



There are many
paths to success

Higher Level Qualifications July 2008

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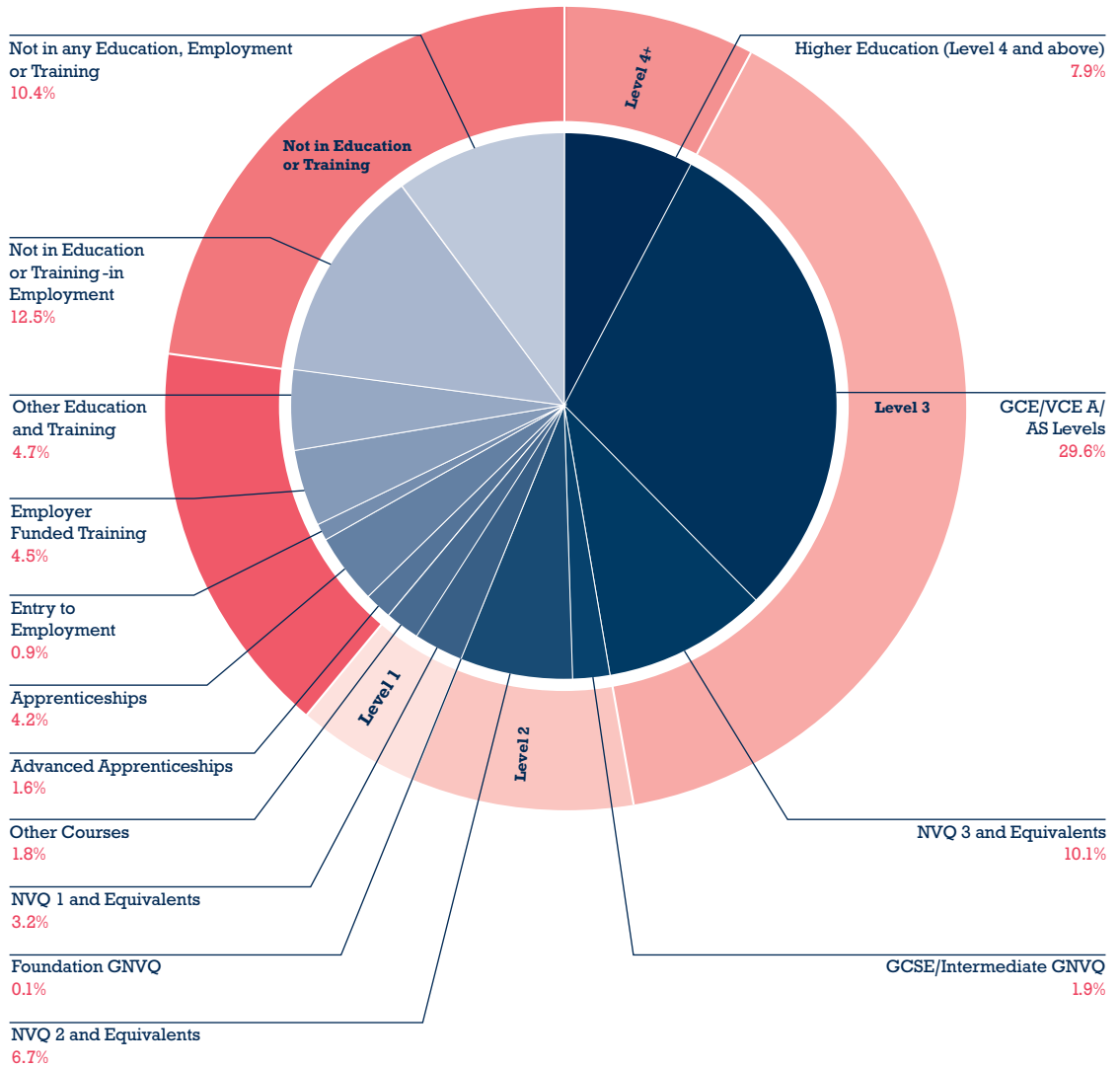
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Of 16–18 year old students, 57.9% are on a broadly academic course (e.g. A levels) and 39.4% on a broadly vocational course.

Academic courses have been defined higher education (level 4 and above), GCE/VCE A/AS levels and GCSE/Intermediate GNVQ. Note that data cannot be disaggregated to pull out VCE/Intermediate GNVQ from academic courses. Vocational courses have been defined as NVQ3 and equivalents, NVQ2 and equivalents, Foundation GNVQ, NVQ 1 and equivalents, Advanced Apprenticeships, Apprenticeships, Entry to Employment and NVQ Learning

Section 1 The Current 16–18 Qualification Landscape



1. Career Decision Making Amongst Young People McGrath, S. & P. Millen (2004).
2. Getting them in: An investigation of factors affecting progression to higher education of 16–19 year olds in full time education. Manchester: MMU.

Section 2

Finding out about the options

Services

Connexions provides information, advice and guidance (IAG) for 13–19 year olds through its website, phone line, text/email service, webchat and personal advisers. A 2004 NAO evaluation of the Connexions service was not able to say how many young people use Connexions, but did warn that 'there is still a risk that not all young people who would benefit from advice are receiving it. This gap is due to Connexions operating with fewer resources than was originally anticipated, together with a lack of clarity regarding the respective role of schools and the Connexions Service in providing careers advice to young people.' The Connexions Service's objectives also have a strong focus on hard-to-reach groups, raising a risk that the majority of young people do not receive an adequate service.

AimHigher works across England to inform learners about access to higher education. This is done through programmes such as IAG, student mentors in schools and colleges, and activities such as summer schools and road shows.

There are limitations with providing IAG in schools and colleges. The NAO's evaluation of the Connexions service found that the majority of schools do not believe that they have the capacity to provide appropriate levels of IAG for young people. In two thirds of schools, IAG is co-ordinated or delivered by staff without formal qualifications in the field.

How young people make decisions

An evaluation of previous research by Prospects¹ in 2006 found that:

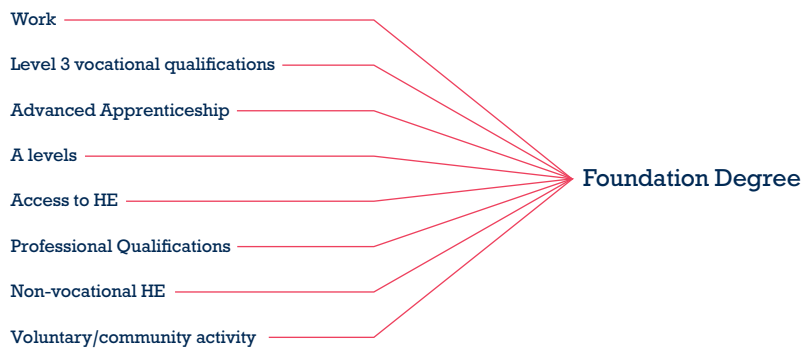
- Young people's career decisions are influenced by a range of factors, including family, teachers, careers specialists, contacts with employers, perception of a subject, finance and their own values and interests.
- Young people bring varying perspectives to the decision-making process, suggesting a single approach to guidance would not be suitable for all.

Practitioner research in the North West has demonstrated that young people rate friends as the most important personal source of information in relation to higher education options. Parents 'exert greater influence than professional advisers over HEI choice and most students regard intervention from careers specialists as less significant than that from their personal tutors.' Students rely principally on published sources of advice (prospectuses, websites and Open Days) in finding out about HEIs².

A 2001 report by the Institute of Employment Studies found that the main motivating factor which encourages potential students from lower social class backgrounds (students who are more likely to choose vocational routes) to enter HE is a belief that a higher qualification will bring improved job and career prospects, and also improved earnings and job security. This suggests the potential of an information campaign which (a) proves these points and (b) shows young people how they can proceed to HE through vocational routes.

Section 3.1 How do young people progress?

Progression Routes to Foundation Degrees

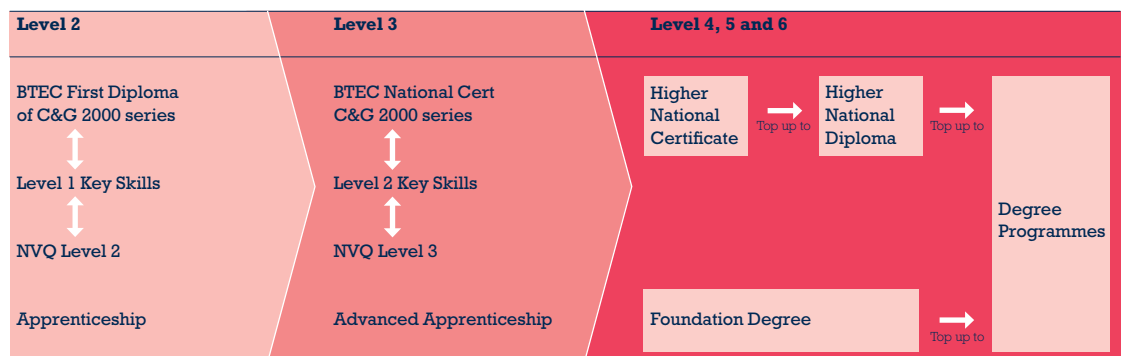


Progression from employment requires foundation degree courses with flexible entry requirements that are able to recognise non-accredited learning.

According to Foundation Degree Forward, factors that facilitate student progression include:

- Good IAG, particularly concerning routes to HE from level 3 vocational qualifications.
- Accessibility in terms of flexible entry requirements.
- Flexibility in terms of delivery model and progression opportunities.
- Relevance of courses to employment in order to gain employer support and ensure clear benefits for students.

Apprenticeship Progression Routes to Higher Education



UCAS Tariff

The 'UCAS tariff' is the framework by which qualifications can be rated and compared for entry into degree programmes. The table below lists the qualifications that are recognised on the framework, many of which are vocational.

UCAS does note, however, that individual universities have the option to disregard certain qualifications according to their own preferences – so vocational routes do not necessarily gain the recognition suggested by the tariff.

Qualification					Max. Points
International Baccalaureate	Diploma				768
BTEC Nationals	Award	Certificate	Diploma		360
OCR Nationals	Certificate	Diploma	Extended Diploma		360
BTEC Nationals in Early Years	Theory Certificate	Theory Dip.	Practical		320
Diploma	Progression Diploma	Additional & Specialist Learning			300
Diploma in Foundation Studies (Art & Design)					285
GCE/VCE Qualifications	GCE A/AS VCE	GCE AS Double Award	GCE A Level/AVCE	GCE/AVCE Double Award	240
CACHE Dip. in Child Care & Edu.	Theory	Practical			240
L3 Diploma in Fashion Retail					160
AAT NVQ L3 in Accounting					160
Scottish Qualifications	Advanced Higher	Higher	Int 2	Standard Grade	120
Advanced Placement Programme	Group A	Group B			120
Welsh Baccalaureate Core					120
EDI L3 Cert. in Accounting (IAS)					120
L3 iPRO	Certificate	Diploma			100
Irish Leaving Certificate	Higher	Ordinary			90
Speech & Drama Examinations	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	PCertLAM	90
Music Examinations	Practical Gr.6-8	Theory Gr.6-8			75
COPE					70
ifs School of Finance	Cert. in Fin. Studies	Dip. in Fin. Studies			60
Extended Project					60
Advanced Extension Awards					40
British Horse Society	Stage 3 Horse Knowledge & Care	Stage 3 Riding	Preliminary Teacher's Cert.		35
Key Skills					30
Higher Sports Leader Award					30
Free Standing Maths					20
Core Skills					20

3. Source: Emailed statistics from UCAS, 7 July 2008. Note that this is a rough estimate of the data requested due to changes in data storage processes. Data is from across the UK.

Section 3.2

Progression statistics

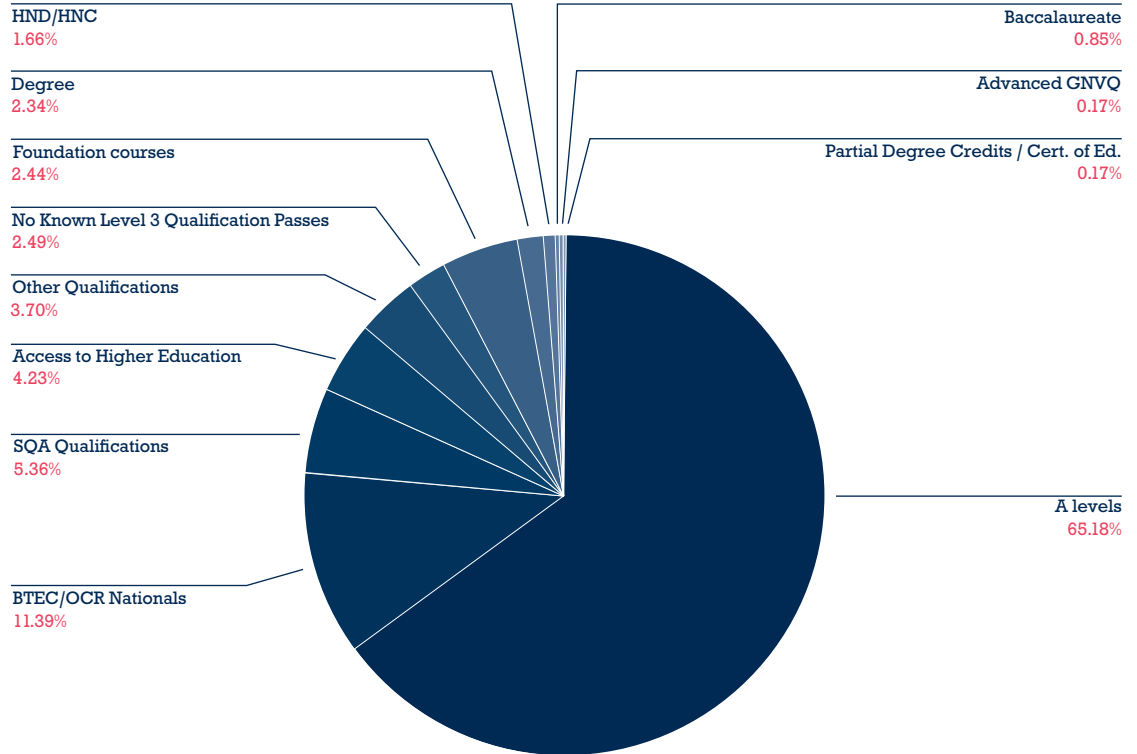
The point made above about vocational routes not necessarily getting the same recognition as academic ones is supported by UCAS figures which show applications against acceptances for different types of qualification. A levels are the most popular qualification, with 85.5% of applicants accepted (even allowing for applicants who apply with one or two A levels); while 81.2% of applicants who undertake foundation courses are accepted, the highest purely vocational qualification is BTEC/OCR Nationals – with 76.3% of applicants accepted, almost 10% less than A level applicants.

Percentage of applicants accepted into degree courses, by qualification type³

Qualification	Acceptances	Qualification	Acceptances
A levels	85.5%	Access to Higher Education	69.0%
Foundation courses	81.2%	Advanced GNVQ	67.8%
Baccalaureate	78.2%	Other Qualifications	62.9%
SQA Qualifications	77.1%	Partial Degree Credits / Cert. of Ed.	62.4%
BTEC/OCR Nationals	76.3%	No Known Level 3 qualification passes	58.9%
HND/HNC	76.3%	Degree	49.4%

4. Source: Emailed statistics from UCAS, 7 July 2008. Note that this is a rough estimate of the data requested due to changes in data storage processes. Data is from across the UK.
5. Registered on another undergraduate-level course at a UK HEI or English FEC. This includes students on programmes leading to certificates or diplomas in higher education, HNDs, HNCs, foundation degrees or institutional undergraduate credits. These are referred to as 'other undergraduate' (OUG) level.
6. UG includes all students progressing to degrees and OUG (see note above) level.

Acceptances to Higher Education, 2007⁴



HEFCE has carried out a study (2007) on progression from BTEC courses, looking at qualification outcomes for students who commenced courses in 2002–2003. This shows good progression rates for BTEC students into higher education (see tables below).

Progression of all registered BTEC students by qualification outcome

Qualification status	Degree	OUG ⁵ 5,711	FE	No FE or HE	Total	% Degree	% all UG ⁶	% FE
Reported as qualifying	8,341	647	14,380	6,193	34,625	24%	41%	42%
Reported as not qualifying	597	1,278	6,653	6,780	14,677	4%	8%	45%
Unknown	1,463	7,636	6,759	2,882	12,382	12%	22%	55%
Total	10,401		27,792	15,855	61,684	17%	29%	45%

Type of BTEC	Degree	OUG	FE	No FE or HE	Total	% Degree	% all UG	% FE
BTEC National Award	226	117	486	345	1,174	19%	29%	41%
BTEC National Certificate	519	2,138	1,529	2,137	6,323	8%	42%	24%
BTEC National Diploma	7,596	3,456	12,365	3,711	27,128	28%	41%	46%
Total	8,341	5,711	14,380	6,193	34,625	24%	41%	42%

- 14. Exert from Stanton, G., (2008) Stanton, G., Learning Matters: Making the 14–19 reforms work for learners, for CfBT Education Trust
- 15. Learning & Labour Market Intelligence for Wales, December 2007
- 16. The Learning Country – Vision into Action, Welsh Assembly Government

Section 4 Funding

The disparity between the funding of academic and vocational qualifications is well documented at FE/HE level (see, for example, the National Skills Forum report Mind the Gap). There is less research into funding at the pre-HE level. Funding set by the LSC for 2008/09 shows a marginal difference between the funding rates for vocational students (the majority of academic students are in school sixth forms):

Funding Model	Funding Rate
16–18 Learner Responsive: School Sixth Forms	£2,945.00
16–18 Learner Responsive: All Other Providers	£2,860.00
16–18 Apprenticeships	£2,860.00

This represents a funding differential of 3% (note that the LSC's funding calculation takes into account two further elements, standard learner number and provider factor).

Section 5

Is it all about the name?

It is arguable that divisions between FE and HE, and therefore the lack of progression routes between them, are compounded by definitional divisions, i.e. 'further' versus 'higher'.

Edge could consider moving towards the concept of a unified 'tertiary sector', the benefits of which could include:

- Greater support for lifelong learning.
- Greater esteem for the FE sector, as it is currently defined.
- Clear progression routes between levels and courses.
- Students undertaking vocational (or academic) courses not feeling that they have to stay within one area or the other; i.e. that it is perfectly acceptable, and even advisable, to experience both vocational and academic learning.

It should be noted that a change in conceptual understanding would take years to achieve. It would also have to be accompanied by structural changes in the education sector, such as the merging of HEFCE and LSC/Skills Funding Agency. This is an idea that would need extensive further research to test its implications.

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