

# **Uptake of GCE A level subjects 2022**

Statistics Report Series No. 138

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17 November 2023

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## How to cite this publication

Lim, C.H.J. & Gill, T. (2023). *Uptake of GCE A level subjects 2022*. Statistics Report Series No. 138. Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

# Introduction

This report is focused on the uptake of A level subjects in England in 2022. Uptake in an A level subject is defined as the number or percentage of students at the end of Key Stage 5 (who have entered for at least one AS or A level) taking the subject.

This report was produced using publicly available data from the Department for Education's (DfE) "Find and compare schools in England" service<sup>1</sup>. The dataset consisted of Key Stage 5 (KS5) results of all subjects provided by each school in England. Other school information, such as schools' sex composition, admissions policy, and the number of disadvantaged pupils at the end of KS5, was also available. Only schools that had at least one student who sat for at least one A level subject in the 2021/2022 academic year<sup>2</sup> were included.

The previous A level uptake reports (e.g., Gill, 2018) were produced using the National Pupil Database (NPD). However, accessing this database has become increasingly challenging and time-consuming. The main difference between the DfE and NPD datasets is that the DfE data is at the school level, while the NPD data is at the student level. For example, the DfE dataset has no records of a student's personal information, such as sex or home postcode, but the NPD does. Therefore, several variables used in the previous reports to group the student population into different categories (e.g., by deprivation) were unavailable. However, similar measures were available at the school level in the DfE dataset, e.g., percentage of disadvantaged students in a school. These were used to group the data into categories instead (where available). Consequently, the composition of the different categories in the analysis may differ from previous years, so comparisons between years must be interpreted cautiously.

Previous reports (e.g., Gill, 2018) have also split the student population by the number of A level subjects they have taken, by combination of subjects taken<sup>3</sup>, and by the number of facilitating subjects taken. However, it was not possible to produce these tables with the DfE (school-level) data.

## Results

Tables 1 to 4 present the distribution of schools within each of the different school classifications. The total number of schools is not identical in each table, due to small amounts of missing or suppressed data within each classification. In certain circumstances, DfE suppressed some school data values to protect confidentiality and minimise identification risks. This usually happens when the measure covers only five or fewer students<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This can be accessed here: <https://www.find-school-performance-data.service.gov.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> The dataset also included information on some results from earlier academic years. If a school only had results achieved between January 2020 and August 2021, they were not included in this report, as no A level candidate count was published for these schools; hence, it was not possible to calculate the uptake percentages.

<sup>3</sup> It might be worth checking Ofqual's analytics webpage for similar information. Ofqual published the most frequent combinations of A levels and their uptake here: <https://analytics.ofqual.gov.uk/apps/Alevel/9to1/>

<sup>4</sup> The applied suppression rule was explained in the "abbreviations" file that accompanied the dataset. As stated in the file, different measures might have different rules applied.

## School type

A levels are taught at several different types of school. In line with the uptake report for 2017 (Gill, 2018), schools were assigned a school type based on their admissions policy and institution type as recorded in the dataset.

In this report, schools and colleges were classified into ten different school types: Academy (non-selective in highly-selective area (HSA)), Academy (other non-selective), Academy (selective), Academy (sixth form), Further Education (FE) College, Independent school, Sixth form college, Non-selective in HSA, Other non-selective, and Selective. Other non-maintained schools, such as special schools, were excluded.

Table 1 presents the number and percentage of students and schools in each school type.

Table 1. A level students and schools, by school type.

| School type                    | N students    | % students   | N schools   | % schools    |
|--------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Academy (non-selective in HSA) | 8282          | 2.9          | 122         | 4.7          |
| Academy (other non-selective)  | 109146        | 38.5         | 1241        | 47.4         |
| Academy (selective)            | 22181         | 7.8          | 140         | 5.3          |
| Academy (sixth form)           | 23997         | 8.5          | 59          | 2.3          |
| FE college                     | 20977         | 7.4          | 119         | 4.5          |
| Independent school             | 34406         | 12.1         | 538         | 20.6         |
| Non-selective in HSA           | 1096          | 0.4          | 22          | 0.8          |
| Other non-selective            | 27614         | 9.7          | 311         | 11.9         |
| Selective                      | 2946          | 1.0          | 20          | 0.8          |
| Sixth form college             | 32999         | 11.6         | 45          | 1.7          |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>283644</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>2617</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

## School attainment

Each school's ability or attainment level was derived based on the mean points score of their candidates' best three A level subjects, which was a variable readily available in the DfE dataset. The calculation taken to construct this variable is explained in greater detail by DfE (2018) but, in essence, this score is calculated for each student by first allocating points to grades such that A\* = 60 points, A = 50 points, ..., and U = 0 points (DfE, 2018, p.26). Then, the points score for each student's best three A levels are added together and summed across a school. This total is then divided by the number of A level students in the school, and further divided by three to arrive at the mean points score per entry. For more details about the calculation, see DfE (2018, p.29).

Given that this is a school-level average, there would be some students who obtained high grades in a low attainment school, and some who obtained low grades in a high attainment school. However, a high attainment school will have more high-attaining students than a low attainment school, which has implications for uptake and teaching.

Table 2. School attainment/ability group. Values for minimum, maximum and mean are calculated based on candidates' average points per entry.

| <b>Attainment group</b> | <b>Schools</b> | <b>Students</b> | <b>Minimum</b> | <b>Maximum</b> | <b>Mean</b> |
|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| Low                     | 804            | 71650           | 8.7            | 34.9           | 30.2        |
| Medium                  | 800            | 99014           | 34.9           | 40.1           | 37.5        |
| High                    | 800            | 110778          | 40.1           | 57.8           | 44.5        |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>2404</b>    | <b>281442</b>   | -              | -              | -           |

## School deprivation level

Each school's deprivation level was derived based on the percentage of disadvantaged<sup>5</sup> students in the school at the end of KS5. This measure was used to categorise schools into three equally-sized groups, representing low, medium, and high deprivation. Table 3 presents the number of schools in each group and the minimum, maximum and mean percentage of disadvantaged candidates for each group.

Some schools had no recorded value for this measure (mostly independent schools) and quite a few schools had a suppressed value due to the rule applied by DfE. These schools were all excluded from this categorisation.

Table 3. School deprivation group. Values for minimum, maximum and mean are calculated based on the percentage of disadvantaged candidates within a school.

| <b>Deprivation group</b> | <b>Schools</b> | <b>Students</b> | <b>Minimum</b> | <b>Maximum</b> | <b>Mean</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| Low                      | 519            | 98849           | 2.9            | 10.8           | 7.3         |
| Medium                   | 518            | 73634           | 10.9           | 21.6           | 15.5        |
| High                     | 518            | 49667           | 21.6           | 75.5           | 33.1        |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>1555</b>    | <b>222150</b>   | -              | -              | -           |

## School sex composition

School sex composition<sup>6</sup> was recorded for each school in the DfE dataset. Table 4 shows the numbers and percentages of different types of schools.

<sup>5</sup> Defined as those who attract pupil premium funding: that is, pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, and pupils in care, or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

<sup>6</sup> The word 'sex' is used throughout the report to describe the different types of schools as it best reflects the admission policy at the time of data collection, and is consistent with terms used by DfE in their reports.

Table 4. A level students and schools, by school sex.

| <b>School sex</b> | <b>N schools</b> | <b>% schools</b> | <b>N students</b> | <b>% students</b> |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Boys' School      | 67               | 2.6              | 6901              | 2.4               |
| Girls' School     | 195              | 7.5              | 14005             | 4.9               |
| Mixed School      | 2355             | 90.0             | 262738            | 92.6              |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>2617</b>      | <b>100.0</b>     | <b>283644</b>     | <b>100.0</b>      |

## Mean number of A levels taken

Tables 5-8 show the mean number of A levels taken by students, according to the different school classifications described above. For example, Table 5 shows that students in selective academies took on average 3.1 A levels, compared with the students in non-selective schools in highly-selective areas, who took on average only 2.2 A levels.

Table 5. Mean number of A levels taken by school type.

| <b>School type</b>             | <b>Total AL entries</b> | <b>Total no. of students</b> | <b>Mean ALs taken</b> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Academy (non-selective in HSA) | 19089                   | 8282                         | 2.3                   |
| Academy (other non-selective)  | 290574                  | 109146                       | 2.7                   |
| Academy (selective)            | 68057                   | 22181                        | 3.1                   |
| Academy (sixth form)           | 61293                   | 23997                        | 2.6                   |
| FE college                     | 54286                   | 20977                        | 2.6                   |
| Independent school             | 100393                  | 34406                        | 2.9                   |
| Non-selective in HSA           | 2448                    | 1096                         | 2.2                   |
| Other non-selective            | 72706                   | 27614                        | 2.6                   |
| Selective                      | 9234                    | 2946                         | 3.1                   |
| Sixth form college             | 84456                   | 32999                        | 2.6                   |

Table 6 shows that students in the high attainment school group took on average 2.9 A levels, compared with those in the low attainment school group, in which students took on average 2.5 A levels. Table 7 shows that students from the low deprivation school group took on average 2.8 A levels, compared with those from the high deprivation school group, in which students took on average 2.6 A levels. Table 8 shows that at girls' schools and boys' schools, students took on average 3 A levels, compared with 2.7 A levels at mixed schools.

Table 6. Mean number of A levels taken by attainment group.

| <b>Attainment group</b> | <b>Total AL entries</b> | <b>Total no. of students</b> | <b>Mean ALs taken</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Low                     | 176445                  | 71650                        | 2.5                   |
| Medium                  | 263565                  | 99014                        | 2.7                   |
| High                    | 318928                  | 110778                       | 2.9                   |

Table 7. Mean number of A levels taken by deprivation group.

| <b>Deprivation group</b> | <b>Total AL entries</b> | <b>Total no. of students</b> | <b>Mean ALs taken</b> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Low                      | 273597                  | 98849                        | 2.8                   |
| Medium                   | 189165                  | 73634                        | 2.6                   |
| High                     | 126892                  | 49667                        | 2.6                   |

Table 8. Mean number of A levels taken by school sex composition.

| <b>School sex</b> | <b>Total AL entries</b> | <b>Total no. of students</b> | <b>Mean ALs taken</b> |
|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Boys' School      | 20402                   | 6901                         | 3.0                   |
| Girls' School     | 41454                   | 14005                        | 3.0                   |
| Mixed School      | 700680                  | 262738                       | 2.7                   |

## **Uptake of individual A level subjects**

The uptake of individual A level subjects is presented in Tables 9 to 12, according to the school classifications described in Tables 1 to 4. Subjects with overall uptake of less than 1% are not included. In each table, subjects are ordered by overall uptake (highest first). Thus, Mathematics had the highest level of uptake, being taken by 29% of A level students in mixed schools, 57.1% of students in boys' schools, and 35.8% of students in girls' schools.

In boys' schools, Mathematics was the most popular subject (57.1% of students from boys' schools), whilst Economics was the second most popular (29.4% of students from boys' schools). In girls' schools, Mathematics was the most popular subject (35.8% of students from girls' schools), whilst Biology was the second most popular (34.8% of students from girls' schools).

Table 9. Uptake of individual subjects by school sex composition (percentage of A level students at the end of KS5).

| <b>Subject</b>                         | <b>Boys' School</b> | <b>Girls' School</b> | <b>Mixed School</b> | <b>Overall uptake</b> |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Mathematics                            | 57.1                | 35.8                 | 29.0                | 30.0                  |
| Psychology                             | 9.1                 | 28.9                 | 26.4                | 26.1                  |
| Biology                                | 20.5                | 34.8                 | 21.6                | 22.2                  |
| Chemistry                              | 27.5                | 31.7                 | 17.3                | 18.3                  |
| Sociology                              | 2.0                 | 9.8                  | 15.5                | 14.9                  |
| History                                | 16.5                | 16.3                 | 14.7                | 14.8                  |
| Business Studies: Single               | 9.3                 | 6.7                  | 13.9                | 13.4                  |
| Physics                                | 24.7                | 10.5                 | 12.2                | 12.5                  |
| Economics                              | 29.4                | 13.7                 | 11.8                | 12.3                  |
| Geography                              | 12.2                | 12.7                 | 11.9                | 11.9                  |
| English Literature                     | 9.4                 | 16.3                 | 11.1                | 11.3                  |
| Government and Politics                | 10.6                | 9.2                  | 6.4                 | 6.6                   |
| Religious Studies                      | 5.5                 | 9.6                  | 5.1                 | 5.4                   |
| Computer Studies / Computing           | 6.9                 | 2.7                  | 5.3                 | 5.2                   |
| Art and Design (Fine Art)              | 3.4                 | 6.2                  | 4.9                 | 4.9                   |
| Mathematics (Further)                  | 14.7                | 5.8                  | 4.6                 | 4.9                   |
| English Language                       | 2.1                 | 2.7                  | 5.1                 | 4.9                   |
| Media / Film / TV Studies              | 0.8                 | 2.0                  | 5.1                 | 4.8                   |
| Law                                    | 0.3                 | 0.9                  | 5.0                 | 4.7                   |
| Physical Education / Sports Studies    | 3.1                 | 2.2                  | 4.3                 | 4.2                   |
| Art and Design (Photography)           | 0.7                 | 1.9                  | 4.1                 | 3.9                   |
| Drama and Theatre Studies              | 1.6                 | 4.3                  | 3.1                 | 3.1                   |
| Design and Technology (Product Design) | 4.0                 | 1.6                  | 3.0                 | 3.0                   |
| Spanish                                | 4.2                 | 5.2                  | 2.8                 | 3.0                   |
| French                                 | 3.5                 | 4.6                  | 2.4                 | 2.6                   |
| English Language and Literature        | 0.8                 | 1.0                  | 2.4                 | 2.3                   |
| Film Studies                           | 0.5                 | 0.4                  | 2.3                 | 2.1                   |
| Art and Design                         | 0.9                 | 2.2                  | 1.9                 | 1.9                   |
| Art and Design (Graphics)              | 0.2                 | 0.5                  | 1.9                 | 1.8                   |
| Music                                  | 1.9                 | 2.1                  | 1.4                 | 1.4                   |
| Art and Design (Textiles)              | 0.0                 | 1.3                  | 1.1                 | 1.1                   |
| Logic / Philosophy                     | 2.1                 | 0.9                  | 1.1                 | 1.1                   |



Table 10. Uptake of individual subjects by school type (percentage of A level students at the end of KS5). The abbreviation NSHSA represents 'Non-selective in highly selective areas'; ONS represents 'Other non-selective'; S represents 'Selective'; and SF represents 'Sixth form'.

| <b>Subject</b>                      | <b>Academy<br/>(NSHSA)</b> | <b>Academy<br/>(ONS)</b> | <b>Academy<br/>(S)</b> | <b>Academy<br/>(SF)</b> | <b>FE<br/>college</b> | <b>Ind.<br/>school</b> | <b>NSHSA</b> | <b>ONS</b> | <b>Selective</b> | <b>Sixth<br/>form</b> |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Mathematics                         | 16.7                       | 28.9                     | 47.6                   | 25.7                    | 19.8                  | 41.2                   | 16.5         | 27.0       | 50.0             | 24.0                  |
| Psychology                          | 27.9                       | 28.0                     | 24.4                   | 26.4                    | 29.5                  | 18.3                   | 32.9         | 26.9       | 20.2             | 26.0                  |
| Biology                             | 17.9                       | 22.3                     | 34.2                   | 19.4                    | 17.0                  | 23.0                   | 18.4         | 21.6       | 34.0             | 19.4                  |
| Chemistry                           | 10.6                       | 16.9                     | 32.9                   | 15.8                    | 11.6                  | 23.4                   | 8.3          | 17.1       | 31.8             | 15.7                  |
| Sociology                           | 20.8                       | 16.8                     | 6.6                    | 17.3                    | 24.7                  | 1.6                    | 20.8         | 18.5       | 7.3              | 16.3                  |
| History                             | 15.5                       | 15.6                     | 15.7                   | 12.4                    | 13.1                  | 15.8                   | 17.2         | 15.7       | 15.7             | 12.6                  |
| Business Studies: Single            | 11.7                       | 13.9                     | 10.2                   | 13.3                    | 15.6                  | 14.1                   | 13.2         | 10.9       | 10.0             | 14.5                  |
| Physics                             | 7.3                        | 12.6                     | 20.6                   | 9.9                     | 7.7                   | 16.0                   | 7.1          | 11.5       | 23.3             | 9.0                   |
| Economics                           | 4.0                        | 11.2                     | 17.8                   | 10.1                    | 7.5                   | 21.5                   | 1.7          | 11.7       | 20.1             | 9.8                   |
| Geography                           | 12.4                       | 13.3                     | 13.7                   | 9.2                     | 8.8                   | 12.5                   | 12.8         | 12.4       | 12.9             | 9.0                   |
| English Literature                  | 12.1                       | 12.0                     | 12.4                   | 8.9                     | 9.2                   | 12.9                   | 16.3         | 13.3       | 14.4             | 7.4                   |
| Government and Politics             | 5.4                        | 5.6                      | 7.9                    | 5.7                     | 6.7                   | 10.2                   | 5.2          | 7.0        | 6.3              | 6.0                   |
| Religious Studies                   | 5.7                        | 5.9                      | 5.9                    | 3.1                     | 3.2                   | 6.9                    | 6.5          | 6.0        | 5.3              | 3.9                   |
| Computer Studies / Computing        | 2.0                        | 5.5                      | 6.8                    | 6.1                     | 4.7                   | 3.3                    | 2.8          | 5.8        | 5.2              | 5.4                   |
| Art and Design (Fine Art)           | 4.6                        | 4.8                      | 4.1                    | 4.4                     | 5.6                   | 6.6                    | 4.5          | 5.0        | 4.9              | 4.4                   |
| Mathematics (Further)               | 1.2                        | 4.2                      | 8.8                    | 4.5                     | 2.3                   | 9.6                    | 0.8          | 3.7        | 9.5              | 3.5                   |
| English Language                    | 2.8                        | 5.2                      | 3.2                    | 6.0                     | 7.8                   | 1.5                    | 2.1          | 5.5        | 0.5              | 6.5                   |
| Media / Film / TV Studies           | 8.3                        | 5.5                      | 1.6                    | 5.4                     | 8.2                   | 0.7                    | 5.3          | 5.8        | 2.6              | 5.1                   |
| Law                                 | 3.8                        | 3.2                      | 1.5                    | 9.9                     | 13.2                  | 0.3                    | 3.7          | 2.7        | 1.2              | 9.6                   |
| Physical Education / Sports Studies | 3.0                        | 4.6                      | 4.2                    | 3.9                     | 2.9                   | 5.0                    | 3.2          | 3.7        | 5.8              | 3.6                   |
| Art and Design (Photography)        | 6.7                        | 3.8                      | 0.8                    | 4.7                     | 5.0                   | 2.9                    | 5.5          | 4.4        | 0.7              | 5.3                   |
| Drama and Theatre Studies           | 2.6                        | 3.2                      | 2.8                    | 2.9                     | 2.3                   | 5.0                    | 1.5          | 2.9        | 1.3              | 2.4                   |
| D&T (Product Design)                | 4.3                        | 3.9                      | 3.0                    | 0.3                     | 0.3                   | 4.2                    | 4.3          | 3.8        | 4.8              | 1.1                   |
| Spanish                             | 1.7                        | 2.7                      | 3.9                    | 2.2                     | 2.1                   | 4.9                    | 2.0          | 2.9        | 2.4              | 2.8                   |
| French                              | 1.3                        | 2.2                      | 3.6                    | 1.8                     | 1.3                   | 4.9                    | 1.2          | 2.2        | 4.2              | 2.4                   |
| English Language and Literature     | 3.2                        | 2.2                      | 0.9                    | 2.7                     | 4.4                   | 0.5                    | 0.3          | 1.7        | 1.4              | 4.6                   |

Table 10. Uptake of individual subjects by school type (percentage of A level students at the end of KS5). *(continued)*

| <b>Subject</b>            | <b>Academy<br/>(NSHSA)</b> | <b>Academy<br/>(ONS)</b> | <b>Academy<br/>(S)</b> | <b>Academy<br/>(SF)</b> | <b>FE<br/>college</b> | <b>Ind.<br/>school</b> | <b>NSHSA</b> | <b>ONS</b> | <b>Selective</b> | <b>Sixth<br/>form</b> |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Film Studies              | 3.0                        | 1.8                      | 0.9                    | 2.9                     | 4.5                   | 0.7                    | 2.6          | 2.1        | 1.7              | 3.4                   |
| Art and Design            | 2.7                        | 2.1                      | 1.2                    | 1.7                     | 1.2                   | 2.0                    | 1.3          | 2.5        | 2.1              | 1.5                   |
| Art and Design (Graphics) | 3.2                        | 1.0                      | 0.3                    | 3.5                     | 3.9                   | 0.7                    | 0.1          | 1.2        | 0.4              | 4.3                   |
| Music                     | 0.7                        | 1.3                      | 1.9                    | 1.1                     | 0.6                   | 2.7                    | 0.4          | 1.2        | 2.2              | 1.1                   |
| Art and Design (Textiles) | 1.4                        | 0.7                      | 0.3                    | 1.8                     | 1.7                   | 1.2                    | 0.2          | 0.7        | 0.3              | 2.1                   |
| Logic / Philosophy        | 0.6                        | 0.6                      | 1.0                    | 1.9                     | 1.7                   | 1.4                    | 1.6          | 1.0        | 2.2              | 1.7                   |

Table 11. Uptake of individual subjects by school attainment (percentage of A level students at the end of KS5).

| <b>Subject</b>                         | <b>Low</b> | <b>Medium</b> | <b>High</b> |
|--|------------|---------------|-------------|
| Mathematics                            | 22.0       | 26.3          | 38.7        |
| Psychology                             | 28.3       | 27.7          | 23.4        |
| Biology                                | 19.0       | 21.1          | 25.6        |
| Chemistry                              | 13.6       | 16.0          | 23.6        |
| Sociology                              | 20.2       | 17.6          | 9.2         |
| History                                | 13.1       | 14.8          | 16.0        |
| Business Studies: Single               | 14.0       | 14.8          | 11.8        |
| Physics                                | 9.3        | 11.5          | 15.5        |
| Economics                              | 8.2        | 10.9          | 16.5        |
| Geography                              | 9.5        | 12.3          | 13.3        |
| English Literature                     | 10.4       | 11.1          | 12.0        |
| Government and Politics                | 5.5        | 5.9           | 8.1         |
| Religious Studies                      | 4.4        | 5.5           | 5.9         |
| Computer Studies / Computing           | 4.9        | 5.5           | 5.2         |
| Art and Design (Fine Art)              | 4.8        | 4.8           | 5.2         |
| Mathematics (Further)                  | 2.3        | 3.6           | 7.8         |
| English Language                       | 5.4        | 5.8           | 3.8         |
| Media / Film / TV Studies              | 6.8        | 5.5           | 3.1         |
| Law                                    | 7.2        | 5.6           | 2.4         |
| Physical Education / Sports Studies    | 3.0        | 4.7           | 4.6         |
| Art and Design (Photography)           | 5.1        | 4.4           | 2.6         |
| Drama and Theatre Studies              | 2.5        | 3.1           | 3.6         |
| Design and Technology (Product Design) | 2.8        | 3.1           | 3.0         |
| Spanish                                | 2.0        | 2.7           | 3.8         |
| French                                 | 1.4        | 2.2           | 3.7         |
| English Language and Literature        | 3.3        | 2.2           | 1.8         |
| Film Studies                           | 2.9        | 2.4           | 1.4         |
| Art and Design                         | 2.2        | 2.1           | 1.5         |
| Art and Design (Graphics)              | 2.2        | 2.0           | 1.3         |
| Music                                  | 0.7        | 1.4           | 1.9         |
| Art and Design (Textiles)              | 1.3        | 1.1           | 1.0         |
| Logic / Philosophy                     | 1.0        | 0.9           | 1.4         |

Table 12. Uptake of individual subjects by school deprivation (percentage of A level students at the end of KS5).

| <b>Subject</b>                         | <b>Low</b> | <b>Medium</b> | <b>High</b> |
|--|------------|---------------|-------------|
| Mathematics                            | 30.9       | 25.0          | 27.3        |
| Psychology                             | 26.4       | 27.8          | 27.8        |
| Biology                                | 22.7       | 20.3          | 22.6        |
| Chemistry                              | 18.0       | 15.5          | 19.3        |
| Sociology                              | 14.1       | 18.1          | 21.7        |
| History                                | 15.1       | 14.3          | 13.2        |
| Business Studies: Single               | 14.5       | 13.2          | 11.5        |
| Physics                                | 13.3       | 10.1          | 10.2        |
| Economics                              | 12.5       | 9.0           | 12.1        |
| Geography                              | 13.6       | 10.7          | 7.5         |
| English Literature                     | 10.2       | 11.0          | 12.4        |
| Government and Politics                | 6.2        | 5.7           | 7.2         |
| Religious Studies                      | 4.7        | 4.8           | 6.0         |
| Computer Studies / Computing           | 5.7        | 5.3           | 5.4         |
| Art and Design (Fine Art)              | 4.9        | 4.9           | 3.9         |
| Mathematics (Further)                  | 5.2        | 3.3           | 3.2         |
| English Language                       | 5.7        | 6.0           | 3.8         |
| Media / Film / TV Studies              | 5.3        | 5.8           | 5.6         |
| Law                                    | 4.5        | 7.0           | 6.5         |
| Physical Education / Sports Studies    | 5.4        | 3.6           | 1.4         |
| Art and Design (Photography)           | 4.2        | 4.6           | 3.3         |
| Drama and Theatre Studies              | 3.6        | 2.7           | 1.7         |
| Design and Technology (Product Design) | 3.3        | 2.3           | 1.9         |
| Spanish                                | 3.0        | 2.5           | 2.5         |
| French                                 | 2.7        | 2.0           | 1.5         |
| English Language and Literature        | 2.8        | 2.8           | 2.2         |
| Film Studies                           | 2.2        | 3.0           | 2.0         |
| Art and Design                         | 1.6        | 1.9           | 2.3         |
| Art and Design (Graphics)              | 2.2        | 2.3           | 1.6         |
| Music                                  | 1.7        | 1.0           | 0.6         |
| Art and Design (Textiles)              | 1.2        | 1.3           | 0.7         |
| Logic / Philosophy                     | 1.4        | 1.0           | 0.9         |

## Subject areas

Tables 13 to 16 present the breakdown of A level entries into five broad subject areas, according to the school classifications described in Tables 1 to 4. Individual subjects were grouped into the five areas: Science/Mathematics, English, Languages, Arts, and Social Science/Humanities. Grouping subjects in this manner is not straightforward and the allocation of subject areas is debatable, so for consistency with previous reports (e.g., Gill, 2018) the classifications of Bell et al. (2005) were followed where possible. Subject areas assigned are listed in the Appendix.

These tables show the popularity of A level subject areas by school characteristics. For instance, Table 14 shows that 40.8% of all A level entries from high attainment schools are in the Science and Maths subject area, which was proportionally higher compared to medium and low attainment schools (32.1% and 29.3%, respectively).

Table 13. Total number of A level entries and percentage of entries for each subject area, by school type. The abbreviation NSHSA represents 'Non-selective in highly selective areas', and ONS represents 'Other non-selective'.

| School type          | Total AL entries | Arts | English | Lang. | Sci./ Maths | Social Sci. |
|----------------------|------------------|------|---------|-------|-------------|-------------|
| Academy (NSHSA)      | 19089            | 15.4 | 9.0     | 2.0   | 24.5        | 49.2        |
| Academy (ONS)        | 290574           | 10.0 | 8.5     | 2.6   | 34.1        | 44.8        |
| Academy (selective)  | 68057            | 5.1  | 6.3     | 3.5   | 49.5        | 35.6        |
| Academy (sixth form) | 61293            | 12.8 | 8.0     | 2.0   | 32.9        | 44.3        |
| FE college           | 54286            | 14.0 | 9.2     | 1.7   | 25.5        | 49.6        |
| Independent school   | 100393           | 8.7  | 6.8     | 6.6   | 40.0        | 37.8        |
| NSHSA                | 2448             | 10.3 | 9.0     | 2.5   | 24.2        | 54.0        |
| Other non-selective  | 72706            | 10.5 | 8.9     | 2.8   | 33.0        | 44.8        |
| Selective            | 9234             | 6.7  | 5.6     | 3.7   | 49.1        | 34.9        |
| Sixth form college   | 84456            | 13.0 | 8.2     | 2.6   | 31.4        | 44.9        |

Table 14. Total number of A level entries and percentage of entries for each subject area, by school attainment group.

| Attainment group | Total AL entries | Arts | English | Lang. | Sci./ Maths | Social Sci. |
|------------------|------------------|------|---------|-------|-------------|-------------|
| Low              | 176445           | 12.5 | 8.8     | 2.2   | 29.3        | 47.2        |
| Medium           | 263565           | 11.3 | 8.3     | 2.7   | 32.1        | 45.7        |
| High             | 318928           | 8.4  | 7.4     | 4.0   | 40.8        | 39.4        |

Table 15. Total number of A level entries and percentage of entries for each subject area, by school deprivation group.

| <b>Deprivation group</b> | <b>Total AL entries</b> | <b>Arts</b> | <b>English</b> | <b>Lang.</b> | <b>Sci./ Maths</b> | <b>Social Sci.</b> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Low                      | 273597                  | 11.0        | 8.0            | 2.8          | 35.2               | 42.9               |
| Medium                   | 189165                  | 11.8        | 8.8            | 2.4          | 31.6               | 45.5               |
| High                     | 126892                  | 8.9         | 7.9            | 2.5          | 34.6               | 46.2               |

Table 16. Total number of A level entries and percentage of entries for each subject area, by school sex composition.

| <b>School sex</b> | <b>Total AL entries</b> | <b>Arts</b> | <b>English</b> | <b>Lang.</b> | <b>Sci./ Maths</b> | <b>Social Sci.</b> |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Boys' School      | 20402                   | 4.3         | 4.7            | 4.7          | 51.5               | 34.8               |
| Girls' School     | 41454                   | 6.9         | 8.2            | 5.7          | 41.0               | 38.2               |
| Mixed School      | 700680                  | 10.8        | 8.2            | 2.9          | 34.2               | 43.9               |

## References

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# Appendix

Table 17. The classification of A level subjects into subject areas.

| <b>A level subject</b>                      | <b>Subject area</b> |
|---|---------------------|
| Accounting / Finance                        | Social Science      |
| Ancient History                             | Social Science      |
| Arabic                                      | Languages           |
| Art and Design                              | Arts                |
| Art and Design (3D Studies)                 | Arts                |
| Art and Design (Critical Studies)           | Arts                |
| Art and Design (Fine Art)                   | Arts                |
| Art and Design (Graphics)                   | Arts                |
| Art and Design (Photography)                | Arts                |
| Art and Design (Textiles)                   | Arts                |
| Bengali                                     | Languages           |
| Biology                                     | Science / Maths     |
| Business Studies: Single                    | Social Science      |
| Chemistry                                   | Science / Maths     |
| Chinese                                     | Languages           |
| Classical Civilisation                      | Social Science      |
| Classical Greek                             | Languages           |
| Computer Studies / Computing                | Science / Maths     |
| Dance                                       | Arts                |
| Design and Technology (Engineering)         | Social Science      |
| Design and Technology (Product Design)      | Social Science      |
| Design and Technology (Textiles Technology) | Social Science      |
| Drama and Theatre Studies                   | English             |
| Economics                                   | Social Science      |
| Electronics                                 | Science / Maths     |
| English Language                            | English             |
| English Language and Literature             | English             |
| English Literature                          | English             |
| Environmental Science                       | Science / Maths     |
| Film Studies                                | Arts                |
| French                                      | Languages           |
| Geography                                   | Social Science      |
| Geology                                     | Science / Maths     |
| German                                      | Languages           |
| Government and Politics                     | Social Science      |
| Gujarati                                    | Languages           |
| History                                     | Social Science      |
| History of Art                              | Arts                |
| Italian                                     | Languages           |



Table 17. The classification of A level subjects into subject areas. *(continued)*

| <b>A level subject</b>              | <b>Subject area</b> |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Japanese                            | Languages           |
| Latin                               | Languages           |
| Law                                 | Social Science      |
| Logic / Philosophy                  | Social Science      |
| Mathematics                         | Science / Maths     |
| Mathematics (Further)               | Science / Maths     |
| Mathematics (Statistics)            | Science / Maths     |
| Media / Film / TV Studies           | Arts                |
| Modern Greek                        | Languages           |
| Modern Hebrew                       | Languages           |
| Music                               | Arts                |
| Music Technology                    | Arts                |
| Other Classical Languages           | Languages           |
| Persian                             | Languages           |
| Physical Education / Sports Studies | Arts                |
| Physics                             | Science / Maths     |
| Polish                              | Languages           |
| Portuguese                          | Languages           |
| Psychology                          | Social Science      |
| Punjabi                             | Languages           |
| Religious Studies                   | Social Science      |
| Russian                             | Languages           |
| Sociology                           | Social Science      |
| Spanish                             | Languages           |
| Turkish                             | Languages           |
| Urdu                                | Languages           |