



Department
for Education

A world-class education system:

The Advanced British Standard
consultation summary





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The Government is launching a consultation to get your views on how to design the new Advanced British Standard.

What is the Advanced British Standard (ABS) and who is it for?

- The ABS is a new qualification framework for 16–19 year-old students to take after GCSEs, based on four key principles:
 - **Clearer options**, bringing together ‘academic’ and ‘technical’ subjects.
 - **More teaching time**, students will get at least 1,475 hours over two years – around 15% more than most 16-19 students currently get.
 - **Greater breadth**, encouraging a broader range of knowledge and skills.
 - **A core of maths and English**, with all students studying both until 18.
- It will be taken by school and college students who would currently take Level 3 qualifications, for example A levels, T Levels or Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs). We are also exploring options for students at Level 2 and below.
- Depending on what they study, students will then go on to study at university, in further education, become an apprentice or move directly into employment.

What will students study under the ABS at Level 3?

- Students will be able to choose from a simple menu of high-quality courses that brings together ‘academic’ and ‘technical’ options.
- Students will study more subjects than currently: most will study three larger subjects (called majors) and two smaller subjects (called minors). All students will be required to study English and maths as a major and/or minor.
- Students who already know, at age 16, that they want to pursue a specific job or training after sixth form or college can choose an occupational route. Most will then study a core major in their chosen sector alongside a double major in their chosen specialism.
- All students will also take part in employability, enrichment and pastoral activities, and some students will also do an industry placement.

What will students study at Level 2?

- We propose two options at Level 2. Students will have access to the same number of teaching hours as at Level 3, and all will study English and maths:
 - A one-year transition programme that will include courses to prepare students to move onto a Level 3 ABS.
 - A one- or two-year Level 2 programme that will allow students to pick from a simple menu of Level 2 courses which will prepare them to progress onto a high-quality job or an apprenticeship.

What are we asking in the consultation and when does it close?

- We want everyone who is interested in this area to be able to access and respond to the consultation. There are five sections to the document, each of which explains different areas and asks specific questions:
 - Chapter 1: aims and purpose of the ABS
 - Chapter 2: how the ABS will look for students
 - Chapter 3: how the ABS will be assessed and graded
 - Chapter 4: what the ABS means for 16-19 education providers
 - Chapter 5: what the ABS means for students, other people and organisations, such as employers
- You can respond online. If unable to use the online system, you can request a word document version of the form.
- The consultation closes on 20 March 2024.

What does the ABS mean for students doing post-16 courses now?

- It will take around a decade to fully roll-out the ABS. We have already improved the quality of current qualifications through reforms and the introduction of T Levels – these will form the backbone of the new ABS.
- In the meantime, A levels, T Levels and AAQs continue to be excellent choices for young people, leading to great outcomes.

What does the ABS mean for schools and colleges?

- All changes will take time to put in place and this consultation is the first step in developing the qualification framework in collaboration with students, parents, teachers, employers, education providers and others.
- Back in October, we announced an initial funding boost of £600 million, over two years, to help lay the groundwork for the ABS. This will help improve the recruitment and retention of teachers in shortage subjects and areas, support students who do not get a standard pass in maths and/or English at 16 to gain these fundamentals and improve the quality of maths teaching.