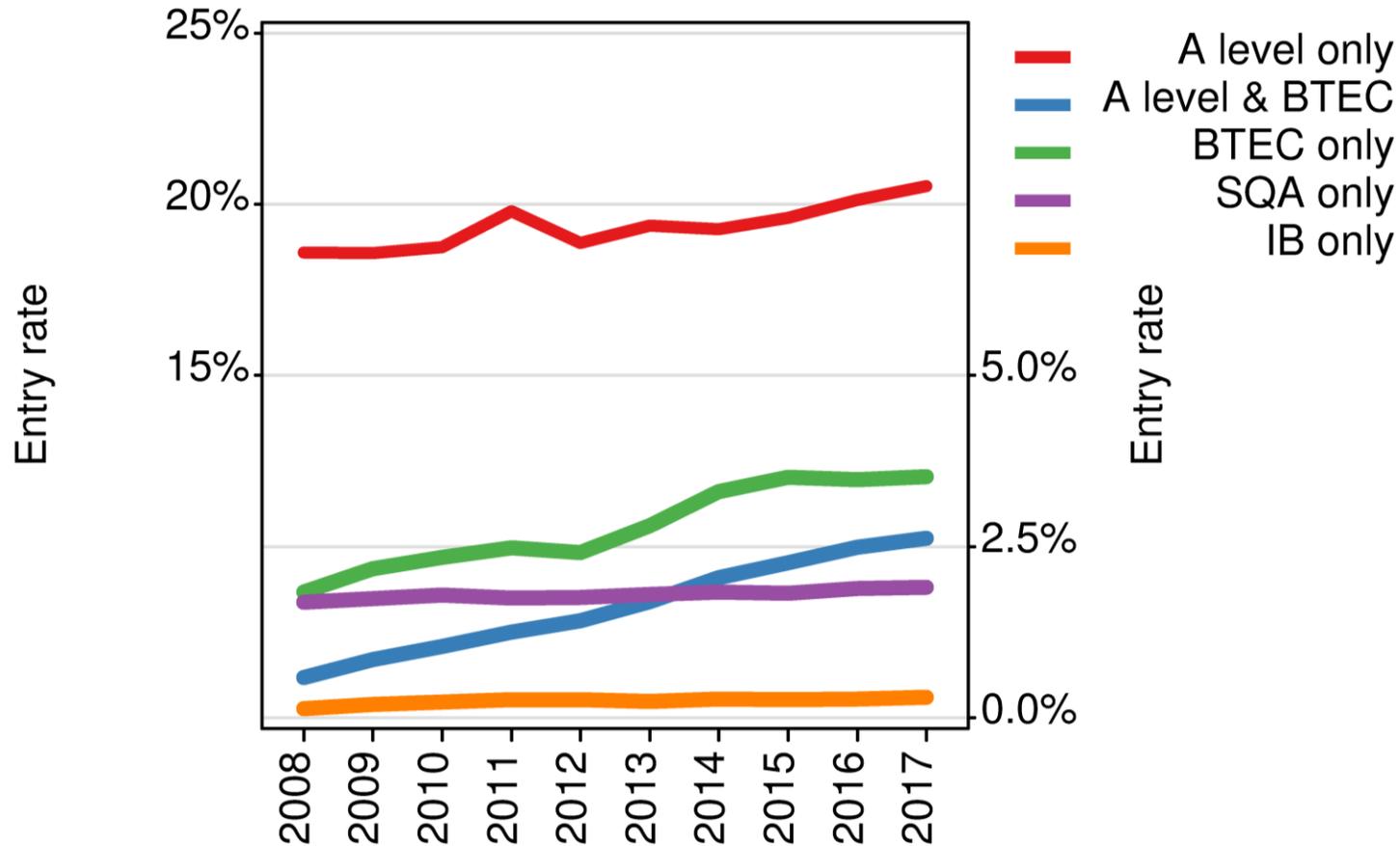




Vocational qualifications and progression to HE

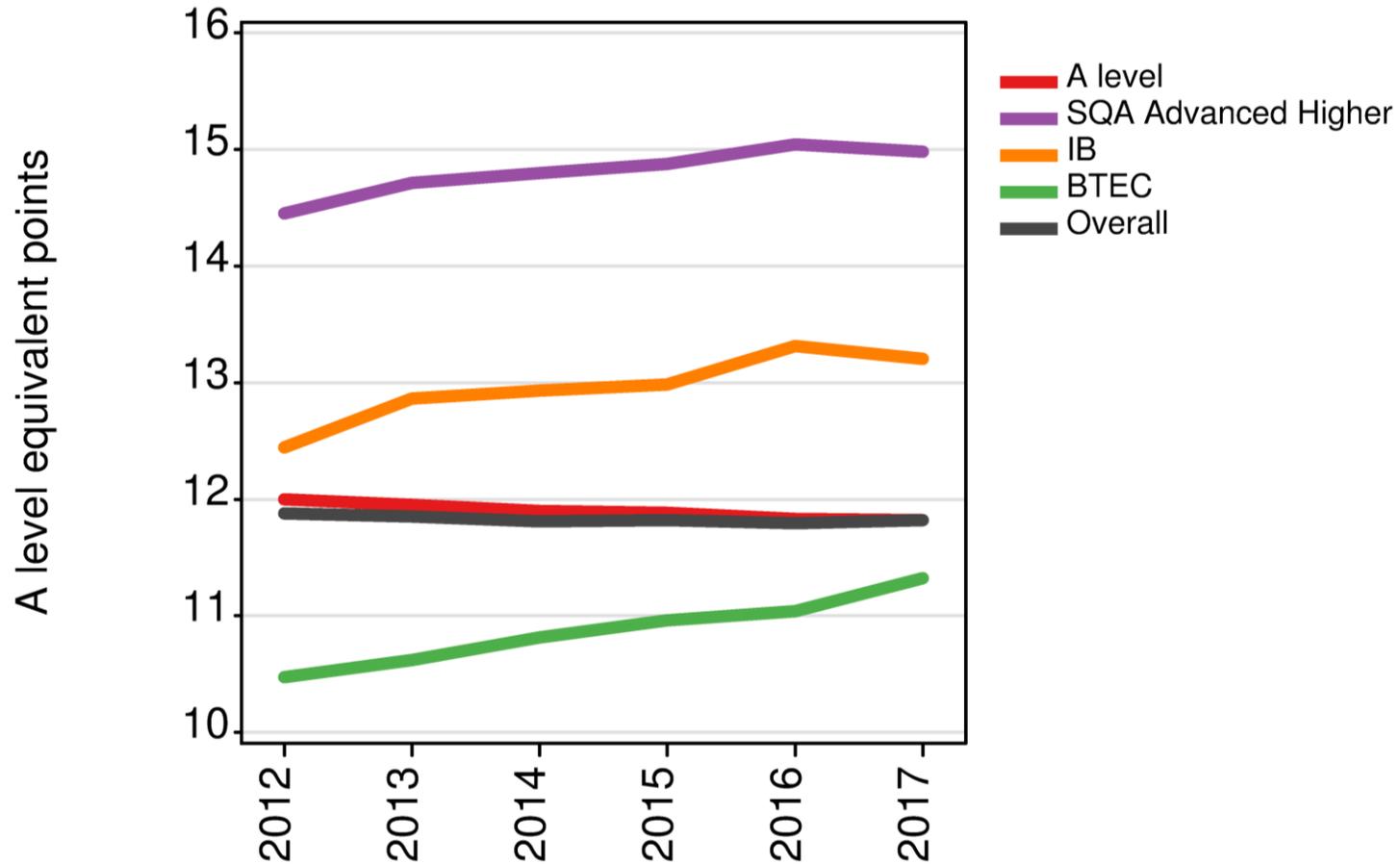
Amy Smith: Senior Policy Executive

Entry rates consistent



- The entry rate for A level only students has been increasing since 2014 but slowed in 2017 to reach 20.5%.
- Entry rates for BTEC and combination of A Level and BTEC both increased by 0.1 percentage points.
- Entry rates are largely stable for students holding SQAs and IB.

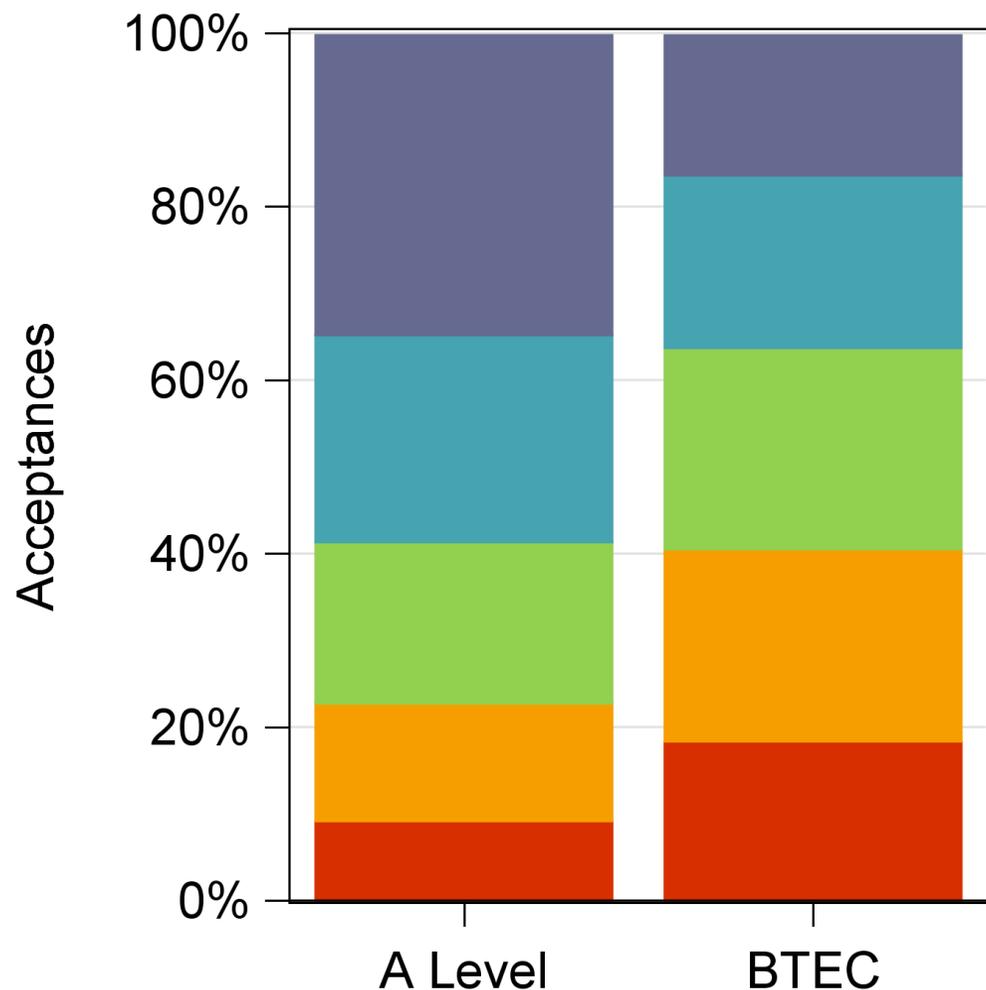
Average attainment levels



- BTECs have the lowest attainment but saw largest increase from last year from 11 points to 11.3.
- A level attainment has been gradually decreasing from 12 points in 2012 to 11.8 in 2017.

Who are BTEC students?

UK 18 year old accepted applicants by POLAR3 (2017)



- More likely to be POLAR3 Q1 and Q2.
- More likely to be Black or Asian.
- More likely to enter lower tariff providers, followed by medium, then higher tariff providers.
- 49.7% of BTEC applicants with D*D*D* placed at lower tariff providers.



Qualification provision survey: findings

Qualification reform roundtable: January 2018

About the event

- A forum to **reflect** on how the education sector was prepared for, and responded to, qualification reform.
- Focused on **lessons learned** and sought to identify the most supportive activities and resources.
- Survey was very useful in showing how the **pre-HE sector responds** to the reforms; the expanded UK-wide survey will continue.

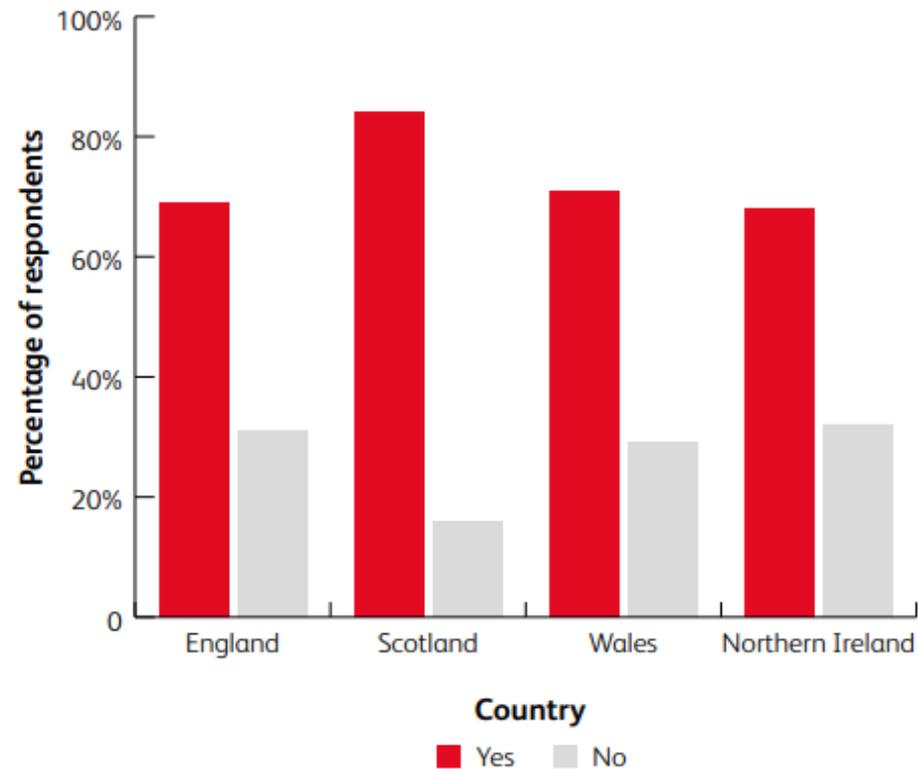
Key findings

- An **unprecedented level of change** – careful preparation, communication and support needed for further changes.
- **Some challenges mitigated** by increased HE competition and the declining 18-year-old population.
- UCAS should continue to play a central role in **communicating intelligence**.
- **Qualification reform statements** are key resource for schools and colleges.

Response across the UK

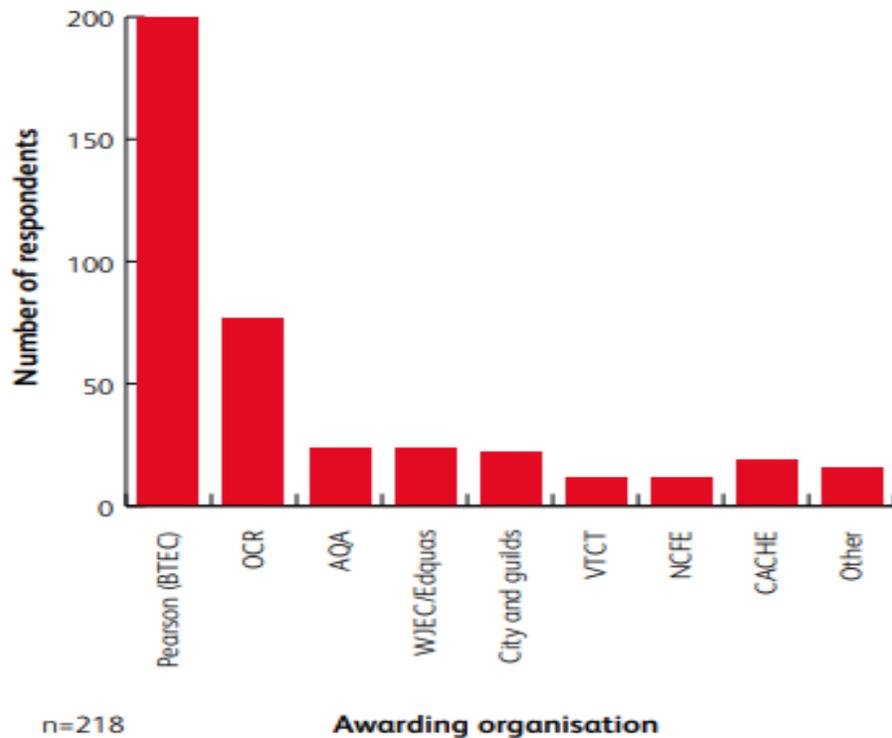
Do you feel you have sufficient information about qualification reform when making decisions about future provision?

In 2016, 49% of respondents did not feel that they had sufficient information about qualification reform.

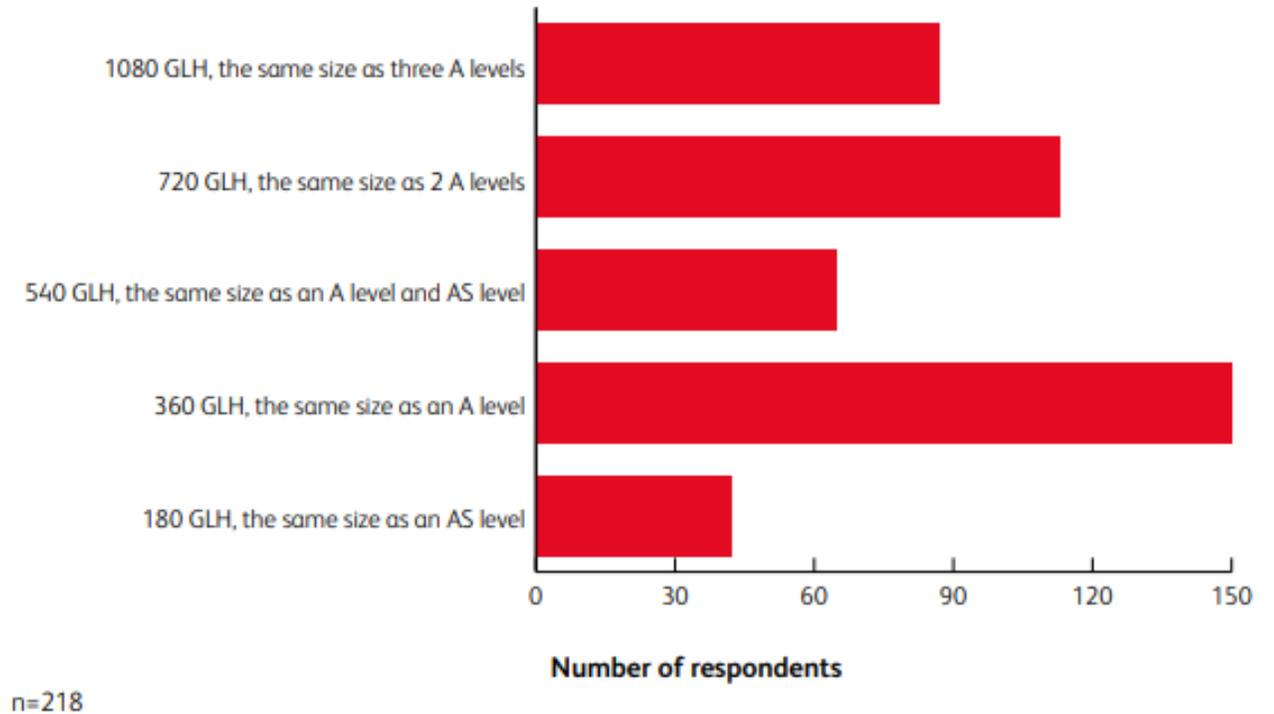


Vocational qualification coverage

Which organisation awards the vocational qualifications you deliver?

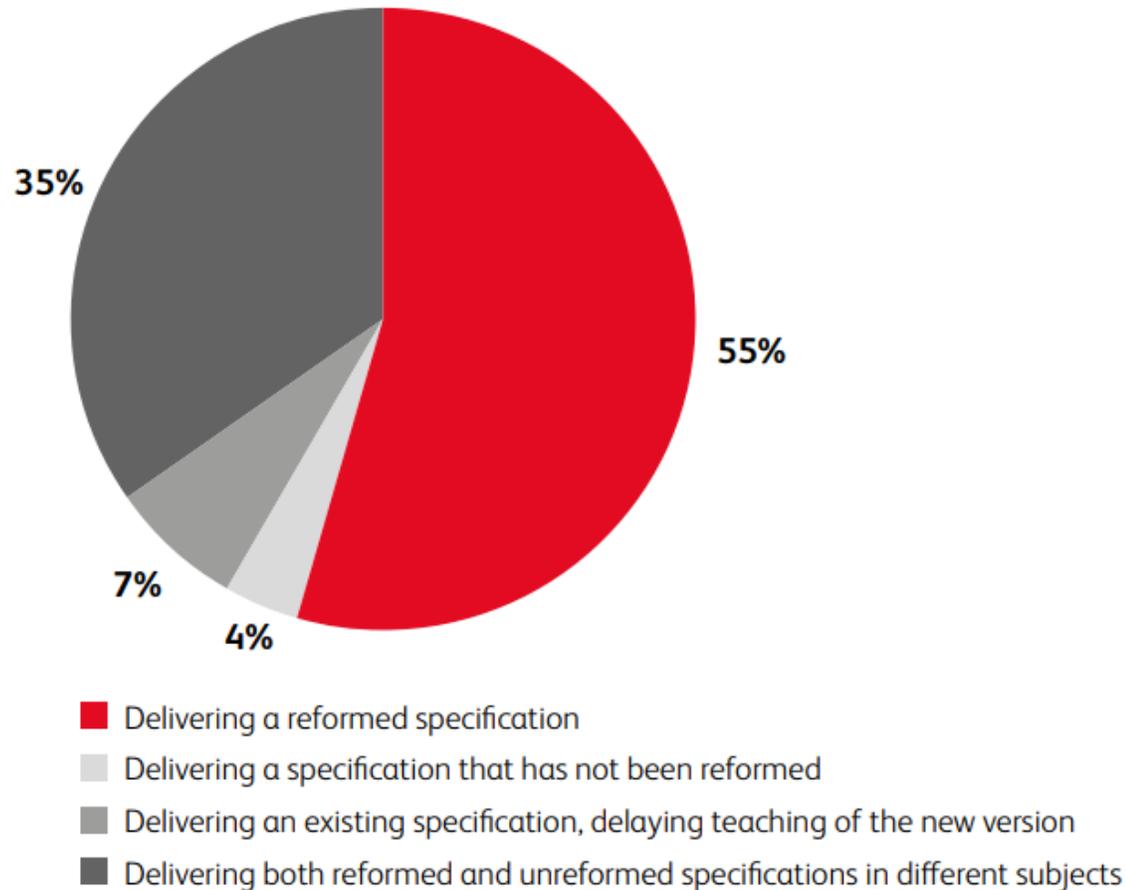


What size vocational qualification do you offer?

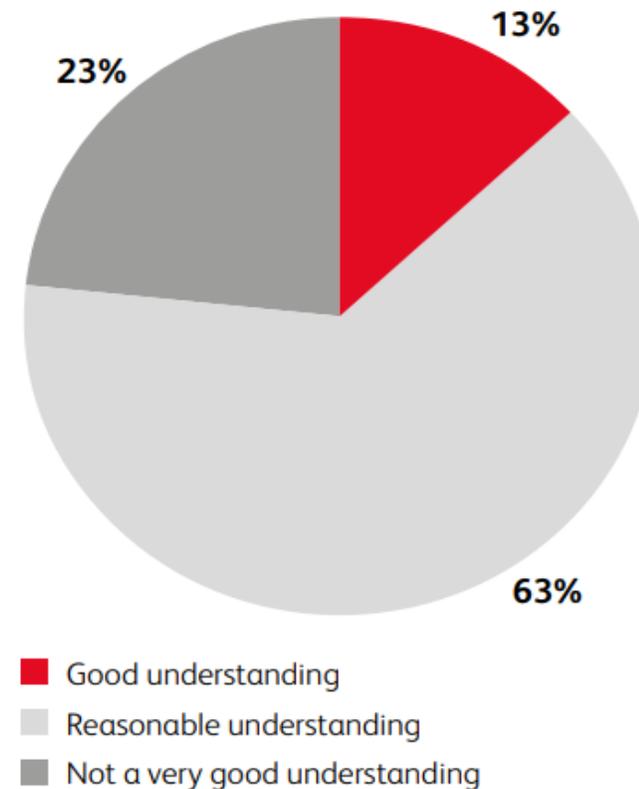


England: vocational qualifications

For the 2017/18 academic year, are you:



To what extent do you believe universities and colleges understand these qualifications?



Feedback on the delivery of vocational qualifications

“

The exam element and new assessment process to the BTEC courses has significantly changed these courses, and I do not believe universities appreciate this. They are still judging these on the previous 100% coursework courses, and now the complexity of the BTEC exams needs to be taken into account. Students who previously would have been directed down the BTEC route due to the coursework nature of the course are finding the courses inaccessible, due to the exam and the structure of the assignments

Academy

“

I think they are better prepared for university, the course is more research-based that it was, and they'll have a deeper understanding of practitioners.

Academy

“

Greater focus and more skills-driven, but the introduction of formal examination seems counter to the spirit of the qualification.

Independent school

“

A greater focus on examinations seems to remove some of the benefits to learners of experiencing hands-on activity.

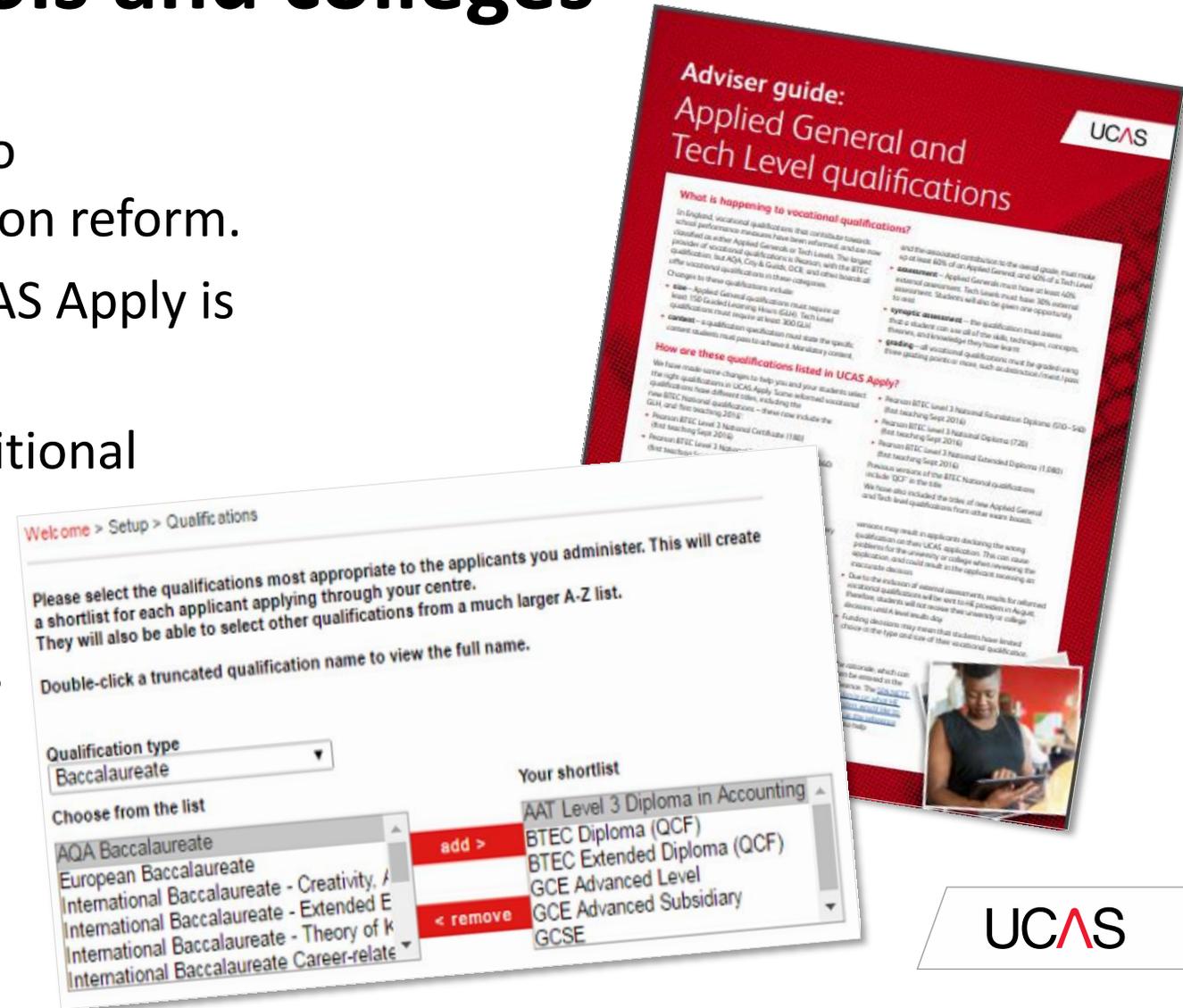
Academy



Qualification provision survey: recommendations

Recommendations: schools and colleges

- Engage with **universities and colleges** to understand their response to qualification reform.
- Ensure the **qualification shortlist** in UCAS Apply is accurate.
- Use the **UCAS reference** to provide additional information on curriculum provision.
- Work with UCAS to **provide insight** into curriculum provision across the UK.



Recommendations: universities and colleges

- Produce/update existing **qualification reform statements**.
- Ensure **entry requirements** are clear and transparent.
- Make sure **offers** are clear and relevant to individual students.
- Provide clear entry requirements and supporting information for **vocational qualifications**.
- Engage with **schools and colleges** to understand their response to reforms.
- Clearly communicate any changes to the **suitability of qualifications** for entry.



Recommendations: UCAS

- Continue to take a central role in communicating intelligence regarding qualification reform.
- Provide comprehensive I&A for a broad range of qualifications for all audiences.
- Issue the UK-wide qualification provision survey annually.
- Reflect the range of qualifications (and their differences) in current and new UCAS services.
- Ensure that changes to qualifications central when developing new products and services.

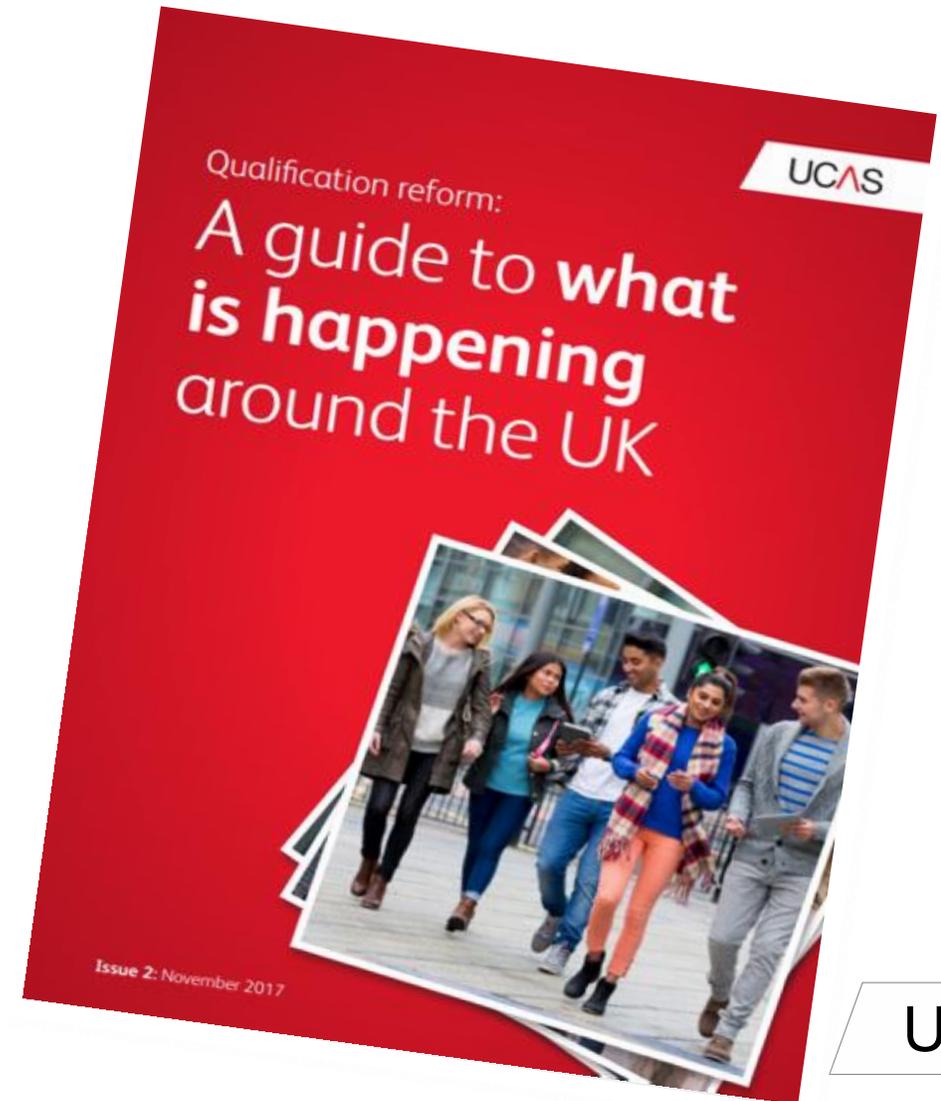




Qualification reform and 2018 entry

What was new for 2018?

- Ongoing introduction of reformed A levels across the UK, including additional subjects in England, and CCEA regulated A levels in Northern Ireland.
- Growing number of reformed GCSEs (9 – 1) entering HE.
- First substantive award of new style vocational qualifications.



Vocational qualification reform: key issues

- **Dual running** – applicants may declare the incorrect version on their application.
- **Different skills and aptitudes** shown.
- Assessment changes – both **external and synoptic assessment**, as well as changes to resit processes.
- **Fewer students passing** the qualification, and changes to grade distribution.
- Greater need for **differentiation at Confirmation/Clearing** could lead to delayed decisions.



UCAS support

- Range of information and advice for all audiences.
- Regular communications.
- Engagement with awarding organisations and regulators to ensure up to date on changes (including the 'must pass' changes).
- ABL and results processing changes.
- Emphasis on reformed vocational qualifications in results embargo training.
- Intelligence gathering and dissemination, including our qualification provision survey.

A black and white photograph of a business meeting. In the foreground, a man in a white shirt and tie is gesturing with his right hand while looking towards the left. To his left, a woman is holding a pen and looking at a document. In the lower right, another person's hands are visible, holding a smartphone. The background is slightly blurred, showing office furniture.

Looking forward to 2019

Qualification reform in 2019

GCSEs in Northern Ireland

- Introduction of the C* grade, aligned to grade 5 on the 9-1 scale
- Grade B now aligns to grade 6
- A* aligns to grade 9
- UCAS is engaging with CCEA around messaging and support for HE providers in setting entry requirements

Key issues for HE providers:

- Fewer students achieving **grade B** and **grade A*** – impact on HE providers' entry requirements.
- Students in Wales will continue to follow A*-G but **will not align** with the Northern Irish scale.
- No **direct equivalence** with grade 8.

Qualification reform in 2019

Forthcoming changes include:

- Continued rollout of reformed **A levels** and **GCSEs**
- **Functional skills** qualifications: awareness raising with HE providers
- Further **vocational** reform: Level 4 and 5 review, Applied Generals, and Level 2 vocational qualifications?
- Continued **apprenticeship** standards development.

Looking beyond 2019: T Levels

How UCAS is supporting:

- Consultation response (early 2018).
- Engaging with the Department for Education and Institute for Apprenticeships regarding T Level content.
- Sharing T Level content and I&A as it is developed.
- UCAS Tariff points and T Levels.

Key issues for HE providers:

- The importance of a **bridging provision** between academic and vocational routes at Level 3.
- Suitability of T Levels for **progression to HE**.
- Differences in **content** between T Levels – is the core transferable?
- Different **grading structures**.



Thank you

Email: a.smith@ucas.ac.uk