

Provision of level 3 qualifications in English schools 2014

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Introduction

This is an update to a report looking at the provision of different level 3 qualifications between 2008 and 2012 in English schools (Gill, 2013). The current report is for 2014 only. The purpose of this report is to give an overall picture of provision at level 3, rather than focussing on one or two qualifications (e.g. A levels).

Provision of a subject is usually defined as the percentage of schools (where the qualification is offered in any subject) with at least one student taking a particular subject (e.g. the percentage of schools 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).

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 were at the end of KS5 (i.e. in year 13).

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	944	30.2
Comprehensive	944	30.2
FE/Tertiary College	186	5.9
Grammar	75	2.4
Independent	617	19.7
Secondary Modern	68	2.2
Sixth Form College	150	4.4

There were a large number of different qualifications recorded in the KS5 extract of the NPD in all three years, 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 2014. Table 3 breaks down the provision of qualifications by school type

Almost all schools offered A levels, with BTECs offered by 60% of schools and Applied A levels by 45%. In comparison to 2012 (Gill, 2013), more schools offered BTECs (up from 55.4%), whilst fewer offered OCR Nationals (down from 22.2%). However, many of the OCR Nationals were replaced by a new qualification, the Cambridge Technical (offered by 12.7% of schools).

Table 2: Provision of level 3 qualifications

Qualification	Schools	% Schools
A level	3,124	99.7
BTEC	1,894	60.5
Applied A level	1,423	45.4
VRQ	682	21.8
OCR National	449	14.3
Applied AS level	422	13.5
Cambridge Technical	398	12.7
IB	138	4.4
Pre-U	90	2.9
Diploma	40	1.3

The percentage of schools offering A levels was very close to 100% in each school type. BTECs 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 and OCR Nationals. Only a small percentage of independent schools offered any alternatives to A levels.

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	98.4	100.0	100.0	98.5	100.0
BTEC	74.7	76.9	71.0	24.0	17.8	79.4	82.6
Applied A level	59.9	60.1	34.9	24.0	10.4	48.5	68.1
VRQ	21.9	19.3	69.9	5.3	5.3	27.9	63.8
OCR National	17.7	16.2	32.3	1.3	1.6	22.1	26.1
Applied AS level	17.2	18.5	7.5	2.7	1.0	14.7	37.0
Cambridge Technical	17.3	18.0	7.0	1.3	1.8	20.6	18.1
IB	2.6	1.7	10.2	12.0	8.1	1.5	9.4
Pre-U	2.5	1.0	1.1	5.3	7.8	1.5	1.4
Diploma	1.5	1.3	3.8	1.3	0.3	1.5	1.4

Combinations of qualifications offered by schools

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

Schools were most likely to offer A levels only (30%), followed by A levels, Applied A levels and BTECs (12.3%) and A levels and BTECs (10.6%).

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

Combination	Schools	% Schools
A level	845	27.0
A level-Applied A level-BTEC	384	12.3
A level-BTEC	332	10.6
A level-Applied A level-BTEC-VRQ	156	5.0
A level-Applied A level-Applied AS level-BTEC	142	4.5
A level-Applied A level	139	4.4
A level-BTEC-VRQ	116	3.7
A level-Applied A level-BTEC-OCR National	63	2.0
A level-Applied A level-Applied AS level-BTEC-VRQ	60	1.9
A level-Applied A level-BTEC-OCR Technical	51	1.6

Provision of individual subjects

This section presents the provision of the five most popular subjects at level 3¹ – mathematics, biology, psychology, history and chemistry.

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	2,675	85.4	99.6
IB	89	2.8	3.3
Pre-U	8	0.3	0.3
Any	2,687	85.8	100.0

Only a small percentage of schools offered alternatives to A levels in mathematics, with 2.8% 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.

¹ 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	843	89.30	99.53
	IB	15	1.59	1.77
	Pre-U	1	0.11	0.12
	Any	847	89.72	100.00
Comprehensive	A level	814	86.23	99.75
	IB	12	1.27	1.47
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	816	86.44	100.00
FE/Tertiary College	A level	150	80.65	99.34
	IB	5	2.69	3.31
	Pre-U	1	0.54	0.66
	Any	151	81.18	100.00
Grammar	A level	71	94.67	100.00
	IB	6	8.00	8.45
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	77	94.67	100.00
Independent	A level	547	88.65	99.64
	IB	41	6.65	7.47
	Pre-U	6	0.97	1.09
	Any	549	88.98	100.00
Secondary Modern	A level	50	73.53	98.04
	IB	1	1.47	1.96
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	51	75.00	100.00
Sixth Form College	A level	136	98.55	100.00
	IB	5	3.62	3.68
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	136	98.55	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	2,540	81.1	99.3
IB	110	3.5	4.3
Pre-U	5	0.2	0.2
Any	2,558	81.6	100.0

Overall, 3.5% of schools offered an IB in Biology and just 5 schools offered a Pre-U.

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

	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering mathematics
Academies	A level	813	86.12	99.39
	IB	19	2.01	2.32
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	818	86.65	100.00
Comprehensive	A level	792	83.90	99.62
	IB	13	1.38	1.64
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	795	84.22	100.00
FE/Tertiary College	A level	141	75.81	99.30
	IB	11	5.91	7.75
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	142	76.34	100.00
Grammar	A level	70	93.33	97.22
	IB	8	10.67	11.11
	Pre-U	1	1.33	1.39
	Any	72	96.00	100.00
Independent	A level	507	82.17	99.22
	IB	47	7.62	9.20
	Pre-U	4	0.65	0.78
	Any	511	82.82	100.00
Secondary Modern	A level	40	58.82	97.56
	IB	1	1.47	2.44
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	41	60.29	100.00
Sixth Form College	A level	125	90.58	93.98
	IB	8	5.80	6.02
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	133	96.38	100.00

Grammar schools were the most likely to offer the IB in 2014 (10.7%), followed by independent schools and FE/tertiary colleges.

Psychology

Table 9 presents the provision of different psychology qualifications. Provision of alternatives to A level were very low (just 2.4% offered the IB and 1 school 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	2,311	72.6	99.5
IB	59	2.4	3.4
Pre-U	1	0.1	0.1
Any	2,266	72.9	100.0

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

	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering psychology
Academies	A level	784	83.05	99.62
	IB	15	1.59	1.91
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	787	83.37	100.00
Comprehensive	A level	763	80.83	99.74
	IB	4	0.42	0.52
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	765	81.04	100.00
FE/Tertiary College	A level	154	82.80	94.48
	IB	9	4.84	5.52
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	163	87.63	100.00
Grammar	A level	64	85.33	96.97
	IB	5	6.67	7.58
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	66	88.00	100.00
Independent	A level	339	54.94	97.98
	IB	15	2.43	4.34
	Pre-U	1	0.16	0.29
	Any	346	56.08	100.00
Secondary Modern	A level	41	60.29	100.00
	IB	0	0.00	0.00
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	41	60.29	100.00
Sixth Form College	A level	129	93.48	99.23
	IB	10	7.25	7.69
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	130	94.20	100.00

IB was most likely to be offered in Sixth Form Colleges (7.3%) or grammar schools (6.7%). The Pre-U was only offered by one (Independent) school.

History

Table 11 presents the provision of different history qualifications. Overall, 3.4% offered the IB and 0.6% 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	2,520	80.4	99.2
IB	106	3.4	4.2
Pre-U	18	0.6	0.7
Any	2,541	81.1	100.0

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

	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering history
Academies	A level	809	85.70	99.39
	IB	19	2.01	2.33
	Pre-U	4	0.42	0.49
	Any	814	86.23	100.00
Comprehensive	A level	800	83.69	99.75
	IB	12	1.27	1.52
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	792	83.90	100.00
FE/Tertiary College	A level	138	74.19	99.28
	IB	11	5.91	7.91
	Pre-U	1	0.54	0.72
	Any	139	74.73	100.00
Grammar	A level	70	93.33	98.59
	IB	7	9.33	9.86
	Pre-U	1	1.33	1.41
	Any	71	94.67	100.00
Independent	A level	496	80.39	98.02
	IB	45	7.29	8.89
	Pre-U	12	1.94	2.37
	Any	506	82.01	100.00
Secondary Modern	A level	50	73.53	98.04
	IB	1	1.47	1.96
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	51	75.00	100.00
Sixth Form College	A level	127	92.03	100.00
	IB	7	5.07	5.51
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	127	92.03	100.00

Provision of IB (as a percentage of all schools) was highest in grammar (9.3%) and independent schools (7.3%). Most of the schools offering the Pre-U were independent schools (12 out of 18).

Chemistry

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

Table 13: Provision of different chemistry qualifications

Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering chemistry
A level	2,477	79.1	99.3
IB	115	3.7	4.6
Pre-U	6	0.2	0.2
Any	2,495	79.6	100.0

Table 14: Provision of different chemistry qualifications, by school type

	Qualification	Schools	% of all schools	% of all offering chemistry
Academies	A level	791	83.79	99.37
	IB	20	2.12	2.51
	Pre-U	1	0.11	0.13
	Any	796	84.32	100.00
Comprehensive	A level	774	81.99	99.61
	IB	13	1.38	1.67
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	777	82.31	100.00
FE/Tertiary College	A level	131	70.43	99.24
	IB	14	7.53	10.61
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	132	70.97	100.00
Grammar	A level	69	92.00	97.18
	IB	7	9.33	9.86
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	71	94.67	100.00
Independent	A level	496	80.39	99.20
	IB	47	7.62	9.40
	Pre-U	5	0.81	1.00
	Any	500	79.42	100.00
Secondary Modern	A level	36	52.94	97.30
	IB	1	1.47	2.70
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	37	54.41	100.00
Sixth Form College	A level	131	94.93	100.00
	IB	8	5.80	6.11
	Pre-U	0	0.00	0.00
	Any	131	94.93	100.00

A relatively high percentage of schools offered an IB certificate in chemistry (3.7%). Again, independent and grammar schools were most likely to offer it (7.6% and 9.3% respectively).

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 3). 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	1,253	40.0
Business Studies	981	31.3
Health Studies	831	26.5
Applied Sciences	822	26.2
Computer Appreciation / Introduction	770	24.6
Art & Design	542	17.3
Music Studies (General)	530	16.9
Multimedia	520	16.6
Public Services	480	15.3
Speech & Drama	469	15.0

Table 16: Provision of popular Applied A level subjects

Subject	Schools	Provision (% of all schools)
Applied ICT	614	19.6
Health & Social Care	603	19.2
Applied Business	535	17.1
Applied Science	311	9.9
Travel & Tourism	218	7.0
Performing Arts	156	5.0
Applied Art & Design	82	2.6
Leisure & Recreation	61	1.9
Applied Engineering	48	1.5
Media: Communication & Production	27	0.9

Reference

Gill, T. (2013). *Provision of level 3 qualifications in English schools 2008-2012. Statistics Report Series No.58*. Cambridge Assessment. Available at <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/150206-provision-of-level-3-qualifications-in-english-schools-2008-2012.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	164	17.4
	A level	120	12.7
	A level-BTEC	105	11.1
	A level-Applied A level-Applied AS level-BTEC	63	6.7
	A level-Applied A level	50	5.3
Comprehensive	A level-Applied A level-BTEC	185	19.6
	A level-BTEC	134	14.2
	A level	126	13.3
	A level-Applied A level-Applied AS level-BTEC	67	7.1
	A level-Applied A level-BTEC-VRQ	55	5.8
FE/Tertiary College	A level	42	22.6
	A level-BTEC-VRQ	29	15.6
	A level-Applied A level-BTEC-VRQ	26	14.0
	A level-BTEC-OCR National-VRQ	25	13.4
	A level-BTEC-OCR National-VRQ	8	4.3
Grammar	A level	35	46.7
	A level-Applied A level	11	14.7
	A level-BTEC	8	10.7
	A level-IB	5	6.7
	A level-Applied A level-BTEC	4	5.3
Independent	A level	380	61.6
	A level-BTEC	60	9.7
	A level-Applied A level	34	5.5
	A level-IB	30	4.9
	A level-Pre-U	29	4.7
Secondary Modern	A level-Applied A level-BTEC	10	14.7
	A level-BTEC	10	14.7
	A level	9	13.2
	A level-Applied A level-BTEC-OCR National	5	7.4
	A level-Applied A level-BTEC-VRQ	4	5.9
Sixth Form College	A level-Applied A level-BTEC-VRQ	20	14.5
	A level	17	12.3
	A level-Applied A level-Applied AS level-BTEC-VRQ	16	11.6
	A level-BTEC-VRQ	12	8.7
	A level-Applied A level-Applied AS level-BTEC-OCR National-Cambridge Technical-VRQ	10	7.2