life and be able to apply that knowledge. For example, the knowledge needed to enable good financial decision making, manage their personal finances, understand key concepts, and communicate effectively.
- Each student should access opportunities to further develop, consolidate and apply the mathematics and English knowledge and skills needed to thrive in the world of work and to support further study.⁸⁰ This could include, for example: for maths, understanding of data, risk and probability and using maths to frame and

⁸⁰ [Hodgen, J., & Marks, R. \(2013\), 'The Employment Equation: Why our young people need more maths for today's jobs', The Sutton Trust. \(www.suttontrust.com\)](http://www.suttontrust.com)

solve problems in the real world; and for English, communication and information literacy⁸¹.

- For English in particular, programmes should increase students' breadth, recognising the cultural value of studying English, including literature to 18. This will support young people to develop fluency and command over English reading, writing and speaking which will unlock areas of interest, engagement with culture and developing independent interests in the future.

Question 30: To what extent do you support using the proposed knowledge and skills identified for maths and English to inform these components of the Advanced British Standard?

Subject options

Students will have access to a range of options at Levels 2 and 3 to meet the principles and aims outlined above.

Majors at Level 3

It should be our ambition for more students to study maths and English at major size than currently take A levels in these subjects (16% of the cohort take Level 3 maths and 11% take Level 3 English at age 16⁸²). We want to incentivise young people to take up the highest level of maths and English they can access, and which best support their progression. We therefore propose that there will be:

- Maths and further maths majors available, offering a depth of study that would enable students who are pursuing some STEM-oriented pathways to develop the more advanced mathematical knowledge they need to progress into HE. We propose to explore whether a major in applied maths is appropriate.
- English majors available, likely with one based on each of English literature and English language (though detailed subject specific content will be worked through in due course). Students wishing to pursue a progression path where English is a facilitating subject, e.g. onto English literature and university or onto a career in law or publishing, would take these majors to develop their English knowledge at greater depth. We are aware that other subjects may also support the development of English skills.

⁸¹ [The Skills Imperative 2035: An analysis of the demand for skills in the labour market in 2035 - NFER](#) identified communication and 'information literacy' as two of six 'essential employment skills' most in-demand by employers in the future. Reading comprehension, written comprehension, oral comprehension and oral expression all remain among the top 20 most 'utilised' skills.

⁸² Tables 3 and 4 of Analytical annex to 'A world-class education system: The Advanced British Standard consultation'

Minors at Level 3

For students not taking maths and English as a major, we propose that for both subjects there should be:

- A theoretical minor at Level 3, for students on a range of programmes who wish to access the theoretical knowledge that will develop advanced mathematics and literacy skills, but who do not require a major to support progression.
 - In maths, this will build on AS level maths and enable students to develop more advanced mathematical knowledge, theories, and concepts.
 - In English, this will build on AS level English literature with a focus on literary genres (drama, poetry and prose), contexts, themes and analysis. We are aware that other subjects may also support the development of English skills.
- An applied minor at Level 3, for students on a range of programmes and which will focus on consolidating understanding of fundamental mathematics and literacy skills (reading, writing, speaking), and mastering the application of them.
 - In maths, this will build on Core Maths qualifications – which are valued by the sector and underpin progression to HE and occupational study with a quantitative element. This would consolidate learning at key stage 4 but be framed and applied for everyday contexts.
 - In English, this could build on English language qualifications, but be rooted in relevant, vocabulary-boosting texts that build knowledge as a way to develop skills (e.g. there could be a focus on ‘English for Business’, which uses economic or management texts as the vehicle through which students develop their ability to understand and implement key tenets of English language). We welcome views on this.

With access to high-quality teaching and the right support, we hope that many students with a lower Level 2 pass (e.g. grade 4 or 5) can successfully go on to achieve Level 3 maths and English qualifications. As such, when designing maths and English options in the ABS it will be important that students with a lower Level 2 pass are encouraged and supported to go onto achieve Level 3 wherever possible, but also that we do not lock them into Level 3 study where it is too stretching, and students would be better served by consolidating their Level 2 knowledge. We are interested in views and evidence on how this could be achieved in practice. For example, through: a 'bridging curriculum' in the first stage of post-16 study to accelerate student readiness for Level 3 study; designing the Level 3 minor course to allow students to achieve Level 2 if, by the end of the ABS, they are not able to reach Level 3 standards; or alternative suggestions.

Question 31: We propose that there will be a range of English and maths majors and minors at Levels 3. To what extent do you support this proposal?

Question 32: How can we best support students who have secured lower Level 2 passes in English and maths at 16 (e.g. grade 4 or 5) to progress onto Level 3 study in these subjects?

We also propose taking steps for all institutions to offer at least a Level 3 applied maths minor earlier than the full roll-out of the ABS, having already begun to increase scale of Core Maths delivery. We expect a substantial amount of the content of Core Maths will become the applied maths minor. A universal offer here will remove initial barriers to student participation and enable greater numbers to take maths in an applied form, as an important step towards the ABS. To support this, we are introducing a dedicated Core Maths Premium, representing a significant contribution to Core Maths workforce costs.

Maths and English for students on the Level 3 ABS occupational programme

At present, elements of maths and English knowledge and skills are embedded into the subject content for T Levels. As outlined above, under the ABS, students on the occupational programme will study maths and English at minor level until the age of 18, receiving approximately 150-175 guided learning hours in each subject over the course of their ABS programme. As a result, we will need to consider how maths and English content will be delivered alongside, or as part of, the content of majors and double majors in the occupational programme. We anticipate that providers should still retain the flexibility to deliver English and maths content in an embedded manner, but with the expectation that content is delivered by subject specialists, covers the required hours and that students are supported to take the relevant maths and English minor qualifications as set out above.

Question 33: If you have views on how English and maths can be delivered for students taking the occupational programme, please share below.

Minors at Level 2

Our ambition should be, first and foremost, to raise standards pre-16 so that students enter the ABS with the knowledge and skills required to take Level 3 maths and English (30% of students do not achieve Level 2 maths (equivalent to a grade 4 at GCSE) by the end of key stage 4 and around 30% do not achieve Level 2 in English⁸³).

Level 2 minors will be taught over two full years, with a minimum of around 150-175 guided learning hours. This will provide significantly more time than our current offer and students will benefit from more exposure to high-quality teaching. We propose having two high-quality Level 2 maths and English minors, building on GCSEs and FSQs, that will consolidate and develop core knowledge and skills taught at key stage

⁸³ [Level 2 and 3 attainment age 16 to 25, Academic year 2021/22 \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.statistics.service.gov.uk) – only includes students who were in the mainstream state sector in year 11

4. We would welcome views on how far GCSEs and FSQs should form the basis of this offer.

Question 34: If you have views on how existing Level 2 qualifications (GCSEs and FSQs) could provide the basis for two-year Level 2 study for English and maths within the Advanced British Standard, please share below.

Question 35: If you have further views on what students will study as part of the ABS, or anything else covered in Chapter 2, please share below.

Chapter 3: How students will be assessed and graded

This chapter seeks initial views on the assessment, grading and awarding principles that should inform further development of the Advanced British Standard (ABS). There will be subsequent technical questions that we are continuing to work through with Ofqual. Ofqual will then consult on detailed assessment arrangements in due course.

Background

Our current assessment and grading approaches for qualifications are based on the core principles of fairness, validity and reliability. Through increasing the rigour of A levels and designing high-quality T Levels, we have made our qualification system knowledge-rich and rooted in the skills employers need. We want to build on these principles to ensure our reforms take the best of our current assessment approaches and provide students with the best vehicle to take their chosen next step.

Several organisations play a role in the assessment and awarding of qualifications in England. DfE is responsible for the policy on qualifications taken by students aged 16-19 and the subject content of these qualifications. Ofqual is the independent regulator and has several statutory objectives including to secure standards and to promote public confidence in qualifications. IfATE works with employers, professional associations and other employer representative bodies to develop, approve, review and revise employer standards so that certain qualifications meet the needs of employers and the economy. While DfE, Ofqual and IfATE have distinct roles and responsibilities, we share a common interest in ensuring public confidence in the assessment and grading of the ABS.

Proposal

Assessment aims and principles

A key principle behind the ABS reforms is the bringing together of options once deemed as 'technical' and 'academic' into a single qualification framework. All Level 3 double majors, majors and minors within the ABS will need to follow a single set of design and assessment criteria to ensure consistency between subjects and the maintenance of standards. We will look to retain the rigour of current approaches; in most instances this will mean exam-based assessment. However, the criteria will need to allow for some non-examined assessment, but only where it is the most appropriate and valid way to assess the skills and knowledge students need to demonstrate. At Level 2, we will work with Ofqual to consider how subjects will be assessed, but, as with Level 3, we will be led by the skills and knowledge students need to demonstrate and the most appropriate and valid way to assess this.

Ofqual will continue to build on our current qualification reform programmes to ensure all components and assessments are rigorous, building on the best of the current system. As part of this, we will also consider the opportunities the ABS may bring, for example, in adopting digital solutions which would open up new possibilities and allow us to be more innovative in our assessment approaches.

We propose that this single set of design and assessment criteria for Level 3 components is drawn and built out from what we have learnt through A level and T Level design:

- **Components must be rigorous with high-level content specified by DfE, and – where relevant – that content informed by the occupational standards specified by IfATE.** Further detail on the subject content is set out in Chapter 2 Section 2.
- **Content will look different across subjects, but there should be a presumption of knowledge-rich content.** Some content will be more abstract or theoretical, and in other subjects, content may be focused more on practical and applied knowledge and application of skills.
- **As currently, assessment will primarily be by exam unless the content cannot validly be assessed by exam, in which case assessment can be non-examined or a balanced mix of both.** Decisions will continue to be led and determined by the knowledge and skills that a student needs to demonstrate in each subject. We believe that for most subjects, exams remain the best and fairest form of assessment and we would seek to maintain this approach. However, there are some practical skills and/or occupational competency which can only be validly assessed in other ways, that look at work done under real-life conditions. We will fit the form of assessment to the nature of the skills and knowledge being assessed, with an underpinning focus on ensuring assessment is fair, accurately reflecting what students really know and can do independently.
- **Assessments will be summative,** generally taken at the end of the course or period of study, enabling students to demonstrate and synoptically apply knowledge and skills learnt. This will continue to help guard against over-assessment and avoid a cycle of retakes by many students to ensure time is primarily focussed on learning.
- **Assessment burden will be minimised,** further focusing time on learning rather than assessment and minimising potential impacts on students' wellbeing.

Assessment design, as it does currently, will ultimately reflect the need to effectively, accurately, reliably and validly assess students' ability to use and combine their knowledge and skills, whilst also considering practical delivery needs and the balance of activities for students.

We welcome views on the above assessment principles from which a single set of design and assessment criteria would be drawn and whether there is anything else, together with Ofqual and IfATE, we should be considering at this stage.

Question 36: We have proposed assessment principles to underpin the Advanced British Standard. To what extent do you support these assessment principles?

Approach to grading

We consider the below principles to be central to any approach to the grading of the ABS, for Level 3 and Level 2 programmes. Grading will:

- **Be fair to all students**, regardless of individual background.
- Have a scale that is **simple to understand and consistent across subjects**.
- **Allow for performance and the level of knowledge and skills obtained to be accurately reflected**.
- **Be recognised and have currency** with employers and FE and HE providers, and enable student progression.
- **Mean student performance is comparable over time**, with standards maintained year on year, as well as between awarding organisations each year.

Question 37: We have proposed principles to underpin the new grading system. To what extent do you support these grading principles?

Grades/scores for majors and minors

We propose that students will need individual grades, scores or marks for each major and minor (or equivalent) component they take at Levels 2 and 3. This ensures it is straightforward for students to understand their achievements and enables employers and post-18 education providers to differentiate between candidates and understand the particular knowledge, skills and capabilities they will bring, in the subjects most relevant to them. This is crucial for them to effectively select students for progression.

Question 38: To what extent do you support the proposal that students will receive individual grades/marks for each major and minor (or equivalents) studied within the Advanced British Standard?

Overall Advanced British Standard award

There is a choice about whether, in addition to the individual grades or marks, students should receive an overall ABS award at the end of the course of study. The purpose of this would be to clearly demonstrate a student's performance across their entire programme, including in maths and English, in a simple and understandable way, and provide added value to universities and employers, above what could be seen by looking at the individual grades or marks. This relates back in part to the overall naming:

as we look at an overall award, we need to decide whether we would take a similar approach across Level 3 and Level 2 programmes.

Internationally there are several different awarding models in baccalaureate-style systems. For example, some create an overall (or aggregated) score based on individual component scores, for example, the International Baccalaureate (IB)⁸⁴ and French *Baccalauréat Général*. Both also require minimum conditions to be met, for example, French *Baccalauréat Général* students need to achieve at least 10 out of 20 points to pass overall⁸⁵. Some other countries do not provide an overall score or minimum conditions, but rather provide individual marks or scores for subjects (e.g. the Irish Leaving Certificate approach⁸⁶)⁸⁷.

We propose that students should receive an overall award, in the form of a certificate or statement of achievement. This would recognise that a student has completed their ABS at Level 3, for example, and provide employers and post-18 education providers with a breakdown of achievement across all components. This would allow them to judge student aptitude to progress, as well as showing performance across the full breadth of the ABS.

Question 39: Do you agree that students should receive some type of overall Advanced British Standard award? If yes, what value could an ‘ABS award’ add on top of individual component grades, particularly for higher education providers and/or employers?

There are different choices on what an overall award could look like and also whether there should be certain minimum attainment conditions students need to achieve to receive the award, for example passing all components or a set proportion of components.

We believe minimum conditions would add value as they would give employers and post-18 education providers confidence that students have met certain standards across the depth and/or breadth of their 16-19 study. It could also incentivise students to engage with the full breadth of their ABS programme. However, we are aware having conditions will mean some students will not achieve an ABS award (although would still be able to progress with the individual component marks received). We recognise that we will want to retain a degree of flexibility when designing these conditions. For example, factoring in that some Level 3 ABS students will be taking a Level 2 English

⁸⁴ [International Baccalaureate \(IB\) Diploma | UCAS Qualification Information Profiles](#)

⁸⁵ [Assessment in general upper secondary education \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁸⁶ [Assessment in Upper Secondary Education \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁸⁷ It should be noted that the ABS is not directly comparable to the IB, French Baccalauréat Général or Irish Leaving Certificate which are narrower programmes which broadly cover ‘academic’ subjects.

and / or maths minor in their programme and should still be able to receive an overall award, irrespective of the fact one or more component may be at Level 2.

Question 40: What minimum attainment conditions, if any, should a student need to achieve to receive a Level 3 Advanced British Standard award?

Taking the above together, in terms of what an ABS award could look like there are three broad options:

- **Our current lead option (1): a certificate or statement of achievement** recognising a student has completed their ABS programme and met the minimum attainment conditions to receive an overall award. This would demonstrate to employers and post-18 providers student performance across the full programme. A certificate would note the marks or grade received in individual components, but there would not be an overall aggregate score or grade that sits above these marks.
- **Alternative option (2): A certificate or statement of achievement without any minimum conditions required to receive.** This would effectively mean all students who completed an ABS programme would receive a certificate of achievement, noting the breakdown of marks or grades across the breadth of study.
- **Alternative option (3): An aggregate ABS score or grade,** based on the individual component scores or marks received. A certificate of achievement may then be awarded on the basis of this score and any other conditions set for passing the ABS. Having an aggregate score would clearly mark the ABS a standalone award and would reward students who show high performance across the breadth of their study.

We are aware that introducing aggregation would add significant complexities into the grading and awarding process, including in drawing equivalence between different subjects and different levels. In addition, currently, through the UCAS Tariff, Level 3 qualifications regulated by Ofqual are already assigned a numerical score to allow university admissions teams to make comparisons across different types of qualifications. As a result, we would like views on the value an ABS aggregate score would add, over the other options.

Question 41: Which of the Advanced British Standard award options outlined do you prefer and think would add most value? Please include any evidence if available.

We are aware any future decisions taken on design, assessment and awarding will have implications for the role of awarding organisations in designing, delivering and awarding qualifications to students. We will continue to engage closely with awarding

organisations, as well as Ofqual and IfATE, as we consider and reflect on design questions and assessment and grading arrangements.

Question 42: If you have further views on how students will be assessed and graded under these reforms, or anything else covered in Chapter 3, please share below.

Chapter 4: Supporting 16-19 providers to implement these reforms

This chapter seeks views on the implications of the Advanced British Standard (ABS) for 16-19 education providers and workforce to ensure we can put the right support in place for the sector and maximise the breadth of offer available to students.

Background

The aims of the ABS go far beyond qualification reform and encompass all aspects of 16-19 education, as well as the pre-16 pathways that feed into it and the subsequent routes of progression into education, apprenticeships or employment. Through this consultation we are looking to build our understanding of the wide-ranging implications that these reforms will have for providers of 16-19 education and their workforce. We recognise that the final design of the qualification framework will significantly influence the changes that are needed to implement these reforms successfully. The implications for providers will also vary depending on their type and specific context. The evidence we gather through this consultation will help guide further development and planning.

This reform will take a decade to deliver and we will continue to engage the sector as proposals are developed. Implementation will take place in a structured way, building on the strengths of the currently reformed system. We are committed to working in partnership with the sector at each stage to ensure that the required system capacity and supporting processes are in place.

Proposal

Preserving the strengths of 16-19 education and protecting the students it supports

In working towards the benefits of the ABS, we must not lose sight of the students that will complete their education under the existing 16-19 system. Ensuring the quality and coherence of 16-19 education up until the introduction of the ABS is a priority, as is safeguarding the value of the qualifications students achieve during this time. Our current reforms to enhance 16-19 education will therefore continue, both to maximise the outcomes for these students and to lay the groundwork for the successful implementation of the ABS.

These reforms include a continued commitment to the roll out of new T Level subjects. T Levels remain a high-quality option for students who are clear that they want to specialise in a particular occupational area: they are robust, rigorous and grounded in the views of employers, ensuring content is directly relevant to occupations. T Level rollout is also essential to the implementation of the ABS, as T Levels will form the

backbone of the ABS Occupational programme. Providers can be confident that delivering T Levels will support their future transition to the ABS.

We will also continue to implement the qualifications review at Levels 2 and 3. Ensuring that every post-16 qualification approved for public funding has a distinct purpose, is high-quality and supports progression will be vital for the transition to a simpler menu of distinct subjects under the ABS.

As we have set out, the success of the ABS goes beyond qualification change. The current system of 16-19 education has many strengths. Preserving these strengths will be vital to the successful implementation of these reforms and important to build upon to maximise their potential benefits.

Question 43: What strengths in the current approach to 16-19 education should we aim to preserve under the Advanced British Standard?

Growing and supporting the workforce needed for the ABS

The success of any educational reform relies on ensuring that the workforce has the skills, capacity and support it needs to deliver it. To deliver the ABS we must continue to attract, retain and develop the highly-skilled teachers needed to inspire the next generation of students. From new graduates looking for their first teaching role, through to industry experts who are passionate about sharing their skills, we want to ensure people have a pathway into teaching and receive the training and support to thrive.

We recognise that the introduction of the ABS, with the commitment to additional teaching hours and subject breadth, will have significant workforce implications for providers of 16-19 education, who already face teacher shortages, particularly in STEM subjects. With approximately an equal number of 16-19 students in schools and FE providers⁸⁸, delivering the ABS across will require a joint approach to growing and developing the workforce.

The details of the changes required, including the number of additional teachers and other staff, as well as the training needed, will depend on the final design of the qualifications and the decisions made by institutions. For example, the range of subjects they provide, and how they choose to deploy their staff. As a result, the responses to this consultation will help us refine the design of the ABS, and in parallel, we will consider how best to step up recruitment and retention of our workforce.

⁸⁸ [Participation in education, training and employment age 16 to 18, Calendar year 2022 \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

We have already taken action to support the workforce, in line with the commitments in our 2019 Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy⁸⁹ and our 2021 Skills for Jobs White Paper⁹⁰. We need to continue investing in the future workforce, both at pre-16 and 16-19. We have started this with the significant additional downpayment of funding, set out in the Introduction. We will further develop our plans for the workforce through the ABS White Paper. Our future workforce strategy will build on the important actions to date for schools and FE, including to: support new teachers into the profession; invest in growing the workforce; deliver high-quality training and support for new and existing teachers; and support the workload and wellbeing of teachers.

Question 44: What opportunities and challenges do you see for the recruitment, retention and deployment of staff as a result of implementing the Advanced British Standard?

Question 45: What staff training do you think may be required to implement the Advanced British Standard successfully?

Wider opportunities and challenges for 16-19 provision, including ensuring a broad offer for all students

The implications of the ABS for 16-19 education extend beyond the workforce and are likely to touch on most aspects of how education is provided at this phase. This includes ensuring that: there are sufficient, suitable estates and facilities to deliver the increased scale and breadth of the ABS; accountability processes align with and incentivise its intended aims; and admissions arrangements reflect the changes in qualification structure. Changes that may be required to support students to access a good education, such as careers guidance and financial support, are covered in Chapter 5.

As with the workforce implications, the detail of the wider changes needed to implement the ABS successfully will be developed over time. For example, the required changes to providers' estates and infrastructure will reflect not only the expectation of increased teaching hours, but also the breadth of offer for individual students.

Increased breadth of 16-19 study is a vital aim of the ABS. We recognise that it may be difficult for all providers to offer the full range of ABS subjects. As a minimum, our aim is for all young people to be able to access any of the ABS subjects at a provider within a reasonable travel distance of where they live. They should also be able to access a provider that offers the combination of subjects that will best support their chosen future pathway. Delivering this broad offer will pose greater challenges in rural areas and other areas with fewer accessible providers. We will continue to engage the sector on the

⁸⁹ [Teacher recruitment and retention strategy \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/424222/teacher-recruitment-and-retention-strategy.pdf)

⁹⁰ [Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/424222/skills-for-jobs-lifelong-learning-for-opportunity-and-growth.pdf)

best ways to overcome these barriers and maximise the opportunities for students. We would welcome views on how to ensure that young people are not disadvantaged in the ABS offer available to them based on where they live.

Question 46: We are interested in the changes that may need to be made to deliver the Advanced British Standard for all students, regardless of where they live. What changes do you think may be required in the following areas:

- a. Buildings/estates?
- b. Technology?
- c. Provider landscape?
- d. Accountability arrangements?
- e. Admissions?
- f. Transportation?

Question 47: If you have further views on how the Advanced British Standard could impact 16-19 providers, or anything else covered in Chapter 4, please share below.

Chapter 5: Maximising the benefits of the Advanced British Standard for students and the wider system

This chapter seeks views on the implications of Advanced British Standard reforms for students and wider groups, and how we can maximise benefits and mitigate any risks.

Background

All parts of society stand to benefit from ensuring that tomorrow's workforce has the breadth and depth of education that the ABS aims to provide. Since 16-19 education does not operate in isolation, the ABS reforms will have implications for a wider group of people and organisations, including pre-16 education providers, post-18 education providers (including higher education, apprenticeship and adult education), employers, adult learners, people with protected characteristics, the environment and learners in other parts of the United Kingdom and overseas.

We have set out some areas of particular interest below, but welcome views on any aspects of the reforms, including those not covered in the previous chapters.

Proposal

High-quality and coherent pathways from pre-16 education

The success of these reforms will be built upon the foundation of a broad, rigorous and high-quality pre-16 education for all children, one which supports coherent and ambitious pathways all the way from early years, through 16-19 education or an apprenticeship, and onto further study and rewarding employment.

Work on this is already underway. Since publishing the Schools White Paper in March 2022, we have made progress in delivering our commitments and working towards our ambitions for 2030 through the hard work of teachers and leaders. This work is focused on levelling up education and improving social mobility, grounded in high standards and expectations for all, with additional support for disadvantaged pupils. We are working hard to ensure:

- An excellent teacher for every child, including delivering world-class training and professional development at every stage of their career.
- High standards of curriculum, attendance and behaviour by making sure that every child is taught an ambitious and stretching curriculum; as well as by supporting school leaders to establish safe and secure schools and to drive attendance back to pre-pandemic levels.
- Targeted support for every child who needs it, including small group tutoring for children who fall behind.

- A stronger and fairer school system that works for every child by encouraging the growth of strong trusts and by giving all organisations in the school system a clearly defined role.

Providing every young person with a broad, ambitious, knowledge-rich curriculum, taught by highly skilled teachers is essential to the task of levelling up opportunity. GCSEs and the emphasis on an academic core of the EBacc subjects will remain an integral part of secondary education following the introduction of the ABS. Sutton Trust research reveals, for example, that studying the EBacc can help improve a young person's performance in English and maths.⁹¹ Alongside this academic core, we will consider how best to align vocational and technical qualifications at 14-16, such as Technical Awards, with the ABS.

Externally-assessed examinations at the end of pre-16 education will remain, as we believe that this is the best and fairest way to ensure children learn and retain knowledge. The ABS will increase the breadth of students' post-16 study, though there will continue to be a natural narrowing of the number of subjects that young people take as they progress through their education. Providing students with a reliable record of their achievements at 16 will support them to make informed decisions about their future, including for the many students that change institutions at this point. GCSEs will also remain important for understanding how well a school is performing, celebrating success, targeting improvement and enabling young people and their families to make informed choices about schools.

We recognise the importance of ensuring that as much time as possible is available for high-quality teaching and learning. We will work with Ofqual, schools, experts, parents and students to look at the type and format of GCSE examinations to identify ways to reduce the burdens of assessment, while retaining the breadth and rigour of pre-16 education. This work will be informed by the final design of the ABS. We will begin to consider these issues next year, informed by the responses to this consultation, and will provide further information following publication of the ABS White Paper.

We are keen to hear your suggestions for the further adjustments that may be needed to pre-16 education to maximise the benefits of these reforms for all young people, especially those children facing the biggest challenges. This includes children with SEND or in alternative provision, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, children with caring responsibilities and children in care or care leavers.

⁹¹ [Allen and Thompson \(2016\), 'Changing the subject: How are the EBacc and Attainment 8 reforms changing results?', Education Datalab Research Brief 13, \(www.suttontrust.com\)](#)

Question 48: What changes to pre-16 education do you think will be needed to create effective pathways into the Advanced British Standard?

Informed student choices about education and careers

Students should know how a particular 16-19 programme, including apprenticeships, will help them to reach their intended education and employment destination when taking decisions on their post-16 options. Ensuring that young people have the right information, advice and guidance to take informed decisions will be particularly important for those students with less access to support outside of their education provider. We have already made great strides in improving the quality of careers advice through the National Careers Service, IfATE's new Occupational Maps and the work of the Careers and Enterprise Company. In a single joined-up system, we have an opportunity to go further to ensure that the variety of careers themselves are also seen as having more even value.

Question 49: If you have views on how students can be supported to make informed choices about their Advanced British Standard programme or apprenticeship – linking to their prior attainment, abilities, interests and future ambitions – please share below.

Additional support for all young people to succeed

All young people should be able to benefit from these reforms. The factors that currently support young people to succeed in 16-19 education will continue to be important in achieving our ambitions for the ABS. We are seeking views on what further support may be needed, in particular for groups of students that face additional barriers to education and who will continue to require extra support if they are to realise the benefits of the ABS. This includes those groups highlighted above for pre-16 education.

The SEND and alternative provision Improvement Plan⁹² includes a focus on improving the experiences of young people with SEND and those in alternative provision so that they receive the support they need to transition into and out of post-16 settings.

Increasing students' time with great teachers is likely to have particular benefit for disadvantaged students, as set out in Chapter 1. Increased hours may, however, reduce the ability of students to find and do paid work alongside their studies. It will also pose challenges for young people with caring responsibilities. We would welcome views on the support that will be needed to prevent this becoming a barrier to participation for these young people.

⁹² [SEND and alternative provision improvement plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612112/SEND_and_alternative_provision_improvement_plan_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

Providing support for students' wellbeing and mental health will continue to underpin their success in education and in life. Our intention to increase quality teaching time offers significant benefits for students and will bring 16-19 education in England closer to many other countries. We are, however, conscious that the overall burden of education must remain manageable for young people and that additional support will continue to be needed for some students. The substantial additional investment in mental health care is one part of that additional support. Nationally, government is expanding and transforming mental health care, with an additional £2.3 billion investment a year by March 2024 meaning 345,000 more children and young people will be able to access NHS-funded mental health support.⁹³

Question 50: If you have views or evidence on the additional support that may be needed to enable students with SEND to access the Advanced British Standard, please share below.

Question 51: If you have views or evidence on the additional support that may be needed to enable other groups of students to access the Advanced British Standard, please share below. Examples of these groups could include disadvantaged students and students with caring responsibilities.

Clear and effective pathways into post-18 education and training

The ABS must offer clear and effective pathways for those students looking to progress into post-18 education and training. This includes HE, Institutes of Technology, apprenticeships, and other adult education and training pathways, such as Higher Technical Qualifications. As set out in the earlier sections of the consultation, ensuring that the content and assessment of the ABS support these pathways will be vital – with implications for the curriculums and admissions processes of post-18 education providers. We are seeking any further views on the implications of the ABS for post-18 education providers that we need to consider when developing the qualification.

Question 52: If you have views on how to ensure the Advanced British Standard provides effective pathways into post-18 education or study, please share below.

Supporting a competitive and dynamic economy by meeting the needs of employers

Ultimately, we are looking for these reforms to set young people up for successful and rewarding careers, which will underpin the future success of our economy. Similar to post-18 education and training providers, employers will have a significant interest in the content and assessment of the ABS, covered in the earlier sections of the consultation. This includes the emphasis on providing young people with the necessary breadth of

⁹³ [How we are supporting mental health services in England - Department of Health and Social Care Media Centre \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2023/05/24/how-we-are-supporting-mental-health-services-in-england/)

knowledge and skills, and ensuring that assessment provides employers with the information they need to make informed decisions about the knowledge and skills that individuals have acquired. We would welcome any further views on the best way to ensure that these reforms meet the needs of employers and support young people to succeed in a rapidly changing labour market.

Question 53: If you have views on how to ensure the Advanced British Standard reforms meet the needs of employers, please share below.

Other groups taking post-16 qualifications that may be affected by these reforms

We are aware that these reforms may have implications for groups of students who are not the primary focus of the ABS in England. These groups include adults in further and community education providers, students in custodial settings, students in independent schools and students that take English-board qualifications, such as A levels, in other locations, such as Wales, Northern Ireland, the Crown Dependencies and overseas. We are keen to hear any views on the implications for these groups and the actions that should be taken in response.

Question 54: If you have views on the impacts of the Advanced British Standard reforms on other groups of students who take post-16 qualifications, please share below.

The potential equalities and environmental impacts of these reforms

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, Ministers must have due regard, when making decisions, to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The DfE has been taking this requirement into account in developing our proposals in this area. We have published our interim equalities impact assessment alongside this consultation. The aims of the ABS, including the significant increase in teaching hours, should disproportionately benefit groups of students with a need for additional support. We are keen to further understand the potential equalities impacts of our proposals and welcome any information that will help us to maximise the benefits for different groups

and mitigate any risks of negative outcomes. We will continue to update our equalities impact assessment as this work progresses, including in developing the White Paper.

We also take seriously our responsibilities under the Environmental Principles duty, which came into force on 1 November 2023. This duty introduced a requirement to assess the effects of any new or significantly revised policy on the environment, identifying opportunities to prevent environmental damage and to enhance environmental protection. We welcome any views at this early stage that would support our assessment of the environmental impacts of these reforms and maximise the opportunities that the policy presents. We will continue to update our assessment in developing the details of the policy.

Question 55: If you have views on the impacts (positive or negative) of the Advanced British Standard reforms on any group with a protected characteristic, please share below.

Question 56: If you have views on the impacts (positive or negative) of the Advanced British Standard reforms on the environment, please share below.

Question 57: If you have further views on the wider implications of the Advanced British Standard, or anything else covered in Chapter 5, please share below.

Question 58: If you have further views on anything else associated with the Advanced British Standard not covered in the questions throughout the consultation, please share below.

List of consultation questions

About You

1. What is your name?

2. What is your email address?

Please note: It is helpful to have your email address if we want to contact you about your answers to the questions in this consultation. You do not have to give your email address, and your views will be considered whether or not you give your email address.

3. Are you happy to be contacted directly about your response? (Options: Yes, No)

Please note: The Department may wish to contact you directly about your responses to help our understanding of the issues. If we do, we will use the email address you have given above.

4. Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

5. If you are responding as an individual, how would you describe yourself?

(Options: A student, pupil or learner; A parent or carer; Teacher, tutor or lecturer; Researcher, academic or education expert; Employer; Careers professional/specialist; Other member of the public)

If more than one applies, please select the one that you think is most important to understanding your consultation response.

6. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, which of the following best describes who/which part of the sector your organisation represents?

(Options: State-funded primary school, state-funded secondary school or sixth form, state funded special school or alternative provision, other state-funded school – e.g. middle school or boarding school, independent school, academy trust, 16-19 academies, Further Education Colleges (including designated Institutions), Specialist Colleges, Higher Education Institutions, Independent Training Providers (i.e. private sector and third sector providers), Employer, A representative organisation or trade association, Qualification awarding organisation, Charity, Local Authority, Government organisation/agency, Other (please specify))

7. What is the name of your organisation?

8. What is your role within the organisation?

9. Would you like us to keep your name and/or organisation confidential?

9a. Name (Options: Yes, No)

9b. Organisation (Options: Yes, No)

10. Would you like us to keep your responses confidential? (Options: Yes, No)

If yes, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

Confidentiality

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal data, may be subject to publication or disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. If you want all, or any part, of a response to be treated as confidential please explain why you consider it to be confidential. If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department for Education.

Privacy Notice

The personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) that you provide in response to this consultation is processed by the Department for Education as a data controller in accordance with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, and your personal information will only be used for the purposes of this consultation. The Department for Education relies upon the lawful basis of article 6 (1) (e) of the UK GDPR which process this personal data as part of its public task, which allows us to process personal data when this is necessary for conducting consultations as part of our function. Your information will not be shared with third parties unless the law allows or requires it. The personal information will be retained for a period of 12 months following the closure of the consultation period, after which it will be securely destroyed. You can read more about what the Department for Education does when we ask for and hold your personal information in our personal information charter, which can be found here: [Personal information charter - Department for Education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/672212/Personal-information-charter-Department-for-Education-2020.pdf)

Chapter 1

11. We propose several overarching aims and principles that should underpin the introduction and design of the Advanced British Standard. To what extent do you support these proposed aims and principles? If you have further views on this, please share below. (Options: Fully support, Somewhat support, Neither support nor oppose, Somewhat oppose, Fully oppose, Don't know Free text box: 250 words)

12. What do you think is the most important thing that the Advanced British Standard could achieve? (250 words)

13. If you have further views on the aims, principles and purposes of the Advanced British Standard, or anything else covered in Chapter 1, please share below. (250 words)

Chapter 2 – Section 1

14. We propose two main programmes at Level 3: Advanced British Standard and Advanced British Standard (occupational). Each will contain a range of separate components to support students. To what extent do you support the proposed design for the Level 3 Advanced British Standard programmes? If you have further views on this, please share below. (Options: Fully support, Somewhat support, Neither support nor oppose, Somewhat oppose, Fully oppose, Don't know. Free text box: 250 words)

15. We propose two main programmes at Level 2: transition and occupational. Each will contain a range of separate components to support students. To what extent do you support the proposed design for the Level 2 programmes? If you have further views on this, please share below. (Options: Fully support, Somewhat support, Neither support nor oppose, Somewhat oppose, Fully oppose, Don't know. Free text box: 250 words)

16. If you have views or evidence on how additional teaching hours at Level 2 could best be used to benefit students, please share below. (250 words)

17. If you have views or evidence on how a transition year could best be structured to support progression to Level 3, please share below. This could include reflections on the existing T Level foundation year. (250 words)

18. In branding terms, how do you think the Level 2 programmes should be considered in relation to Level 3 Advanced British Standard? (Options: Both Level 2 and Level 3 programmes should be framed as the Advanced British Standard, with no level-based badge provided to students; Both Level 2 and Level 3 programmes should be framed as the Advanced British Standard, but it should be clear whether a student reached Level 2 or Level 3; Level 2 programmes should have a different name and framing, separate from the Level 3 Advanced British Standard; Don't know)

19. To what extent do you support the proposal for Level 1 and Entry Level students? (Options: Fully support, Somewhat support, Neither support nor oppose, Somewhat oppose, Fully oppose, Don't know)

20. If you have views or evidence on how students at Level 1 and Entry Level would most benefit from additional teaching hours, please share below. (250 words)

Chapter 2 – Section 2

21. Once rolled out, we anticipate that the Advanced British Standard qualification framework will supersede the varied Level 3 qualification landscape for 16–19 year-olds (including A levels and T Levels etc.). If you have views on this, please share below. (250 words)

22. To what extent do you support the proposal for how subjects will be selected to be included in the Level 3 Advanced British Standard programmes? (Options: Fully support, Somewhat support, Neither support nor oppose, Somewhat oppose, Fully oppose, Don't know)

23. To what extent do you support the proposal for how subjects will be selected to be included in the Level 2 programmes? *(Options: Fully support, Somewhat support, Neither support nor oppose, Somewhat oppose, Fully oppose, Don't know)*

24. If you have further views on how subjects will be included in these reforms at either Level 2 or Level 3, please share below. *(250 words)*

25. To what extent do you support the proposal for increased teaching time relative to self-directed study? We particularly welcome any evidence of how this is balanced currently. *(Options: Fully support, Somewhat support, Neither support nor oppose, Somewhat oppose, Fully oppose, Don't know, Free text box: 250 words)*

26. If you have views on the appropriate size of subjects, including whether we should standardise associated hours, please share them below. We particularly welcome any evidence of GLH delivered currently. *(250 words)*

27. If you have views or evidence on how time for employability, enrichment and pastoral (EEP) can best be used, please share below. We particularly welcome views and evidence about how to support students with additional challenges, e.g. lower prior attainment or the most disadvantaged. *(250 words)*

28. If you have views on how we can encourage employers to offer industry placements and what further support education providers will require, please share below. *(250 words)*

Chapter 2 – Section 3

29. We propose that we develop the English and maths offer within these reforms around certain principles. To what extent do you support these principles? *(Options: Fully support, Somewhat support, Neither support nor oppose, Somewhat oppose, Fully oppose, Don't know)*

30. To what extent do you support using the proposed knowledge and skills identified for maths and English to inform these components of the Advanced British Standard? If you have further views on this, please share below. *(Options: Fully support, Somewhat support, Neither support nor oppose, Somewhat oppose, Fully oppose, Don't know. Free text box: 250 words)*

31. We propose that there will be a range of English and maths majors and minors at Levels 3. To what extent do you support this proposal? *(Options: Fully support, Somewhat support, Neither support nor oppose, Somewhat oppose, Fully oppose, Don't know)*

32. How can we best support students who have secured lower Level 2 passes in English and maths at 16 (e.g. grade 4 or 5) to progress onto Level 3 study in these subjects? *(250 words)*

33. If you have views on how English and maths can be delivered for students taking the occupational programme, please share below. *(250 words)*

34. If you have views on how existing Level 2 qualifications (GCSEs and FSQs) could provide the basis for two-year Level 2 study for English and maths within the Advanced British Standard , please share below. (250 words)

35. If you have further views on what students will study as part of the Advanced British Standard, or anything else covered in Chapter 2, please share below. (250 words)

Chapter 3

36. We have proposed assessment principles to underpin the ABS. To what extent do you support these assessment principles? If you have further views on this, please share below. (Options: Fully support, Somewhat support, Neither support nor oppose, Somewhat oppose, Fully oppose, Don't know. Free text box: 250 words)

37. We have proposed principles to underpin the new grading system. To what extent do you support these grading principles? If you have further views on this, please share below. (Options: Fully support, Somewhat support, Neither support nor oppose, Somewhat oppose, Fully oppose, Don't know. Free text box: 250 words)

38. To what extent do you support the proposal that students will receive individual grades/marks for each major and minor (or equivalents) studied within the Advanced British Standard? (Options: Fully support, Somewhat support, Neither support nor oppose, Somewhat oppose, Fully oppose, Don't know)

39. Do you agree that students should receive some type of overall Advanced British Standard award? If yes, what value could an 'ABS award' add on top of individual component grades, particularly for higher education providers and/or employers? (Options: Yes, No, Don't know. Free text box: 250 words)

40. What minimum attainment conditions, if any, should a student need to achieve to receive a Level 3 Advanced British Standard award? (Options: Pass all subjects at Level 3, except for English and maths (Level 2 pass accepted); Pass all subjects at Level 3, including English and maths; Pass a set proportion of subjects (e.g. 3 majors and 1 minor or 2 majors and 2 minors); Meet a minimum aggregate ABS score; No minimum attainment conditions; Don't know; Another condition not listed above (please specify - 250 words))

41. Which of the Advanced British Standard award options outlined do you prefer and think would add most value? Please include any evidence if available. (250 words)

42. If you have further views on how students will be assessed and graded under these reforms, or anything else covered in Chapter 3, please share below. (250 words)

Chapter 4

43. What strengths in the current approach to 16-19 education should we aim to preserve under the Advanced British Standard? (250 words)

44. What opportunities and challenges do you see for the recruitment, retention and deployment of staff as a result of implementing the Advanced British Standard? (250 words)

45. What staff training do you think may be required to implement the Advanced British Standard successfully? (250 words)

46. We are interested in the changes that may need to be made to deliver the Advanced British Standard for all students, regardless of where they live. What changes do you think may be required in the following areas:

46a. Buildings/estates? (250 words)

46b. Technology? (250 words)

46c. Provider landscape? (250 words)

46d. Accountability arrangements? (250 words)

46e. Admissions? (250 words)

46f. Transportation? (250 words)

47. If you have further views on how the Advanced British Standard could impact 16-19 providers, or anything else covered in Chapter 4, please share below. (250 words)

Chapter 5

48. What changes to pre-16 education do you think will be needed to create effective pathways into the Advanced British Standard? (250 words)

49. If you have views on how students can be supported to make informed choices about their Advanced British Standard programme or apprenticeship – linking to their prior attainment, abilities, interests and future ambitions – please share below. (250 words)

50. If you have views or evidence on the additional support that may be needed to enable students with SEND to access the Advanced British Standard, please share below. (250 words)

51. If you have views or evidence on the additional support that may be needed to enable other groups of students to access the Advanced British Standard, please

share them below. Examples of these groups include disadvantaged students and students with caring responsibilities. *(250 words)*

52. If you have views on how to ensure the Advanced British Standard provides effective pathways into post-18 education or study, please share below. *(250 words)*

53. If you have views on how to ensure the Advanced British Standard reforms meet the needs of employers, please share below. *(250 words)*

54. If you have views on the impacts of the Advanced British Standard reforms on other groups of students who take post-16 qualifications, please share them below. Examples of these groups could include adults in further and community education providers, students in custodial settings, and students in devolved administrations, Crown Dependencies or overseas. *(250 words)*

55. If you have views on the impacts (positive or negative) of the Advanced British Standard reforms on any group with a protected characteristic, please share below. *(250 words)*

56. If you have views on the impacts (positive or negative) of the Advanced British Standard reforms on the environment, please share below. *(250 words)*

57. If you have further views on the wider implications of the Advanced British Standard, or anything else covered in Chapter 5, please share below. *(250 words)*

58. If you have further views on anything else associated with the Advanced British Standard not covered in the questions throughout the consultation, please share below. *(250 words)*

Glossary

A level: Subject-based qualifications usually assessed by exams. They can lead to further study, training or work. A levels are usually studied over 2 years. Most students choose 3 subjects to study.

Accelerated apprenticeship: An accelerated apprenticeship is where the apprentice's planned duration is shorter (by at least 3 months) than the typical duration of the standard, based on prior learning. Minimum requirements of an apprenticeship must still be met, including the 12-month minimum duration and minimum volume of off-the-job training.

Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs): AAQs are Level 3 qualifications that incorporate applied learning in strategically important subjects, that support progression into Higher Education, and can be taken alongside A levels.

Alternative provision: Education arranged by local authorities for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education and support arranged by schools, including for pupils receiving targeted support in their mainstream school; pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour; and provision for pupils on a fixed period exclusion.

Apprenticeship: An apprenticeship is a job that combines practical training with study. See [Become an apprentice: How apprenticeships work - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/become-an-apprentice) for further information.

Apprenticeship standard: Apprenticeship standards are developed by an employer (trailblazer) group and will set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours required in that occupation.

Awarding organisation (AO): Organisation that develops, delivers and awards qualifications.

Core Maths: Core Maths qualifications were introduced in 2014, and are designed for students with grades 9-4 (previously A*-C) at GCSE but who do not study AS/A level mathematics. They have been designed to consolidate and build on GCSE maths by developing a deeper mathematical understanding in the application of 'real world' problems. The qualifications provide a sound basis for the mathematical demands that students will face at university and within employment across a broad range of academic, professional and technical fields.

Disadvantage: Disadvantaged students are defined as those who are eligible for Pupil Premium, including pupils who are recorded as eligible for free school meals, or have been recorded as eligible in the past 6 years, including eligible children of families who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF), children looked after by local authorities, and

children previously looked after by a local authority or other state care. For the statistics within this document, disadvantaged students are defined as having fallen into at least one of the above categories by (academic) age 15.

Early Career Framework (ECF): The Early Career Framework is a framework of standards to help early career teachers succeed at the start of their careers. It sets out what early career teachers are entitled to learn about and learn how to do when they start their careers. It underpins a new entitlement for two years of professional development designed to help early career teachers develop their practice, knowledge and working habits.

Education Endowment Foundation (EEF): An independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement, by supporting schools to improve teaching and learning through better use of evidence. The EEF is the government's 'What Works Centre' for education, committed to increasing both the supply of and demand for evidence in education.

English Baccalaureate (EBacc): A combination of GCSE subjects (including a language) that offer an important range of knowledge and skills to young people. The core subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate are English language and literature, mathematics, the sciences (including combined science, or three single sciences chosen from biology, chemistry, computer science and physics), geography or history, and a language (ancient or modern).

Further education (FE): Includes any study after secondary education that's not part of higher education (that is, not taken as part of an undergraduate or graduate degree).

Full Level 2: Five GCSEs, each at grade C or above/grade 4 or above, or a Technical Certificate at Level 2 that meets the requirements for the 2018, 2019 and 2020 16 to 18 school and college performance tables.

Full Level 3: Two A levels, or four AS levels, or QAA Access to Higher Education (HE) Diploma at Level 3, or either a Tech Level or an applied general qualification at Level 3 that meets the requirements for the 2018, 2019 and 2020 16 to 18 school and college performance tables.

Guided learning (and Guided Learning Hours (GLH)): Guided learning is the activity of a learner when being taught or instructed by – or otherwise participating in education or training under the Immediate Guidance or Supervision of – a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.

Higher education (HE): Qualifications and courses that can be taken after 18. It includes diplomas, foundation years, and bachelor degrees.

Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs): HTQs are technical qualifications that employers have helped develop. They are an alternative to apprenticeships or degrees. HTQs are usually taught at colleges, universities or independent training providers.

Industry placement: Industry placements are a mandatory component of T Levels. Students must spend a minimum of 315 hours (approximately 45 days) on their industry placement. The placement must take place in a real environment, that is external to the students' normal learning environment, and it must be occupationally-specific and focused on developing their technical and employability skills.

Initial Teacher Training: Courses that lead to the award of Qualified Teacher Status.

Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE): A Crown non-departmental public body, established in April 2017 as the Institute for Apprenticeships, responsible for, amongst other things, ensuring the quality of and approving standards.

Institute of Technology (IoT): IoTs are designed to be prestigious, high-quality education providers created through innovative collaborations between further education colleges, universities, and employers.

Key stage 4: The national curriculum is organised into blocks of years called 'key stages'. At the end of each key stage, a pupil's performance is assessed. Key stage 4 refers to education in years 10 and 11 of schools in England (ages 14 to 16), at the end of which most pupils sit GCSEs or equivalent Level 1/2 qualifications. See the guidance on the national curriculum for further information.

Level 1-9: Most qualifications have a difficulty level. The higher the level, the more difficult the qualification is. More information on what qualification levels mean can be found on [GOV.UK – What qualification levels mean](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-qualification-levels-mean).

Mastery-based maths approaches: Mastery-based maths approaches move away from generic and superficial understanding of maths and focus instead on a method informed by top-performing parts of the world such as Shanghai and Singapore, to enable pupils to acquire a deep and long-term understanding of maths.

Multiplication Tables Check: The Multiplication Tables Check (MTC) is an on-screen assessment checking Year 4 pupils' ability to fluently recall their knowledge of multiplication tables up to 12x12.

National Curriculum: The National Curriculum sets out the subjects and programmes of study which schools are obliged to cover for children of compulsory school age in English maintained schools. The National Curriculum focuses on the essential knowledge that must be taught, allowing teachers to take greater control over the wider curriculum in schools and how it is taught.

National Professional Qualifications (NPQs): National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) are designed to provide training and support for professionals at all levels and deliver improved outcomes for young people. NPQs have been designed with education professionals in mind, using the latest and best available evidence, and can be completed flexibly around existing commitments.

Occupational competence: An individual has all the knowledge, skills and behaviours in the occupational standard, and is able to apply them practically in the workplace as required by employers. E.g. the competence a learner obtains from completing an apprenticeship.

Occupational entry competence: An individual has knowledge, skills and behaviours that employers have identified as sufficient to enter skilled employment, with a need for further learning or training in work to reach occupational competence. E.g. the competence a learner obtains from completing a T Level.

Occupational Maps: Occupational maps show all the occupations for which apprenticeships and technical qualifications are available. They group occupations with related knowledge, skills and behaviours, making it easier to see how they relate to one another.

Occupational standard: Standards published by IfATE which set out the knowledge skills and behaviours that are required for an individual to be competent in an occupation.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): An intergovernmental organisation of 38 member countries. It produces research and statistics as part of its work.

Ofqual: The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England. It was set up in April 2010 under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and is also covered by the Education Act 2011. Ofqual is a non-ministerial government department with jurisdiction in England. See the [Ofqual](#) website for further information.

Ofsted: Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. It inspects services providing education and skills for learners of all ages. It also inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people. It is a non-ministerial government department with jurisdiction in England. See the [Ofsted](#) website for further information.

Phonics Screening Check: The phonics screening check is a statutory assessment for all pupils in the academic year they turn 6 (typically year 1) to assess their ability to decode and read words using phonics and check whether they have met the expected

standard in phonic decoding. All state-funded schools with this cohort must administer the check.

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA): The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international education study organised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). PISA tests 15 year-olds' competence in maths, reading and science. Each PISA cycle focusses on one of these subjects in more detail and also includes an 'innovative' assessment domain.

Sainsbury Review: The Independent Panel on Technical Education, chaired by Lord Sainsbury, reported its findings in April 2016. The recommendations were accepted in the Post-16 Skills Plan and form the basis for technical education reforms. See the [Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education](#) for more information.

Special Educational Needs (SEN), Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND): A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if they have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age or has a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions. 'Special educational needs' and 'disability' have different definitions in law and guidance. In England, the Equality Act 2010 defines a person as having a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Standard pass at GCSE: The Department for Education recognises grade 4 and above as a 'standard pass' in all subjects. It is a credible achievement for a young person that should be valued as a passport to future study and employment. Students who do not hold a grade 4 or above in English and/or maths must continue to study these subjects as part of their post-16 education. This requirement does not apply to other subjects.

Study Programme: All students funded through the 16-19 funding methodology must be enrolled on a study programme, or T Level programme, which typically combines qualifications and other activities, and is tailored to each student's prior attainment and career goals. Study programmes have a core aim, are tailored to each student, have clear study or employment goals reflecting the student's prior attainment and include substantial qualifications, mathematics and English for students who have not achieved grade 9 to 4 at GCSE in these subjects, high-quality work experience or work preparation, and added value non-qualification activity that supports the students' goals and is integrated into the study programme.

T Levels: T Levels are new two year courses for 16-19 year-olds taken after GCSEs and are broadly equivalent in size to 3 A levels. Launched in September 2020, these courses have been developed in collaboration with employers and education providers so that the content meets the needs of industry and prepares students for entry into skilled employment, an apprenticeship or related technical study through further or higher education. T Levels offer students practical and knowledge-based learning at a school or college and on-the-job experience through an industry placement of at least 315 hours.

T Level foundation year: Technical routes are structured around clusters of occupations that share common knowledge and skills. They offer progression to and through skilled employment.

Technical Awards: Technical Awards are Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications in non-English Baccalaureate subjects that equip students with applied knowledge not usually acquired through general education. They focus on applied study of a sector or occupational group, including the acquisition of associated practical or technical skills where appropriate. These qualifications are included in Department for Education's secondary (key stage 4) performance tables.

Technical Occupational Entry Qualifications (TOQs) at Level 3: Technical qualifications are based on the knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs) set out in the occupational standards co-designed with employers and approved by IfATE. At Level 3, technical qualifications are designed to provide direct entry into skilled employment or higher levels of technical study. These are only funded for 16-19 year-olds in Occupational areas which are not covered by T Levels.

White Paper: Policy documents produced by the government that set out their proposals for future legislation.

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