

# Advanced British Standard: Consultation

Future of Work Trade Association meeting—  
15<sup>th</sup> February 2024



Department  
for Education



# Consultation



# Why have we launched a consultation?

- On 14 December, we launched a 14-week consultation on the design of the Advanced British Standard (ABS). The consultation closes on 20 March 2024.
- This follows the [Prime Minister's announcement](#) in October of proposals to introduce the ABS, a new Baccalaureate-style qualification framework at 16-19, over the next decade. Students will be able to choose from a clearer, high-quality menu from which young people can choose – going further to simplify student choices and focus on subjects which support progression, whilst building on the best of A levels and T Levels
- The consultation document sets out detail on the way the ABS will work. It is seeking views on:
  - aims and purposes of reform to 16-19 education;
  - what students will study in the ABS, including a **broader range of subjects**, more **hours in the classroom**, and **maths and English to 18**;
  - how students will be assessed and graded;
  - supporting 16-19 providers to implement these reforms; and
  - maximising the benefits of the ABS for students and the wider system.
- Following the consultation, a White Paper setting out further details will be published in 2024.



# How can stakeholders respond to the consultation?

- The consultation is aimed at students, parents and carers, teachers, leaders, schools, colleges, universities and employers, as well as the general public. We welcome views from as many individuals and groups as possible to help shape the design and implementation of the new qualification framework.
- The consultation will run for 14 weeks until 20 March 2024. Stakeholders can respond to the consultation via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-world-class-education-system-the-advanced-british-standard>
- If, for exceptional reasons, respondents are unable to use the online system, they can email [ABS.consultation@education.gov.uk](mailto:ABS.consultation@education.gov.uk).
- There will be a variety of ways for stakeholders to engage with the consultation, including events, webinars and existing stakeholder forums





# Aims and Purpose



# Why are we introducing the Advanced British Standard?

- We have made huge strides in the last decade in driving up standards, investing in teachers, introducing the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), ensuring A levels are rigorous and T Levels are rooted in the technical skills employers need.
- Despite these ambitious reforms, we have further to go in creating a world-class education system. England's post-16 education system remains an international outlier in terms of the average number of subjects students take, the number of teaching hours students receive and the study of maths and the native language until 18.
- For example, in Sweden and Finland students get between 1,400 and 1,600 teaching hours over two years. Students in Italy, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway also get more than the average in England (1,280), and in France and many US states students can get over 2,000. In the OECD, students typically study around seven subjects, including maths and their native language, during their upper secondary education. Meanwhile, the majority of A level students take three A levels. Evidence shows the importance of both studying a sufficient breadth of subjects and achieving a strong core in English and maths for progression to further study and employment, as well as for future earnings.
- We know that a substantial number of young people leave compulsory education without high-quality qualifications to support their career progression, and many without the essential numeracy and literacy needed to get on in life and work, while outcomes for disadvantaged students and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to lag behind those of their peers.



# How will the Advanced British Standard change things?

- There are four key principles underpinning the development of the Advanced British Standard:
  - **a clear, high-quality menu of subjects that young people can choose from** – going further to simplify student choices and focus on subjects with high-quality, rigorous content which support progression, building on the best of A levels and T Levels.
  - **increase the amount of time young people spend with a teacher in 16-19 education** – aligning with international best practice and maximising students' opportunities to benefit from excellent teaching.
  - **encourage young people to gain knowledge and skills across a broader range of subjects while maintaining sufficient depth of understanding** – enabling young people to thrive and be resilient within the future labour market, and keeping progression options open for longer for most students.
  - **ensure all young people study maths and English up to age 18, as part of a strong core underpinning all study programmes** – equipping young people with the fundamental knowledge and skills needed to thrive in life and work.
- These changes will bring post-16 education in England closer in line with other world leading economies.



# How will the Advanced British Standard support young people?

- The Advanced British Standard will be taken by all students who are currently studying Level 3 qualifications. We have also proposed a Level 2 pathway is created for students to study at this level too.
- The ABS will serve several purposes. It will:
  - Enable students to develop depth and breadth of knowledge, skills and expertise to support their progression into future study, apprenticeships and skilled work, and life.
  - Provide a range of information to support decision-making, including for:
    - admission and selection purposes for further and HE;
    - recruitment and selection purposes for work and employment, including apprenticeships; and
    - accountability purposes to strengthen the quality of 16-19 education.
  - Support student engagement in, and decision-making about, their education, both in the 16-19 phase and beyond.



# What does this mean for existing qualifications?

- We anticipate that, once rolled out, the Advanced British Standard (ABS) qualification framework will supersede the landscape of individual qualifications at level 3, such as A Levels, T Levels and alternative academic and technical qualifications.
- In the meantime, we will continue to be ambitious for students who complete their education under the current system. To lay the groundwork for the ABS, we will continue to roll out our prestigious T Level courses and wider reforms to technical and vocational education. Students will continue to be encouraged to choose from these, A levels and other high-quality options, all of which will in time form the backbone of the ABS.
- Apprenticeships will continue to be available for those who wish to move straight into ‘on-the-job’ training. Apprentices will continue to benefit from high-quality employer-led standards – those which will also underpin the ABS occupational programme – and support to achieve appropriate English and maths qualifications.

# Design of the Advanced British Standard



# What will students study under the Advanced British Standard?

- Students at Level 3 will be able to choose a combination of bigger and smaller subjects, called ‘majors’ and ‘minors’. Students will typically study a minimum of five subjects, or four if they’re focused on preparing for a specific occupational pathway. We expect most students to take three majors and two minors.
- At Level 2, we are proposing two programmes: a one-year programme that will prepare students to access the Level 3 ABS, and an occupational programme (one or two years) that supports progression to skilled employment.
- The consultation proposes that learners in post-16 provision at Level 1 and below should still benefit from increased teaching hours and maths and English, but proposes that this provision sits outside ABS.
- All students taking the ABS will study English and maths to age 18, either as a major or minor subject (or equivalent). We anticipate students will be able to access theoretical or applied versions of these subjects, depending on their interests and future goals.

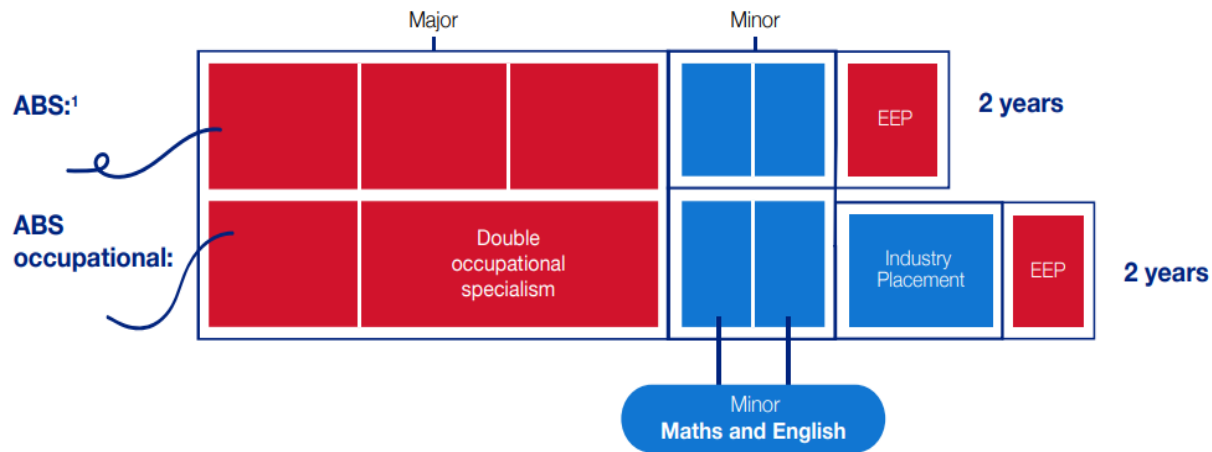


# What ABS might look like for Level 3 students?

## How students might spend their time on the different programmes

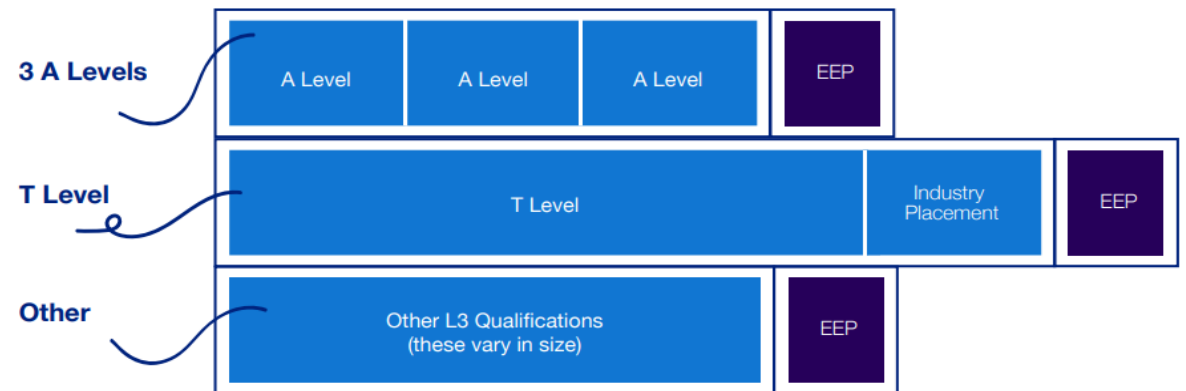
**ABS:** for students working at Level 3 who want to leave with a range of progression options open to them.

**ABS occupational:** for those who want to specialise in one subject area, in preparation for direct employment, apprenticeships or further specialist study.



1. Students may choose to replace one of their minors with an additional major, or take an additional minor

## This compares to current Level 3 programmes, for example

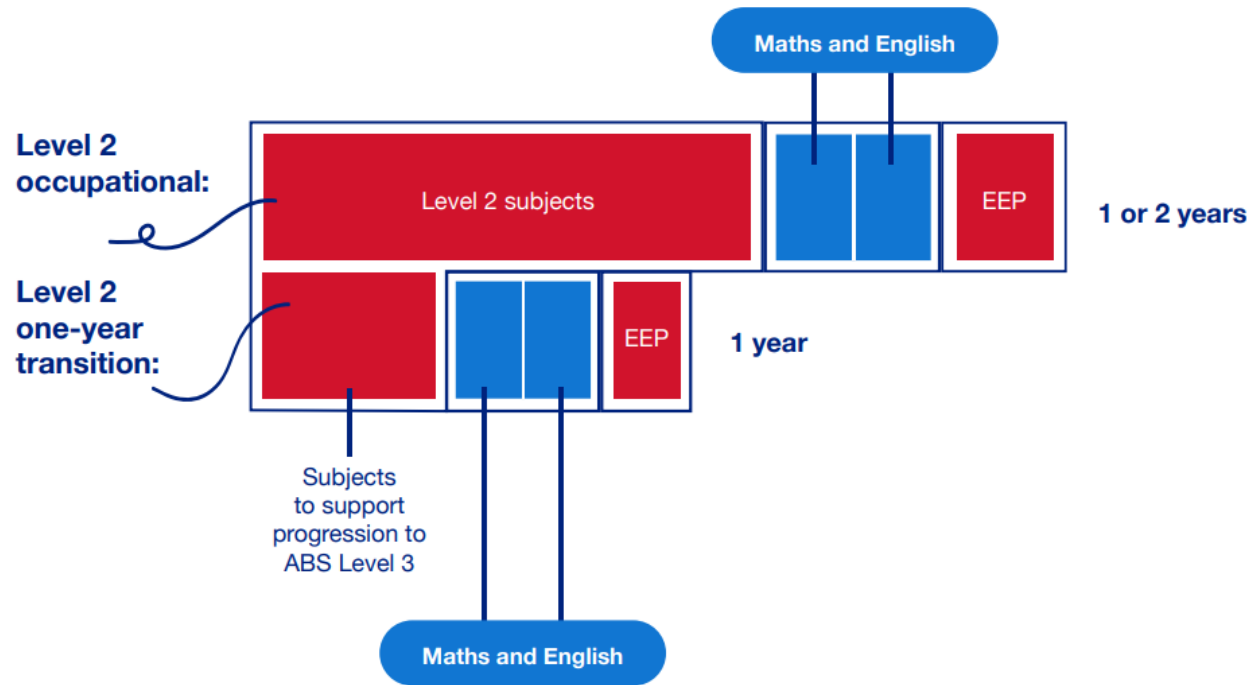


# What ABS might look like for Level 2 students?

How students will spend their time on the different pathways

**Level 2 occupational:** for those who wish to progress to employment or an apprenticeship.

**Level 2 one-year transition:** for those who want to transition to Level 3 ABS.





# What subjects might different students take under the ABS?

## Adam



Adam got mainly grades 5 to 2 at GCSE, including a 3 in English and a 2 in maths.

He is taking

### Level 2 occupational programme

Social Care –  
Adult Care Worker

Maths

English

Adam wants to work  
in the care sector.

## Emily



Emily got mainly grades 5 to 2 at GCSE, including a 3 for English and a 4 in maths.

She is taking

### Level 2 transition programme

Digital

Maths

English

Emily wants to move onto a  
Level 3 ABS occupational to  
become an IT support technician.

## Alice



Alice got mainly grades 9 to 4 at GCSE, including English and maths.

She is taking

### ABS occupational at Level 3

Majors

Design,  
Surveying and  
Planning for  
Construction

Double:

Civil  
Engineering

Industry Placement with  
a construction employer

Minors

Maths

English

Alice wants to work in  
construction as a civil engineer,  
through a degree apprenticeship.

## Embry



Embry got mainly grades 9 to 4 at GCSE, including in English and higher grades for maths and science.

He is taking

### ABS at Level 3

Majors

Chemistry

Biology

Maths

Minors

English

Physics

Embry wants to train  
to become a doctor.

## Fatima



Fatima got mainly grades 9 to 4 at GCSE, including in English and maths.

She is taking

### ABS at Level 3

Majors

Media,  
Broadcast &  
Production

English  
Literature

History

Minors

Maths

Music

Fatima wants to study  
English Literature at university.



# Assessment and Grading



# How will students be assessed and graded?

- We are proposing the following assessment principles to underpin the Advanced British Standard:
  - components must be rigorous, with high-level content specified by DfE, and, where relevant, informed by the occupational standards specified by IFATE;
  - content will look different across subjects, but there should be a presumption of knowledge-rich content;
  - as currently, assessment will primarily be by exam unless the content cannot validly be assessed by exam;
  - assessments will be summative; and
  - assessment burden will be minimised.
- We consider the below principles to be central to any approach to the grading at both Level 3 and Level 2:
  - **be fair to all students**, regardless of background;
  - have a scale that is **simple to understand and consistent across subjects**;
  - **allow for performance and level of knowledge and skills to be accurately reflected**;
  - **be recognised and have currency** with employers and FE and HE providers, and enable progression; and
  - **mean student performance is comparable over time**
- We are proposing that students will receive individual grades/marks for each major and minor, as well as an overall award at the end of their course of study, likely in the form of a certificate or statement of achievement. We are consulting on what conditions a student would need to achieve (if any) to receive an overall award, and asking for views on whether this should be a certificate/statement of achievement or an aggregate score or grade.
- We will continue to work through subsequent technical questions with Ofqual, who will then consult on detailed assessment and grading arrangements in due course.



# Wider implications and implementation





# Wider Implications

- We are consulting on the implications of the Advanced British Standard (ABS) for 16-19 education providers and workforce, to ensure we can put the right support in place for the sector and maximise the breadth of offer available to students.
- We are also consulting on the wider implications of the ABS and how we can maximise benefits for both students and the wider system. For example:
  - Implications for pre-16 education
  - Ensuring students can make informed choices about their education and careers
  - Supporting all young people to succeed and benefit from these reforms, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - Offering clear and effective pathways into post-18 education and training
  - Meeting the needs of employers
  - The impact on other groups of students taking post-16 qualifications
  - The potential equalities and environmental impacts of these reforms





# Funding for the Advanced British Standard

- The Advanced British Standard (ABS) will involve significant investment in our education system.
- We will fund more teaching hours to enable schools and colleges to deliver the qualification.
- There will be future Spending Reviews and funding will be dependent on policy design. In the short term, we are making a substantial downpayment of over £600 million across the next two years to help build the capacity needed to deliver the ABS, focused on:
  - **Recruiting and retaining teachers in key shortage subjects:** eligible teachers in the first five years of their career, teaching key STEM and technical shortage subjects, will be able to claim an additional £6,000 per year after tax. This is double the current rates of Levelling Up Premium, which will now be available to eligible teachers in Further Education, as well as schools.
  - **Raising attainment in maths and English:** Students who did not pass maths and English GCSE at 16 will be supported to gain these fundamentals, backed by £300 million over two years. We are investing a further c. £60 million over two years to expand teaching for mastery approaches across the country using our Maths Hubs, and supporting settings to deliver maths by enhancing the existing Advanced Maths Premium and introducing a new Core Maths Premium
  - **Supporting teachers and pupils with evidence of what works in 16-19 education:** we are providing an additional £40 million for the Education Endowment Foundation to create and share high-quality, evidence-based resources, particularly focused on improving disadvantaged pupils' outcomes.



# How will we implement these reforms?

- This is a decade long programme, the system will look significantly different, and we will continue to work to ensure it is designed and implemented successfully.
- We have already had discussions with a variety of key stakeholders, but the publication of the consultation document on 14 December is the beginning of more formal, extensive and detailed discussions over the coming months on the design of the new qualification framework, informing a White Paper in 2024.
- This consultation will focus on the design of the new qualification framework, the White Paper will focus more on the delivery.