

Provision of level 3 qualifications in English schools 2015

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Introduction

This report is a follow up to a previous report analysing the provision of different level 3 qualifications in English schools (Gill, 2015). The previous report looked at provision in 2013/14. The current report is an update for 2014/2015.

Provision of a subject is usually defined as the percentage of centres (where the qualification is offered in any subject) with at least one student taking a particular subject (e.g. the percentage of centres where A levels are taken that offer A level English). However, as this report looks at multiple qualifications this definition has changed to be the percentage of all schools in England (offering level 3 qualifications) with at least one student taking a particular qualification (or a particular subject in that qualification).

For this year's report we changed the definition of provision used, so that only centres offering the qualification in 2014/15 were counted. This contrasts to previous reports which also included centres who offered the qualification to their current students, but not in the current year (e.g. in the 2013/14 report, centres offering a qualification in 2012/13 to current students, but not offering it in 2013/14).

Data

The data for these analyses were taken from the National Pupil Database (NPD). This is a database held by the Department for Education, consisting of results for all students in all qualifications and subjects in schools and colleges in England. The Key Stage 5 (KS5) extract of the NPD was used, consisting of all students who took at least one level 3 qualification equivalent to an A level in 2014/15.

It is of interest to investigate patterns of provision in different types of school, so most of the analyses were broken down into the following school types: comprehensive, academy, FE/tertiary college, grammar, independent, secondary modern and sixth form college. Table 1 presents the number of each school type.

Table 1: Number and percentage of different school types

School type	Schools (n)	Schools (%)
City Academy	1,022	34.5
Comprehensive	789	26.6
FE/Tertiary College	171	5.8
Grammar	69	2.3
Independent	594	20.1
Secondary Modern	55	1.9
Sixth Form College	128	4.3

There were a large number of different qualifications recorded in the KS5 extract of the NPD, but not all of these were included in this report. To make the analyses more manageable only KS5 qualifications that are worth at least the same as an A level were included. Only students in year 13 were included in this report, but any level 3 qualifications that these students took in previous years were counted.

Results

Overall provision of qualifications

Table 2 presents the number and percentage of schools offering the different qualifications in 2015. Table 3 breaks down the provision of qualifications by school type

Almost all schools offered A levels, with BTECs offered by 64.6% of schools and Applied A levels by 43.4%. In comparison to 2014 (Gill, 2015), more schools offered Cambridge Technicals (up from 12.7%), whilst fewer offered OCR Nationals (down from 14.3%).

Table 2: Provision of level 3 qualifications

Qualification	Schools	% Schools
A level	2,958	99.7
BTEC	1,916	64.6
Applied A level	1,287	43.4
Cambridge Technical	498	16.8
VRQ	480	16.2
Applied AS level	276	9.3
Pre-U	93	3.1
IB	88	3.0
Diploma	12	0.4
OCR National ¹	5	0.2

The percentage of schools offering A levels was very close to 100% in each school type. BTECs were most likely to be offered by secondary modern, sixth form colleges or comprehensives and applied A and AS levels were most likely to be offered by sixth form colleges. FE/tertiary colleges were more likely than other school types to offer VRQs. Independent and grammar schools were very unlikely to offer Cambridge Technicals, Applied AS levels or VRQs.

Table 3: Provision of level 3 qualifications (% of school type)

Qualification	Acad	Comp	FE/Ter	Grammar	Ind	Sec Mod	Sixth Form
A level	99.9	99.9	99.4	100.0	99.7	100.0	100.0
BTEC	76.8	84.3	78.4	21.7	19.9	90.9	84.4
Applied A level	57.2	58.7	29.8	18.8	9.8	40.0	64.1
Cambridge Technical	22.5	24.6	8.2	1.4	2.5	25.5	22.7
VRQ	13.8	12.8	74.9	4.3	3.4	16.4	43.0
Applied AS level	12.1	12.8	3.5	1.4	0.7	7.3	28.1
Pre-U	2.3	0.9	0.0	5.8	8.9	1.8	2.3
IB	1.5	0.8	2.9	7.2	7.7	0.0	5.5
Diploma	0.4	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0
OCR National	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.8

¹ OCR Nationals have now been phased out and replaced by Cambridge Technicals. However, some legacy OCR National specifications were awarded in 2015.

Combinations of qualifications offered by schools

Table 4 presents the numbers and percentages of schools offering the top 10 combinations of qualifications. Appendix A presents the top 5 combinations in each of the different school types.

Schools were most likely to offer A levels only (23.5%), followed by A levels, Applied A levels and BTECs (15.9%) and A levels and BTECs (15.8%).

Table 4: Most popular combinations of level 3 qualifications offered by schools

Combination	Schools	% Schools
A level	697	23.5
A level-Applied A level-BTEC	472	15.9
A level-BTEC	469	15.8
A level-BTEC-VRQ	172	5.8
A level-Applied A level-BTEC-Cambridge Technical	166	5.6
A level-Applied A level	145	4.9
A level-Applied A level-Applied AS level-BTEC	131	4.4
A level-BTEC-Cambridge Technical	131	4.4
A level-Applied A level-BTEC-VRQ	116	3.9
A level-Applied A level-BTEC-Cambridge Technical-VRQ	49	1.7

Provision of individual subjects

This section presents the provision of the five most popular subjects at level 3² – mathematics, biology, psychology, history and English literature.

Mathematics

Table 5 presents the provision of different mathematics qualifications.

Table 5: Provision of different mathematics qualifications

Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering mathematics
A level	2,686	90.50	99.67
IB	69	2.32	2.56
Pre-U	8	0.27	0.30
Any	2,695	90.80	100.00

Only a small percentage of schools offered alternatives to A levels in mathematics, with 2.3% of all schools offering the IB and 0.3% Pre-U.

Table 6 breaks down the provision by different school types. Grammar and independent schools were the most likely to offer the IB and 6 out of the 8 schools offering Pre-U were independent.

² Level 3 qualifications are dominated by A levels so these subjects were all available as A levels.

Table 6: Provision of different mathematics qualifications, by school type

	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering mathematics
Academies	A level	956	93.54	99.79
	IB	10	0.98	1.04
	Pre-U	1	0.10	0.10
	Any	958	93.74	100.00
Comprehensive	A level	740	93.79	99.87
	IB	3	0.38	0.40
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	741	93.92	100.00
FE/Tertiary College	A level	137	80.12	100.00
	IB	2	1.17	1.46
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	137	80.12	100.00
Grammar	A level	67	97.10	98.53
	IB	5	7.25	7.35
	Pre-U	1	1.45	1.47
	Any	68	98.55	100.00
Independent	A level	541	91.08	99.45
	IB	40	6.73	7.35
	Pre-U	6	1.01	1.10
	Any	544	91.58	100.00
Secondary Modern	A level	48	87.27	100.00
	IB	0	0.00	0.00
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	48	87.27	100.00
Sixth Form College	A level	127	99.22	100.00
	IB	5	3.91	3.94
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	127	99.22	100.00

Biology

Table 7 presents the provision of different biology qualifications. Table 8 breaks down the provision by school type.

Table 7: Provision of different biology qualifications

Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering biology
A level	2,539	85.55	99.49
IB	87	2.93	3.41
Pre-U	3	0.10	0.12
Any	2,552	85.98	100.00

Overall, 2.9 % of schools offered an IB in Biology and just 3 schools offered a Pre-U.

Table 8: Provision of different biology qualifications, by school type

	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering biology
Academies	A level	921	90.12	99.78
	IB	14	1.37	1.52
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	923	90.31	100.00
Comprehensive	A level	715	90.62	99.72
	IB	6	0.76	0.84
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	717	90.87	100.00
FE/Tertiary College	A level	131	76.61	100.00
	IB	5	2.92	3.82
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	131	76.61	100.00
Grammar	A level	66	95.65	97.06
	IB	4	5.80	5.88
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	68	98.55	100.00
Independent	A level	504	84.85	99.02
	IB	46	7.74	9.04
	Pre-U	3	0.51	0.59
	Any	509	85.69	100.00
Secondary Modern	A level	38	69.09	100.00
	IB	0	0.00	0.00
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	38	69.09	100.00
Sixth Form College	A level	124	96.88	100.00
	IB	7	5.47	5.65
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	124	96.88	100.00

Independent schools were the most likely to offer the IB in 2015 (7.7% of all grammar schools), followed by independent schools (5.8%).

Psychology

Table 9 presents the provision of different psychology qualifications. Provision of alternatives to A level were very low (just 1.8% offered the IB and 2 schools offered the Pre-U). Table 10 breaks down the provision by school type.

Table 9: Provision of different psychology qualifications

Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering psychology
A level	2,340	78.84	99.36
IB	52	1.75	2.21
Pre-U	2	0.07	0.08
Any	2,355	79.35	100.00

Table 10: Provision of different psychology qualifications, by school type

	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering psychology
Academies	A level	887	86.79	99.89
	IB	11	1.08	1.24
	Pre-U	1	0.10	0.11
	Any	888	86.89	100.00
Comprehensive	A level	699	88.59	99.71
	IB	3	0.38	0.43
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	701	88.85	100.00
FE/Tertiary College	A level	142	83.04	100.00
	IB	4	2.34	2.82
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	142	83.04	100.00
Grammar	A level	60	86.96	96.77
	IB	4	5.80	6.45
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	62	89.86	100.00
Independent	A level	355	59.76	98.07
	IB	19	3.20	5.25
	Pre-U	1	0.17	0.28
	Any	362	60.94	100.00
Secondary Modern	A level	37	67.27	100.00
	IB	0	0.00	0.00
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	37	67.27	100.00
Sixth Form College	A level	122	95.31	100.00
	IB	6	4.69	4.92
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	122	95.31	100.00

IB was most likely to be offered in grammar schools (5.8%) or Sixth Form Colleges (4.7%). The Pre-U was offered by one independent and one academy school.

History

Table 11 presents the provision of different history qualifications. Overall, 2.7% offered the IB and 0.5% the Pre-U. Table 12 breaks down the provision by school type.

Table 11: Provision of different history qualifications

Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering history
A level	2,533	85.34	99.22
IB	81	2.73	3.17
Pre-U	16	0.54	0.63
Any	2,553	86.02	100.00

Table 12: Provision of different history qualifications, by school type

	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering history
Academies	A level	939	91.88	99.79
	IB	13	1.27	1.38
	Pre-U	3	0.29	0.32
	Any	941	92.07	100.00
Comprehensive	A level	715	90.62	99.72
	IB	6	0.76	0.84
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	717	90.87	100.00
FE/Tertiary College	A level	128	74.85	100.00
	IB	5	2.92	3.91
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	128	74.85	100.00
Grammar	A level	66	95.65	97.06
	IB	4	5.80	5.88
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	68	98.55	100.00
Independent	A level	487	81.99	97.79
	IB	42	7.07	8.43
	Pre-U	12	2.02	2.41
	Any	498	83.84	100.00
Secondary Modern	A level	40	72.73	100.00
	IB	0	0.00	0.00
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	40	72.73	100.00
Sixth Form College	A level	122	95.31	100.00
	IB	6	4.69	4.92
	Pre-U	1	0.78	0.82
	Any	122	95.31	100.00

Provision of IB (as a percentage of all schools) was highest in independent (8.4%) and grammar schools (5.8%). Most of the schools offering the Pre-U were independent schools (12 out of 16).

English literature

Table 13 presents the provision of different English literature qualifications. Table 14 breaks down the provision by school type.

Table 13: Provision of different English literature qualifications

Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering English literature
A level	2,439	82.18	98.91
IB	83	2.80	3.37
Pre-U	25	0.84	1.01
Any	2,466	83.09	100.00

Table 14: Provision of different English literature qualifications, by school type

	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering English literature
Academies	A level	893	87.38	99.44
	IB	11	1.08	1.22
	Pre-U	8	0.78	0.89
	Any	898	87.87	100.00
Comprehensive	A level	695	88.09	99.86
	IB	6	0.76	0.86
	Pre-U	.	0.00	0.00
	Any	696	88.21	100.00
FE/Tertiary College	A level	119	69.59	100.00
	IB	4	2.34	3.36
	Pre-U	.	0.00	0.00
	Any	119	69.59	100.00
Grammar	A level	65	94.20	97.01
	IB	4	5.80	5.97
	Pre-U	1	1.45	1.49
	Any	67	97.10	100.00
Independent	A level	463	77.95	96.46
	IB	46	7.74	9.58
	Pre-U	16	2.69	3.33
	Any	480	80.81	100.00
Secondary Modern	A level	46	83.64	100.00
	IB	.	0.00	0.00
	Pre-U	.	0.00	0.00
	Any	46	83.64	100.00
Sixth Form College	A level	121	94.53	100.00
	IB	7	5.47	5.79
	Pre-U	.	0.00	0.00
	Any	121	94.53	100.00

A relatively high percentage of schools offered an IB certificate in English literature (2.8%). There were 25 schools offering the Pre-U, which was also relatively high. Independent schools were most likely to offer IB (7.7%). Most schools offering the Pre-U were independent schools (16 out of 25)

Provision of individual subjects in other level 3 qualifications

Finally the provision of the most common subjects offered in other popular qualifications (BTECs and applied A levels) is summarised below. These are worth reporting as a substantial percentage of schools offered these qualifications (see Table 2). Tables 15 and 16 present the 10 most popular subjects offered by schools in these qualifications. There were only 10 applied A level subjects available, so Table 16 includes all of these.

Table 15: Provision of popular BTEC subjects

Subject	Schools	Provision (% of all schools)
Sports Studies	1,260	42.5
Business Studies	996	33.6
Health Studies	848	28.6
Applied Sciences	845	28.5
Computer Appreciation / Introduction	830	28.0
Multimedia	486	16.4
Art & Design	460	15.5
Music Studies (General)	460	15.5
Public Services	445	15.0
Speech & Drama	427	14.4

Table 16: Provision of popular Applied A level subjects

Subject	Schools	Provision (% of all schools)
Health & Social Care	563	19.0
Applied Business	495	16.7
Applied ICT	470	15.8
Applied Science	278	9.4
Travel & Tourism	177	6.0
Performing Arts	138	4.6
Applied Art & Design	45	1.5
Applied Engineering	43	1.4
Leisure & Recreation	37	1.2
Media: Communication & Production	22	0.7

Reference

Gill, T. (2015). *Provision of level 3 qualifications in English schools 2014. Statistics Report Series No.87*. Cambridge Assessment. Available at <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/222150-provision-of-level-3-qualifications-in-english-schools-2014.pdf>

Appendix A: Most popular combinations of qualifications offered, by school type

Table A1: Most popular combinations of qualifications offered, by school type

	Combination	Schools	% Schools
Academy	A level-Applied A level-BTEC	201	18.5
	A level	146	13.4
	A level-BTEC	128	11.8
	A level-Applied A level-BTEC-VRQ	75	6.9
	A level-Applied A level-Applied AS level-BTEC	74	6.8
Comprehensive	A level-Applied A level-BTEC	170	19.2
	A level-BTEC	130	14.7
	A level	117	13.2
	A level-Applied A level-BTEC-VRQ	52	5.9
	A level-Applied A level-Applied AS level-BTEC	51	5.7
FE/Tertiary College	A level	44	23.4
	A level-BTEC-VRQ	36	19.1
	A level-Applied A level-BTEC-VRQ	22	11.7
	A level-BTEC-Cambridge Technical-VRQ	20	10.6
	A level-Applied A level-BTEC-Cambridge Technical-VRQ	8	4.3
Grammar	A level	34	47.9
	A level-BTEC	9	12.7
	A level-Applied A level	7	9.9
	A level-BTEC-IB	4	5.6
	A level-Applied A level-BTEC	3	4.2
Independent	A level	361	56.3
	A level-BTEC	88	13.7
	A level-Applied A level	35	5.5
	A level-Pre-U	33	5.2
	A level-IB	28	4.4
Secondary Modern	A level- BTEC	13	20.3
	A level-Applied A level-BTEC	8	12.5
	A level	7	10.9
	A level-BTEC-VRQ	5	7.8
	A level-Applied A level-BTEC-VRQ	4	6.3
Sixth Form College	A level-Applied A level-BTEC-VRQ	16	11.9
	A level	14	10.4
	A level-BTEC-VRQ	13	9.6
	A level-Applied A level-Applied AS level-BTEC-VRQ	12	8.9
	A level-Applied A level-Applied AS level-BTEC-Cambridge Technical-VRQ	11	8.1