Tracking the June 2020 Key Stage 4 cohort: progression to post-16 study

Research Report

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Contents

Executive Summary

Background and aim of the research

On 18 March 2020, the Secretary of State for Education announced that the summer 2020 exam series would be cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic and that students due to sit GCSE and AS/A level exams would be awarded a grade based on "an assessment of the grade they would have been most likely to achieve had exams gone ahead".

Teachers were asked to provide, for each student and for each subject they were entered for, a centre assessment grade (CAG). A mechanism to standardise teachers' judgements was put in place, in the interests of fairness to students. As a result, exam boards produced calculated grades to standardise the grades between different schools and colleges and to ensure that the distribution of grades followed a similar pattern to that in previous years.

However, many students were disappointed with their results, which in many cases were lower than the teachers' CAGs. There were also concerns about the impact of the calculated grades on different demographic and socio-economic groups of students as well as on students who were "outliers" in their schools (*e.g.*, students with very high prior attainment in low performing schools).

In the end, the government decided not to award calculated grades and use the CAGs instead (in fact, students were awarded "whatever was higher, CAG or calculated grade"), despite warnings that such a move could undermine the credibility of the results through grade inflation and have an impact on students' futures.

Both the government and the education sector are aware of the severe disruptions to education experienced by students during the Covid-19 pandemic and it is important not only to consider the impact of school closures and other disruptions on students' learning outcomes, but also how students should be supported with their progression. In particular, making sure that the 2020 cohort is protected and supported through the journeys to their next destinations in education, training or employment is critical. If groups of students in the 2020 cohort have been disadvantaged by the cancellation of exams in terms of their progression, it is important to discover this as soon as possible, in order to inform mitigation efforts.

This research investigated the impact of awarding CAGs on the education system. The focus was on the progression to post-16 study of the students who achieved GCSEs and other Level 1/2 qualifications in June 2020. The research also investigated the progression to post-16 study of specific groups of students to understand the impact of the CAGs on the destinations of different demographic and socio-economic groups (*e.g.*, disadvantaged children).

Data and method

This research analysed data from two different sources. The National Pupil Database (NPD) was used to obtain exam results and background characteristics for whole cohorts of students in Key Stage 4. The Post-16 Learning Aims (PLAMS) data was used to identify the post-16 learning aims (qualifications and subjects) of the students in the above cohorts. The PLAMS data details the aims students start in the autumn term following completion of Key Stage 4.

In particular, the 2019/20 Key Stage 4 extract of the NPD was used to identify the students who achieved qualifications (GCSEs and other Level 1/2 qualifications) in the June 2020 session. For these students, exam results, socio-demographic characteristics and qualifications being studied at Key Stage 5 (post-16 learning aims) were available.

Analyses of the learning aims of the students identified in the NPD extract above were carried out to investigate the impact of the CAGs on progression to post-16 education. Progression was investigated for the full cohort and broken down by different students' background characteristics (*e.g.*, school type, socio-economic deprivation, overall attainment, ethnicity, and special education needs). Data on the post-16 learning aims of the June 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort was used to highlight any changes in progression.

Findings

This research has helped understand the progression to post-16 study of the students who sat GCSEs and/or other Level 1/2 qualifications in June 2020 and how the awarding of CAGs impacted the progression of different groups of students. The main findings and conclusions are outlined below.

Overall progression to Key Stage 5

There were no big changes in the proportion of learners who went on to post-16 study after completing Year 11 in 2020: students at the end of Year 11 in June 2020 were slightly more likely to continue onto post-16 learning in 2020/21 than students at the end of Year 11 in the previous year. This small increase could be partly due to more students getting the grades they needed in summer 2020, following the award of CAGs.

Although the effects of the pandemic on progression for the 2020 cohort were small, the evidence from this research suggests that there were differences by students' backgrounds. For example, the percentage of low and medium attainers[1] progressing to post-16 study was higher amongst the 2020 cohort than amongst the 2019 cohort. Furthermore, although progression rates to post-16 study increased for all students, independently of their socio-economic background, the increase was slightly higher for the most deprived students than for the least deprived students.

Key Stage 5 learning aims

The research showed that a higher percentage of students from the 2020 cohort than from the 2019 cohort progressed to studying at least one A level, and, in particular, that a higher percentage of students from the 2020 cohort were taking three or more A levels. There was also higher progression in 2020 than in 2019 to Applied General qualifications (*e.g.*, BTECs and Cambridge Technicals).

The prior attainment profile of A level students, as well as of students with Applied Generals and the EPQ, was lower for students in the 2020 cohort than for students in the previous year. Furthermore, there was an increase in students from the most deprived backgrounds continuing to AS/A levels and Applied Generals in 2020 than in 2019.

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[1] The level of attainment at Key Stage 4 was measured by the *average GCSE and equivalents point score per entry*. This measure was used to divide students into three approximately equally sized groups: low attainment, medium attainment and high attainment. Due to the grade inflation at GCSE in 2020 (Ofqual, 2020a), the prior attainment of the students in each tercile in 2020 was higher than the prior attainment of the students in the same tercile in 2019.

When looking at progression to specific A level subjects or Applied General subject areas, this research showed that differences in uptake between cohorts were small. The A level subjects with the highest increase in 2021 (taken by the 2020 Key Stage 4 cohort) with respect to the previous year were Psychology, Biology, Sociology and Mathematics. Social Sciences reported the highest increase in uptake amongst the Applied General subjects.

Key Stage 5 withdrawn and transferred learning aims

This research has shown, contrary to what might have been expected, that there were more withdrawn and transferred aims[2] amongst students from the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort than amongst students from the 2020 cohort at the beginning of the following academic year. The aims withdrawn or transferred from by students in the 2020 cohort were more likely to come from A levels, Applied Generals or the EPQ than was the case for the 2019 cohort. Withdrawn and transferred aims were less likely to come from AS levels and from GCSEs in English or Mathematics.

Retention, however, might change by the end of Key Stage 5. That could be the case, for example, if students who got the GCSE grades they needed in the summer (due to the awarding of the CAGs, which could have been slightly generous) realise, during Key Stage 5, that their grades did not have the same meaning as in normal series and that their post-16 courses were not right for them.

Conclusions

The above findings show that the progression from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 in 2020 was similar to progression in 2019, the last year not affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. We should, however, be cautious not to over-interpret this finding, as it is possible that the impact of the pandemic on post-16 progression is not fully reflected in the PLAMS data for this cohort. There are a couple of potential reasons for this. Firstly, students might have fully planned which post-16 qualifications/subjects to study prior to the CAGs being awarded and followed through with their choices (*i.e.*, not altered their plans based on CAGs). Alternatively, school sixth forms and colleges admissions might have been more lenient than in the past to make sure that the 2020 cohort was supported through the journey to the next step in their education and allowed more students to start post-16 courses. These factors could explain why we saw little impact on the immediate progression of the 2020 cohort, but leave open the question of how the pandemic impacted the cohort's progression once they reached the end of Key Stage 5, as well as the impact on subsequent cohorts. In terms of performance, for example, it might be possible that, at the end of Key Stage 5, the students from the 2020 Key Stage 4 cohort achieve lower grades in their qualifications (*e.g.*, A levels; Applied Generals; …) than students in previous cohorts. Such finding would need to be discussed, however, in light of the difference in the cohorts progressing to post-16 education before and after the start of the pandemic (*e.g.*, students with lower prior attainment progressing to A level; most A level students not having taken public examinations before) and in light of the 2022 grading strategy, which will see exam adaptations to support

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[2] A learning aim has been withdrawn if "the learner has withdrawn from the learning activities leading to the learning aim. A learning aim has been transferred if "the learner has transferred to a new learning aim. That is, the learner has withdrawn from this learning aim and as a direct result has at the same time started studying for another learning aim within the same provider".

students and make exams fairer for them, and exam boards setting grade boundaries based on a profile that reflects a midpoint between 2021 and pre-pandemic grading.

The effects of the disruption caused by the covid-19 pandemic will be felt for years to come, and support for those affected will be needed to minimise the effects. Therefore, research looking at their progression (not only to post-16 education, but to Higher Education as well) should continue in order to provide timely evidence to inform any mitigation efforts (whether educational interventions, guidance or adaptations to assessment) and make sure that no student is disadvantaged.

Introduction

The June 2020 exam series was an exceptional one. On 18 March 2020, the Secretary of State for Education announced that the summer 2020 exam series would be cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic[3] and that students due to sit GCSE and AS/A level exams would be awarded a grade based on "an assessment of the grade they would have been most likely to achieve had exams gone ahead".

Teachers were asked to provide, for each student and for each subject they were entered for, a centre assessment grade (CAG) which represented the grade that the student would have been most likely to achieve if teaching and learning had continued and the student had taken the exams as planned. Teachers were also asked to provide a rank order of students for each grade for each subject.

Research suggests that, in estimating the grades students are likely to achieve, teachers tend to be optimistic (*e.g.*, BIS, 2013; Gill and Benton, 2015; Wyness, 2016). Ofqual's initial analysis of the CAGs showed that they were, indeed, optimistic (although not always) and the combined effect would be likely to lead to overall national results that were implausibly high (Ofqual, 2020a).

A mechanism to standardise teachers' judgements was put in place, in the interests of fairness to students. As a result, exam boards produced calculated grades to standardise the grades between different schools and colleges and to ensure that the distribution of grades followed a similar pattern to that in previous years, so that students did not face a systemic advantage/disadvantage because of this year's circumstances. More details on how grades were planned to be awarded in summer 2020 can be found in Ofqual (2020b).

However, many students were disappointed with their results, which in many cases (*e.g.*, 40% at A level) were lower than the teachers' CAGs, and many concerns were raised by different stakeholders (*e.g.*, teachers, students, parents, researchers, …). There were also concerns about the impact of the calculated grades on different demographic and socio-economic groups of students as well as on students who were "outliers" in their schools (*e.g.*, students with very high prior attainment in low performing schools).

In the end, the government decided not to award calculated grades and use teacher-assessed grades (CAGs) for A levels and GCSEs instead[4] (in fact, students were awarded "whatever was higher, CAG or calculated grade"), despite warnings that such a move could undermine the credibility of the results through grade inflation and have an impact on students' futures.

For GCSEs, the final results data showed that, for students in England, overall outcomes in summer 2020 across the grade range increased significantly compared to 2019. However, the extent to which outcomes increased relative to 2019 differed by subject and grade (JCQ, 2020; Ofqual, 2020c) and by centre type (Ofqual, 2020c). In particular, in 2019, 21.9% of grades given out to 16-year-olds in England were grade 7 or above. This percentage rose to 27.6% in summer 2020. Furthermore, the proportion of grade 4s or above rose by 8.9

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[3] https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-03-18/debates/FCD4DEB2-86A8-4F95-8EB8-D0EF4C752D7D/EducationalSettings

[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-from-roger-taylor-chair-ofqual

percentage points, up from 69.9% in June 2019 to 78.8% in 2020 – meaning nearly four in five pupils achieved a standard pass.

Both Government and the education sector are aware of the severe disruptions to education experienced by younger cohorts during the Covid-19 pandemic and it is important, not only to consider the impact of school closures and other disruptions on students' learning outcomes but also how students should be supported with their progression. In particular, making sure that the 2020 cohort is protected and supported through the journeys to their next destinations in education, training or employment is critical. Over the course of the disruption caused by Covid-19 and as we move towards recovery, the expectation is that all students make meaningful progress. If groups of students in the June 2020 cohort have been disadvantaged by the cancellation of exams in terms of their progression, it is important to discover this as soon as possible, in order to inform mitigation efforts by stakeholders: most importantly, schools and policymakers.

Aim of the research

This research will investigate the impact of awarding centre assessment grades on the education system. The focus will be on the progression to post-16 study of the students who sat GCSEs and/or other Level 1/2 qualifications in June 2020. The uptake of qualifications/subjects taken during the first year of Key Stage 5 will be studied and compared to the progression of students in a previous cohort (those achieving qualifications in June 2019, pre-pandemic).

This work will be a first look at the progression (with a focus on uptake) of the June 2020 Key Stage 4 cohort. Once Key Stage 5 results for this cohort become available (for most students after the June 2022 exam session), retention and performance can be investigated.

As it has been suggested that the pandemic has affected some groups of learners more than others (Cullinare and Montacute, 2020; EEF, 2020; DfE, 2021a), this research will also investigate the progression to post-16 education of specific groups of students to understand the impact of the CAGs on the destinations of different demographic and socio-economic groups (*e.g.*, disadvantaged children).

Data and methods

Data

This research used National Pupil Database (NPD) data for pupils who completed Key Stage 4 (KS4) in 2020, linked to the School Census and their Post-16 Learning Aims (PLAMS).

National Pupil Database data

The National Pupil Database is a longitudinal database for children in schools in England, linking pupil characteristics to school and college learning aims and attainment. It holds individual pupil level attainment data for pupils in all schools who take part in the tests/exams and pupil and school characteristics (*e.g.*, age, gender, ethnicity, special educational needs, eligibility for free school meals, etc.) sourced from the School Census for maintained schools only.

The following extracts of the NPD data were used:

- 2019/20 KS4 Pupil & Exam data, linked to Spring Census 2019/20
- 2018/19 KS4 Pupil & Exam data, linked to Spring Census 2018/19

In all the analyses carried out in this report, only students who achieved GCSEs and/or Technical Awards in the June session were included. Furthermore, the analyses were restricted to students who were 16 years old at the end of the academic year. This age restriction was made to have a set of "typical" candidates at the end of Key Stage 4.

Post-16 Learning Aims data

The Post-16 Learning Aims data is also part of the National Pupil Database. In particular, it is a module of the Autumn School Census where schools list their students' learning aims (mainly for administrative reasons to help the Education Funding Agency to calculate funding for schools).

Schools with a sixth form are required to record students' aims (*i.e.*, subjects and qualifications students are going to study for) at the start of the aim, usually at the start of the school year, and keep their records up to date. They also need to provide details about all students' learning aims once a year in the school census autumn return (DfE, 2013).

Learning aims are collected for students taught in Year 12 and above and the following post-16 information is included in the collection:

- Qualification Accreditation Number (QAN)
- Subject classification code
- Start date of the learning aim
- End date of the learning aim
- Current status of the learning aim (*i.e.*, completed; continuing; withdrawn; transferred).

In this report, the following extracts of the PLAMS data were used:

- PLAMS 2020/21 (learning aims from the 2020/21 Autumn Census data collection) matched to NPD 2019/20 KS4 data
- PLAMS 2019/20 (learning aims from the 2019/20 Autumn Census data collection) matched to NPD 2018/19 KS4 data

Zanini and Williamson (2017) showed that PLAMS data might not be representative of the school/college population: sixth form colleges, further education colleges and the independent sector can be under-represented as they are not required to complete the school census. As a result, progression to Key Stage 5 might be under-represented in this research (although there is no reason to believe that the under-representation *changed* between 2019 and 2020). Despite this limitation, the PLAMS data will allow us to investigate students' progression (qualifications/subjects students are aiming to complete in Key Stage 5) before measures of post-16 attainment provided by the "results" extracts of the NPD become available – which for the 2020 Key Stage 4 cohort, will be no earlier than the end of 2022.

Learning aims were classified by qualification type as shown in Table 1 below. The following qualifications were not included in the research: entry level qualifications; graded music/dance/drama; post-16 higher level qualifications at Level 4. Learning aims with missing "Type of qualification" were removed.

The focus of the research is on post-16 study so, for the majority of analyses presented in this report, "old" aims have been removed (*e.g.*, for 2020/21, aims that started before August 2020 have been removed, as they were out of scope) and only "active" aims were considered. Separate analyses of transferred and withdrawn aims were also carried out[5].

Table 1: Types of qualifications in Key Stage 5

Qualification types (Key Stage 5)
Applied Generals
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3
Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)
GCE A level
GCE AS level
GCSE English
GCSE Maths
Other GQ Level 3
Other Level 1/Level 2
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3
T Levels
Tech Levels
Technical Certificates

Method

For both years, 2018/19 and 2019/20, we used the Key Stage 4 extract to select the students who sat qualifications in the June 2019 and the June 2020 sessions. For these students, detailed information such as socio-demographic characteristics and general attainment in school (*e.g.*, average GCSE performance) was available, as follows:

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[5] Definitions of withdrawn and transferred aims in the context of this research are given on Page 32.

- Gender (male / female)

- Prior Attainment at Key Stage 4: The level of attainment at Key Stage 4 was measured by the *average GCSE and equivalents point score per entry* (for details on how this is calculated, see DfE (2017)). The average GCSE and equivalents point score per entry ranges from 0 to 9. This measure was used to divide students into three approximately equally sized groups: low attainment, medium attainment and high attainment.

  Note that, due to the grade inflation at GCSE in 2020 (Ofqual, 2020a), the prior attainment of the students in each tercile in 2020 was higher than the prior attainment of the students in the same tercile in 2019.

  Average point score is one possible measure of attainment, but the attainment of certain 'benchmarks' is also important. In particular, *achieving 9-4 passes in English and Maths GCSEs* is a key benchmark that was also used in this research to take students level of attainment at Key Stage 4 into account.

- Socio-economic background: The level of income-related deprivation of the students was measured by two different indicators:

  o IDACI deprivation: The level of income-related deprivation that students experience was inferred using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)[6].

    This index is based on the student's home postcode and describes the percentage of children in a very small geographical area (Lower Layer Super Output Area or LSOA) living in low income families. It varies between 0 and 1 and indicates how income deprived the area in which a student lives is. It cannot, however, indicate how income deprived the student actually is. This measure was used to divide students into three approximately equally sized groups: low deprivation (more affluent), medium deprivation and high deprivation.

  o Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility: The NPD provides a flag to indicate if a student has ever been recorded as eligible for free school meals on census day in any termly or annual school census in the last six years up to the students' current year. This measure can be used as a proxy for the students' level of deprivation (Ilie, Sutherland and Vignoles, 2017).

- Type of school: The NPD listed the centre at which candidates gained their Key Stage 4 qualifications, indicated by the centre's Unique Reference Number (URN). This number was used to match candidates to the Department for Education's register of educational establishments[7], providing information on the type of school (Gill, 2017). Based on their type, schools were classified into five groups: comprehensive schools, secondary modern schools, independent schools, selective schools, and other.

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[6] For further information on IDACI calculation, including definitions of children, families, and income deprivation, see https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015-technical-report.

[7] https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/.

Comprehensive and *secondary modern* schools (which include free schools and academies) do not select their intake on the basis of academic achievement or the wealth of the parents of the students they accept. *Selective schools* are state-funded schools that admit students on the basis of some sort of selection criteria, usually academic. *Independent schools* are fee-charging private schools, independent from many of the regulations and conditions that apply to state-funded schools. *Other* schools included, for example, sixth form and further education colleges, special schools, pupil referral units, tutorial colleges, and training centres.

- Ethnicity: The student's major ethnic group, as provided by the NPD, was used to classify students into the following ethnic groups: Asian (not Chinese), Black, Chinese, White, Mixed or Other.

- Special educational needs (SEN): The NPD provided information on whether a student received SEN support, had an EHC (Education, Health and Care) plan or did not have any SEN.

Note that some of the variables described above are collected as part of the annual school census, so they are primarily available only for students at state-maintained schools (which do not include independent schools). This can lead to missing data for some variables (*e.g.*, IDACI deprivation, FSM eligibility or ethnicity).

For both years (2019/20 and 2020/21), we used the PLAMS data to identify the qualifications and subjects being studied at Key Stage 5 by the Key Stage 4 students above (those achieving GCSEs and/or Technical Awards in June 2019 and June 2020).

The Key Stage 5 qualifications/subjects taken by students in 2020/21 (June 2020 cohort) were investigated and compared to the qualifications/subjects taken by students pre-pandemic, in 2019/20 (June 2019 cohort) to highlight changes in uptake.

Analyses were carried out for the whole cohort of students and for different demographic and socio-economic groups of students (*e.g.*, school type, socio-economic deprivation measures, prior attainment, ethnicity, special educational needs).

Results

The results of the research are organised in four sections, as follows.

Firstly, the progression to Key Stage 5 of the 2020 and 2019 cohorts is described. This includes progression to any learning aims, to at least one Level 3 learning aim and to Level 3 learning aims only, overall and by students' background characteristics.

Next, the specific learning aims (for the 2020/21 academic year) of the students in the 2020 cohort are presented, for the full cohort and also broken down by students' background characteristics. Learning aims of the students in the 2019 cohort (learning aims for the 2019/20 academic year) are included for comparison.

The third section investigates the progression to specific post-16 learning aims of candidates with GCSEs. We focussed on these candidates because they are the typical Key Stage 4 candidates.

Finally, an investigation into the withdrawn and transferred learning aims of the students in the 2020 and 2019 cohorts is presented.

Overall progression to Key Stage 5

In this research, progression to Key Stage 5 was defined as having at least one learning aim (at any level) in the following year after completing Key Stage 4.

Table 2 below shows that there was not a big change in the proportion of Key Stage 4 students who went on to post-16 education (Key Stage 5) after completing Year 11 in summer 2020, compared to those who completed it in summer 2019 (36.8% compared to 35.2%). Note that, as explained on Page 12, the coverage of the PLAMS data (under-representation of students from certain types of centres) might lead to the underestimation of the progression to Key Stage 5 learning aims. However, there is no reason to believe that the under-representation *changed* between 2019 and 2020.

In terms of progression to Level 3 only learning aims, Table 2 reports similar findings, with students at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2020 being slightly more likely to progress to qualifications at Level 3 in Key Stage 5 than those in the previous year (33.5% compared to 30.6%).

These slight increases could be partly due to more pupils getting the grades they needed in summer 2020, following the award of CAGs.

Table 2: Progression to Key Stage 5

Progression to Key Stage 5	2019 cohort		2020 cohort	
	N	%	N	%
Any learning aims	203767	35.2	220313	36.8
At least one Level 3 learning aim	197393	34.1	215295	36.0
Level 3 learning aims only	177101	30.6	200394	33.5
Key Stage 4 candidates	*578530*		*598221*	

Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5 show the progression to Key Stage 5 (any learning aims), to at least one Level 3 learning aim and to Level 3 learning aims only respectively, by students' background characteristics.

First of all, looking at students' gender, Table 3 shows that progression to any Key Stage 5 learning aims increased, from 2019 to 2020, slightly more amongst male than amongst female students.

The percentage of low and medium attainers progressing to Key Stage 5 was higher amongst the 2020 cohort than amongst the 2019 cohort. On the contrary, the progression among students who had achieved at least a grade 4 in English and Mathematics fell slightly in 2020 compared to 2019 (from 50.0% to 48.9%). However, more students had achieved this standard in 2020 than in 2019 (68.6% compared to 62.2%).

Although progression rates to Key Stage 5 increased for all students, independently of their socio-economic background (as measured by IDACI), the increase was slightly higher for the most deprived students than for the least deprived students. There was also an increase amongst students eligible for free school meals continuing onto post-16 learning aims in 2020 compared to 2019.

In 2020, there were increases in progression amongst all ethnic groups, with the greatest increases in progression rates being amongst Black and Chinese students, followed by students with an Asian background. The smallest change was amongst white students.

Regarding progression from different types of schools, Table 3 showed increases in all types of centres, with the greatest changes in progression rates being in secondary modern and comprehensive schools and the lowest in the 'other' category of schools.

Table 5 showed the same patterns of progression when only Level 3 learning aims at Key Stage 5 were considered.

Table 3: Progression to any Key Stage 5 learning aims, by students' background characteristics (percentage progressing in each category)

Characteristics		2019			2020		
		N (in KS4)	N (progressing)	% (progressing)	N (in KS4)	N (progressing)	% (progressing)
Gender	Female	284701	107953	37.9	294464	115933	39.4
	Male	293829	95814	32.6	303757	104380	34.4
Prior attainment	Low	193551	20152	10.4	201614	25324	12.6
	Medium	192356	74064	38.5	203481	85069	41.8
	High	192606	109549	56.9	193126	109920	56.9
English & Maths 9-4	No	218917	24110	11.0	187787	19555	10.4
	Yes	359613	179657	50.0	410434	200758	48.9
IDACI	Low	178014	80288	45.1	184827	86109	46.6
	Medium	177070	65545	37.0	182259	70326	38.6
	High	176438	53615	30.4	183432	59104	32.2
FSM	No	396176	164953	41.6	412336	178826	43.4
	Yes	136210	34798	25.5	139005	37005	26.6
SEN	SEN statement	58882	11413	19.4	62638	13075	20.9
	EHCP	12431	1516	12.2	13599	1691	12.4
	No SEN	461076	186822	40.5	475106	201066	42.3
Ethnicity	White	401467	138240	34.4	411389	146919	35.7
	Asian	57107	28506	49.9	59893	31386	52.4
	Chinese	1928	1214	63.0	1908	1268	66.5
	Black	30576	13889	45.4	32376	15806	48.8
	Mixed	26861	11021	41.0	29245	12419	42.5
	Other	9232	4422	47.9	10121	5147	50.9
Type of school	Comprehensive	478106	168836	35.3	495726	183141	36.9
	Secondary Modern	16237	6925	42.6	16789	7528	44.8
	Selective	23255	19923	85.7	24040	20923	87.0
	Independent	40255	3738	9.3	41323	4172	10.1
	Other	12043	707	5.9	12177	749	6.2

Table 4: Progression to at least one Level 3 Key Stage 5 learning aim, by students' background characteristics (percentage progressing in each category)

Characteristics		2019			2020		
		N (in KS4)	N (progressing)	% (progressing)	N (in KS4)	N (progressing)	% (progressing)
Gender	Female	284701	105139	36.9	294464	113895	38.7
	Male	293829	92254	31.4	303757	101400	33.4
Prior attainment	Low	193551	14290	7.4	201614	20636	10.2
	Medium	192356	73579	38.3	203481	84760	41.7
	High	192606	109522	56.9	193126	109899	56.9
English & Maths 9-4	No	218917	18259	8.3	187787	15202	8.1
	Yes	359613	179134	49.8	410434	200093	48.8
IDACI	Low	178014	79301	44.5	184827	85321	46.2
	Medium	177070	63422	35.8	182259	68630	37.7
	High	176438	50429	28.6	183432	56621	30.9
FSM	No	396176	161247	40.7	412336	175934	42.7
	Yes	136210	32197	23.6	139005	34924	25.1
SEN	SEN statement	58882	9992	17.0	62638	11812	18.9
	EHCP	12431	1207	9.7	13599	1334	9.8
	No SEN	461076	182245	39.5	475106	197712	41.6
Ethnicity	White	401467	134521	33.5	411389	143874	35.0
	Asian	57107	27311	47.8	59893	30515	50.9
	Chinese	1928	1206	62.6	1908	1260	66.0
	Black	30576	13094	42.8	32376	15255	47.1
	Mixed	26861	10719	39.9	29245	12168	41.6
	Other	9232	4203	45.5	10121	4953	48.9
Type of school	Comprehensive	478106	163013	34.1	495726	178595	36.0
	Secondary Modern	16237	6609	40.7	16789	7268	43.3
	Selective	23255	19921	85.7	24040	20916	87.0
	Independent	40255	3705	9.2	41323	4157	10.1
	Other	12043	606	5.0	12177	644	5.3

Table 5: Progression to Level 3 (only) Key Stage 5 learning aims, by students' background characteristics (percentage progressing in each category)

Characteristics		2019			2020		
		N (in KS4)	N (progressing)	% (progressing)	N (in KS4)	N (progressing)	% (progressing)
Gender	Female	284701	94430	33.2	294464	106015	36.0
	Male	293829	82671	28.1	303757	94379	31.1
Prior attainment	Low	193551	5585	2.9	201614	11637	5.8
	Medium	192356	63680	33.1	203481	79953	39.3
	High	192606	107834	56.0	193126	108804	56.3
English & Maths 9-4	No	218917	3749	1.7	187787	4036	2.1
	Yes	359613	173352	48.2	410434	196358	47.8
IDACI	Low	178014	73622	41.4	184827	81313	44.0
	Medium	177070	56707	32.0	182259	63738	35.0
	High	176438	42880	24.3	183432	50784	27.7
FSM	No	396176	146876	37.1	412336	165560	40.2
	Yes	136210	26575	19.5	139005	30536	22.0
SEN	SEN statement	58882	7672	13.0	62638	9733	15.5
	EHCP	12431	903	7.3	13599	1068	7.9
	No SEN	461076	164876	35.8	475106	185295	39.0
Ethnicity	White	401467	121001	30.1	411389	134292	32.6
	Asian	57107	24741	43.3	59893	28543	47.7
	Chinese	1928	1146	59.4	1908	1218	63.8
	Black	30576	11139	36.4	32376	13663	42.2
	Mixed	26861	9568	35.6	29245	11223	38.4
	Other	9232	3711	40.2	10121	4550	45.0
Type of school	Comprehensive	478106	144824	30.3	495726	165116	33.3
	Secondary Modern	16237	5539	34.1	16789	6483	38.6
	Selective	23255	19523	84.0	24040	20644	85.9
	Independent	40255	3463	8.6	41323	4061	9.8
	Other	12043	492	4.1	12177	552	4.5

Key Stage 5 learning aims

In this section of the report, the learning aims (for the 2020/21 academic year) of the students in the June 2020 cohort are presented. Learning aims of the students in the June 2019 cohort (learning aims for the 2019/20 academic year) are included for comparison.

Note that, as mentioned on Page 12, "old" aims have been removed (*e.g.*, for 2020/21, aims started before August 2020 have been removed) and only "active" aims are considered in these analyses.

Figure 1 shows the changes in the uptake of different Key Stage 5 learning aims between the June 2020 and June 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts (more details are given in Table A1, Appendix A).
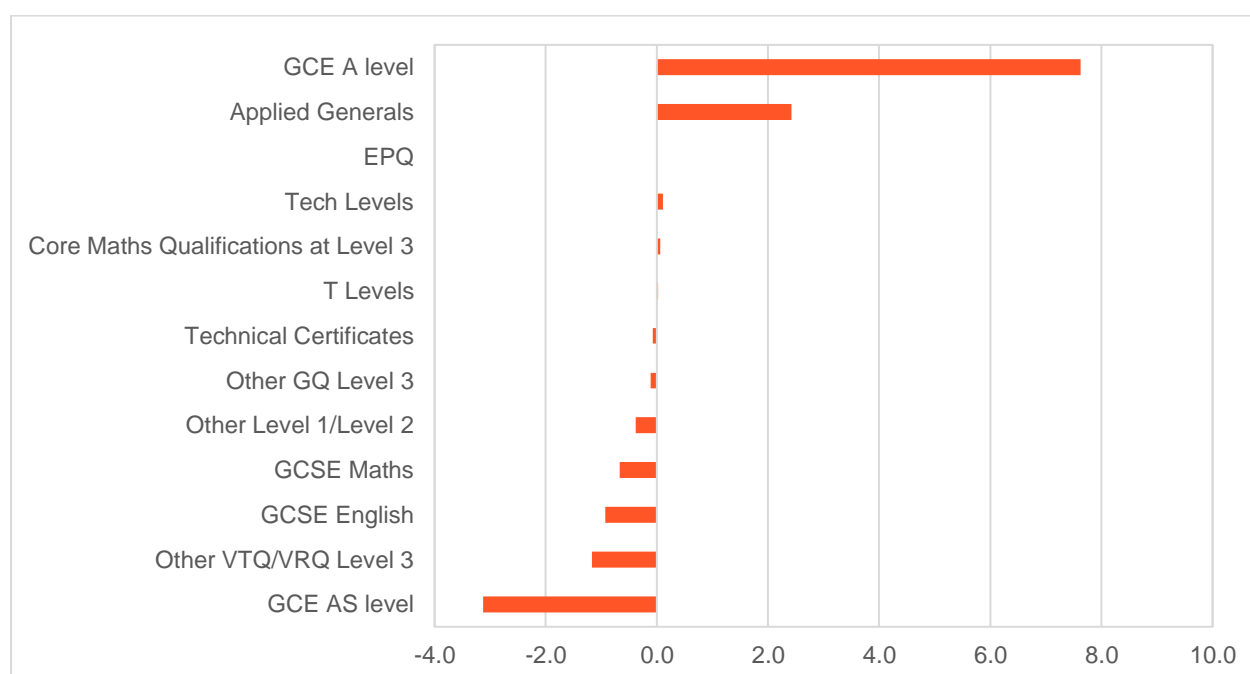
Figure 1: Key Stage 5 learning aims – difference, between 2020 and 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts, in the percentage (out of total number of students in the KS4 cohort) progressing to each qualification type

Following the award of CAGs in 2020, there was hardly any change in the proportion of students who went on to post-16 learning after completing Year 11 in 2020 (as shown in Table 2), but the students in the 2020 cohort were more likely to be doing A levels, or level 3 vocational programmes (Applied Generals) than students in the 2019 cohort. This could be partly due to more pupils getting the GCSE grades they needed in summer 2020 to progress to A levels.

The average number of aims taken per student in the 2020 Key Stage 4 cohort was 3.20 (standard deviation = 0.79), just slightly lower than the average number of aims taken by the students in the 2019 cohort (average = 3.24; standard deviation = 0.81). On the contrary, the average number of A levels per student increased slightly over time, from 2.13 (standard deviation = 1.34) for the 2019 cohort to 2.25 (standard deviation = 1.28) for the 2020 cohort.

The number of aims (Figure 2, Table A2 in Appendix A) and the number of A levels (Figure 3, Table A3 in Appendix A) by cohort are shown below. Figure 3 shows, in particular, that a lower percentage of students from the 2020 cohort than from the 2019 cohort did not progress to A level and that a higher percentage of students from the 2020 cohort were taking three or more A levels.
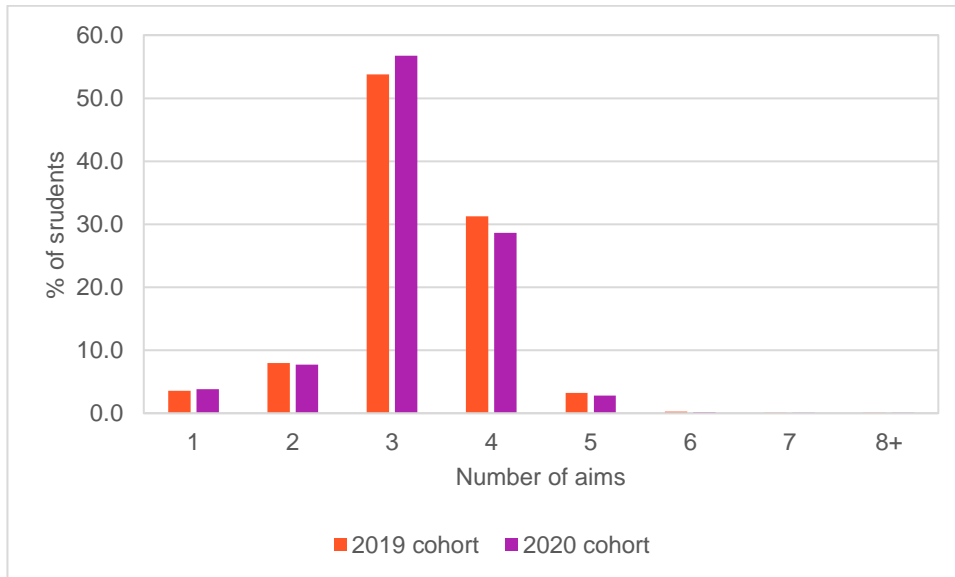
Figure 2: Number of Key Stage 5 aims per student
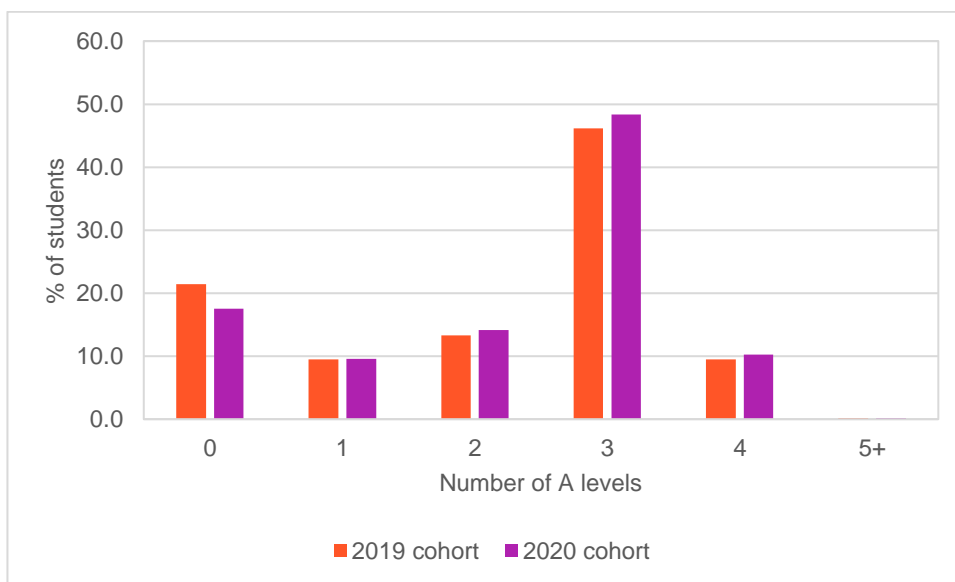
Figure 3: Number of A levels per student

Key Stage 5 learning aims, by students' characteristics

In the following, the progression to the different learning aims, broken down by students' characteristics, is discussed.

Firstly, Figure 4 (Table B1 in Appendix B) shows the aims by gender. The percentages of females taking AS levels were lower amongst the 2020 cohort than amongst the 2019 cohort. There were, however, very small differences over time in the percentages of females taking A levels, Applied Generals or the EPQ.
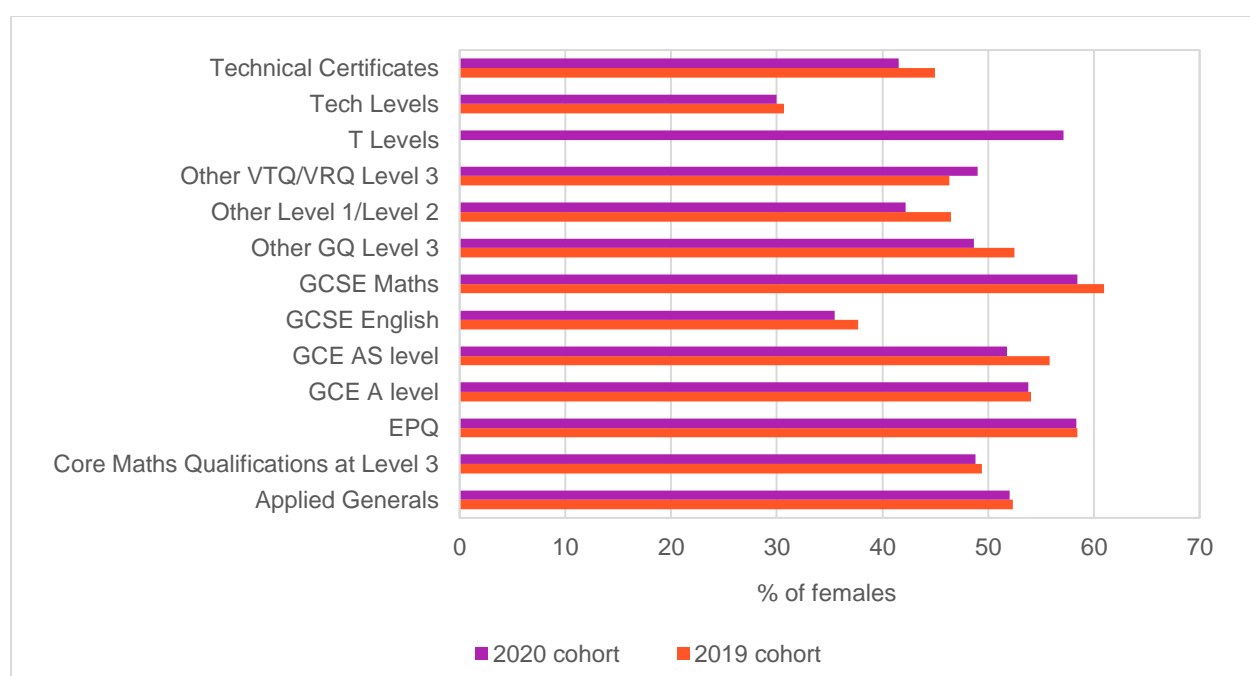
Figure 4: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and gender

Table 6 shows the qualification types broken down by students' prior attainment, measured by the average GCSE and equivalent point score per entry (numbers of students per qualification aim and prior attainment group are in Table B2, Appendix B).

As shown in Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5 the percentages of low and medium attainers progressing to Key Stage 5 were higher in the 2020 cohort than in the 2019 cohort (that is, relatively more progression from the two bottoms thirds). Table 6 shows that, in particular, the prior attainment of students enrolled for A level and AS level qualifications was lower for students in the 2020 cohort (that is, there were relatively fewer from the top third). For example, 64% of A level students had higher prior attainment if they completed Key Stage 4 in 2020, compared with 69% if they completed Key Stage 4 in 2019. Similar findings were found for Applied Generals and the EPQ.

Table 6 also shows that the students from the 2020 cohort taking GCSEs in English and Maths at Key Stage 5 had much lower prior attainment than the students from the 2019 cohort (*e.g.*, for GCSE English, 84% had low prior attainment in 2020 (were in the bottom third), compared to 69% in 2019).

On the contrary, students from the 2020 cohort taking Level 3 VQs or any other Level1/Level 2 qualifications had higher prior attainment than the students from the 2019 cohort (that is, relatively more from the top third). For example, for students taking Level 3 vocational qualifications, 24% had high prior attainment in 2020, compared to 18% in 2019.

Table 6: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and Key Stage 4 attainment - average GCSE and equivalent point score per entry (percentage of students)

Qualifications	2019 cohort			2020 cohort		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Applied Generals	19.9	63.5	16.5	27.2	57.6	15.1
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3	6.2	46.6	47.3	9.3	46.9	43.7
EPQ	2.5	27.9	69.6	3.9	32.4	63.7
GCE A level	2.0	29.6	68.4	3.3	33.7	63.0
GCE AS level	2.1	28.7	69.3	3.8	32.9	63.2
GCSE English	68.2	29.4	2.4	84.1	14.7	1.2
GCSE Maths	61.1	36.7	2.1	75.2	23.9	0.9
Other GQ Level 3	8.4	41.0	50.5	14.0	38.1	47.9
Other Level 1/Level 2	78.6	12.6	8.8	79.1	11.9	9.0
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3	27.4	54.7	17.9	29.9	46.1	24.0
T Levels	0.0	0.0	0.0	26.7	-	-
Tech Levels	24.3	58.2	17.5	30.4	54.0	15.6
Technical Certificates	88.2	10.6	1.2	89.4	-	-

When looking at the students achieving 9-4 passes in English and Maths GCSEs as a measure of Key Stage 4 attainment, Figure 5 (Table B3 in Appendix B) shows that, for the majority of the qualification types, the percentage of students achieving the benchmark was higher amongst the 2020 cohort than amongst the 2019 cohort. The only exception was for students who took GCSE English in Key Stage 5 – in this case, in the last year pre-pandemic, a higher percentage of students who achieved a standard pass in GCSE English re-sat the qualification than did during the pandemic.

Table 7 shows the qualification types broken down by students' socio-economic deprivation group, measured by the IDACI (numbers of students per qualification aim and IDACI group are in Table B4, Appendix B). The socio-economic deprivation of students enrolled for A level and AS level qualifications was higher for students in the 2020 cohort than for the students in the 2019 cohort. For example, 35% of AS level students had lower socio-economic deprivation if they completed Key Stage 4 in 2020, compared with 39% if they completed Key Stage 4 in 2019. Similar findings were found for Applied Generals.

Table 7 also shows that the students from the 2020 cohort taking GCSEs in English and Maths at Key Stage 5 were from more highly deprived areas than the students from the 2019 cohort (*e.g.*, for GCSE English, 46% were in areas of high deprivation in 2020, compared to 43% in 2019).

On the contrary, higher percentages of students from the 2020 cohort taking other VQs or any other Level1/Level 2 qualifications lived in areas of lower socio-economic deprivation than the students from the 2019 cohort. For example, for students taking Level 3 vocational qualifications, 33% lived in areas of low socio-economic deprivation in 2020, compared to 30% in 2019.
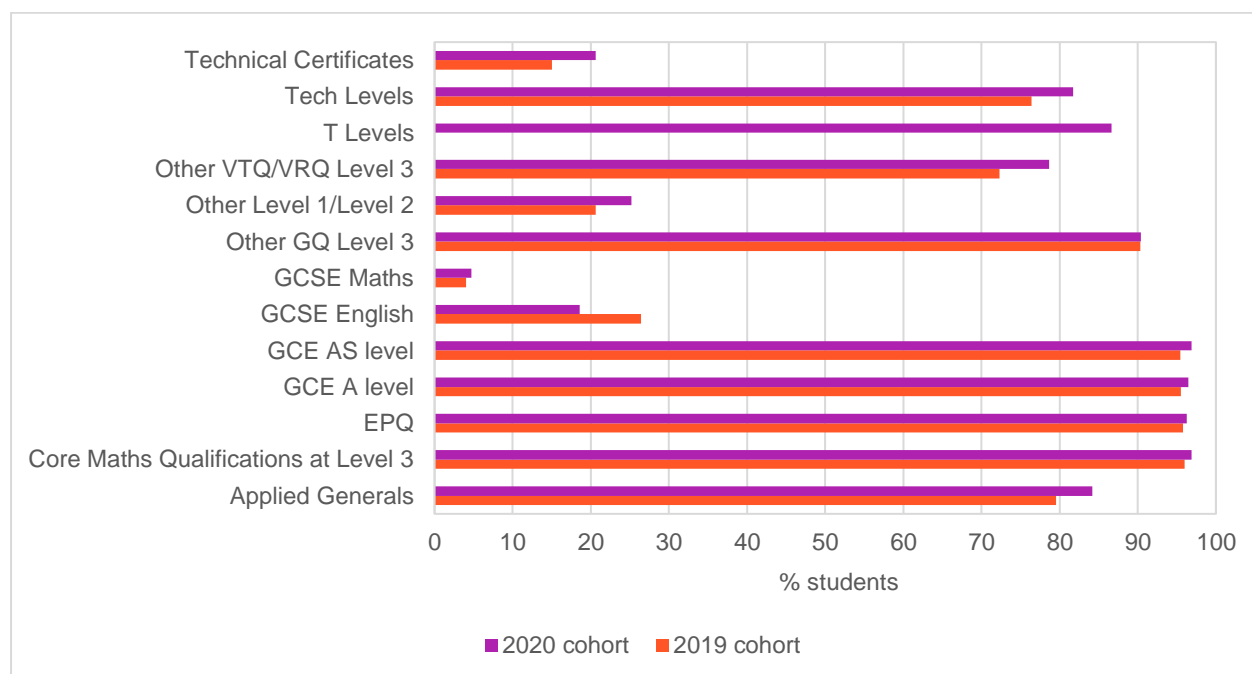
Figure 5: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and Key Stage 4 attainment - percentage of students who achieved standard 9-4 passes in English and Maths GCSEs

Table 7: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and socio-economic deprivation - IDACI (percentage of students)

Qualifications	2019 cohort			2020 cohort		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Applied Generals	32.1	34.2	33.7	31.7	33.9	34.4
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3	46.4	32.4	21.2	46.5	31.9	21.6
EPQ	48.6	31.8	19.7	48.3	31.7	20.0
GCE A level	45.3	32.2	22.5	44.5	32.1	23.4
GCE AS level	38.8	34.4	26.7	34.6	35.2	30.2
GCSE English	23.2	33.8	43.0	20.3	33.7	46.0
GCSE Maths	22.5	33.3	44.2	22.4	33.0	44.6
Other GQ Level 3	38.6	34.9	26.5	37.5	35.6	27.0
Other Level 1/Level 2	20.0	33.2	46.8	20.8	33.0	46.1
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3	29.8	34.5	35.7	33.2	35.0	31.8
T Levels	0.0	0.0	0.0	23.1	29.8	47.1
Tech Levels	30.1	34.2	35.7	29.1	33.4	37.5
Technical Certificates	16.0	34.7	49.3	16.6	36.0	47.5

Figure 6 (Table B5 in Appendix B) shows that, for the majority of the qualification types, there were not big differences between cohorts in the percentages of students eligible for free school meals. There were a few exceptions: students who are taking Technical Certificates or GCSE English in Key Stage 5. In this case, in the last year pre-pandemic (2019), a lower percentage of students who were eligible for free school meals took these qualifications than did during the pandemic.
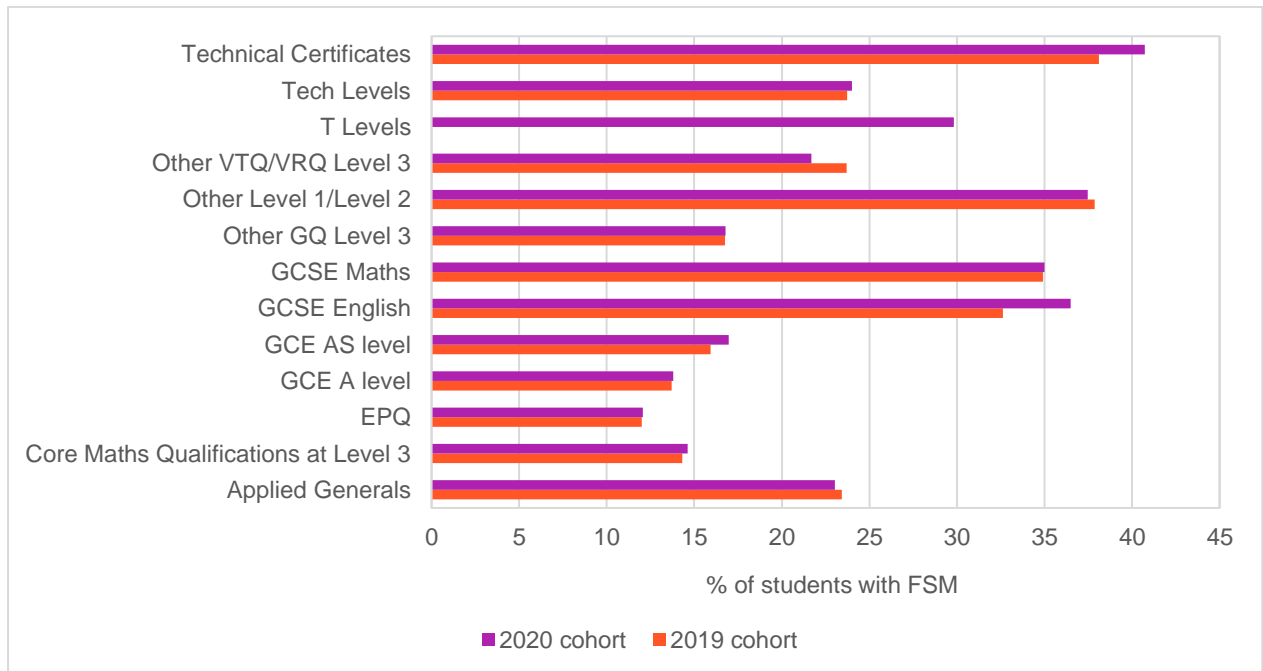
Figure 6: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and socio-economic deprivation - free school meals eligibility (percentage of students)

Table 8 shows the qualification types broken down by students' special educational needs (numbers of students per qualification aim and the different special educational needs categories are shown in Table B6, Appendix B).

For the majority of the qualification types, there were not big differences between years in the percentages of students that did not have special educational needs. There were, however, a few exceptions: students who took Level 2 qualifications in Key Stage 5, such as GCSE English and Maths or other Level 1 / Level qualifications. In those cases, higher percentages of students from the 2020 cohort than the 2019 cohort had special educational needs (either a SEN statement or a EHC plan).

Table 8: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and special educational needs (percentage of students)

Qualifications	2019 cohort			2020 cohort		
	EHCP	SEN statement	No SEN	EHCP	SEN statement	No SEN
Applied Generals	0.8	7.0	92.2	0.8	8.0	91.2
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3	0.5	5.4	94.1	0.6	5.7	93.8
EPQ	0.4	4.3	95.3	0.5	4.9	94.6
GCE A level	0.5	4.2	95.3	0.5	4.5	95.0
GCE AS level	0.4	4.2	95.4	0.5	4.3	95.3
GCSE English	2.5	17.3	80.2	4.2	21.0	74.8
GCSE Maths	2.4	15.6	82.1	3.1	18.6	78.3
Other GQ Level 3	0.6	6.3	93.1	0.9	6.3	92.8
Other Level 1/Level 2	5.4	19.6	75.0	6.9	22.8	70.3
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3	1.2	9.7	89.2	1.5	10.9	87.6
T Levels	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.5	86.5
Tech Levels	1.1	9.2	89.8	1.5	10.7	87.8
Technical Certificates	2.5	21.4	76.1	3.9	20.5	75.5

Table 9 shows the qualification types broken down by students' ethnicity (numbers of students per qualification aim and ethnicity group are shown in Table B7, Appendix B).

Lower percentages of white students were seen in the 2020 cohort than in the 2019 cohort for the following qualifications at Key Stage 5: Applied Generals, AS levels, GCSE English, Tech Levels and Technical Certificates.

For all the qualification types, the percentages of students with a mixed background were higher amongst the 2020 cohort than the 2019 cohort and percentages of black students were similar or higher amongst the 2020 cohort than the 2019 cohort.

Finally, Table 10 shows the qualification types broken down by the type of school students attended during Key Stage 4 (numbers of students per qualification aim and in the different school types are shown in Table B8, Appendix B). For the majority of the qualification types, there were not big differences between cohorts in the percentages of students in each type of school.

Table 9: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and ethnicity (proportion of students with at least one aim in the category in each ethnic group)

Qualifications	2019 cohort						2020 cohort					
	Asian	Black	Chinese	White	Mixed	Other	Asian	Black	Chinese	White	Mixed	Other
Applied Generals	12.6	7.9	0.3	72.4	4.9	2.0	13.1	8.5	0.2	70.9	5.0	2.2
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3	12.4	5.2	0.3	76.4	4.6	1.2	11.3	5.0	0.4	77.3	4.8	1.3
EPQ	13.5	4.5	0.7	74.5	5.2	1.5	12.9	5.0	0.6	74.4	5.4	1.7
GCE A level	14.6	5.9	0.8	70.9	5.6	2.1	15.0	6.4	0.8	69.6	5.9	2.3
GCE AS level	18.8	9.2	0.8	62.5	5.9	2.9	21.1	10.0	0.8	58.6	6.0	3.5
GCSE English	15.2	10.6	0.4	65.6	5.1	3.1	16.2	11.5	0.3	62.1	5.9	4.0
GCSE Maths	15.3	12.6	0.1	63.5	5.9	2.6	14.8	12.1	0.1	63.6	6.5	3.0
Other GQ Level 3	7.4	5.6	0.8	76.2	6.9	3.2	5.3	5.3	0.6	77.6	8.0	3.2
Other Level 1/Level 2	14.9	10.8	0.2	65.6	5.4	3.1	15.1	11.2	0.2	64.4	5.6	3.5
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3	8.2	7.2	0.2	77.3	5.3	1.8	4.0	7.3	0.3	80.0	6.8	1.5
T Levels	0.0	0.0	-	0.0	0.0	-	11.9	17.8	-	54.5	-	-
Tech Levels	10.7	7.8	0.4	74.0	5.4	1.7	11.0	9.5	0.2	71.7	5.8	1.8
Technical Certificates	24.0	10.3	-	59.1	4.4	-	21.2	11.3	-	58.9	-	-

Table 10: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and school type (proportion of students with at least one aim in the category in each school type)

Qualifications	2019 cohort				2020 cohort			
	Comprehensive	Secondary Modern	Selective	Independent	Comprehensive	Secondary Modern	Selective	Independent
Applied Generals	90.8	5.9	2.1	0.9	91.2	6.0	1.6	0.9
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3	88.7	2.2	7.1	1.9	88.8	2.2	7.1	1.7
EPQ	77.8	2.7	17.3	2.1	78.7	3.0	16.0	2.3
GCE A level	81.3	2.6	13.7	2.1	81.7	2.8	13.1	2.3
GCE AS level	84.1	2.9	10.6	2.3	86.0	1.6	10.5	1.7
GCSE English	92.5	4.9	0.8	0.9	93.2	5.0	0.3	0.3
GCSE Maths	92.7	5.2	0.2	1.0	93.4	5.2	0.1	0.4
Other GQ Level 3	57.9	22.0	18.1	1.9	57.2	17.9	22.7	2.2
Other Level 1/Level 2	90.1	5.1	2.3	0.7	89.0	5.9	2.5	0.5
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3	88.3	5.6	3.0	1.6	87.2	5.6	1.8	2.3
T Levels	0.0	0.0	-	-	99.0	0.0	-	-
Tech Levels	94.0	3.3	1.2	1.0	93.4	4.5	0.8	0.8
Technical Certificates	88.7	10.6	-	-	88.0	10.8	-	-

Progression to Key Stage 5 from GCSE qualifications

The next two sub-sections of the report show the progression of candidates with GCSEs (*i.e.*, candidates who achieved at least one GCSE). We focussed on these candidates because they are the typical Key Stage 4 candidates.

Progression to A level subjects (to individual subjects; progression in the same subject) and progression to Applied General qualifications (to individual subject areas; progression in the same subject area) was investigated. These were chosen because they are the two most popular Key Stage 5 types of qualifications, as described in Table A1, Appendix A.

Progression to A levels

Figure 7 shows the difference in the uptake of A level subjects between the 2020 Key Stage 4 cohort and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort (see Table C1 in Appendix C for full details on the uptake by both cohorts of students). Only subjects with at least 100 entries at A level in 2020/21 were included in the figure.

Figure 7 shows that the differences in uptake in A level subjects between cohorts were not very big (between -0.5% and 1.5%). The subjects with the highest increase in 2021 (taken by the 2020 Key Stage 4 cohort) with respect to the previous year were: Psychology, Biology, Sociology and Mathematics. On the other hand, the A level subject with the highest decrease in 2021 was English Literature.

Figure 8 shows the progression to A level in the same subject as the GCSE qualification (see Table C2 in Appendix C for full details on the uptake by both cohorts of students). As for Figure 7 above, only subjects with at least 100 entries at A level in 2020/21 were considered.

There were some small changes, between the 2020 and 2019 cohorts, in the within-subject progression from GCSE to A level. The subjects with the highest increase in 2021 (taken by the 2020 Key Stage 4 cohort) with respect to the previous year were: Psychology, Economics, Computer Studies/Computing, and Sociology. The subject with the highest decrease was, as above, English Literature but the difference between both cohorts was just -0.3%.
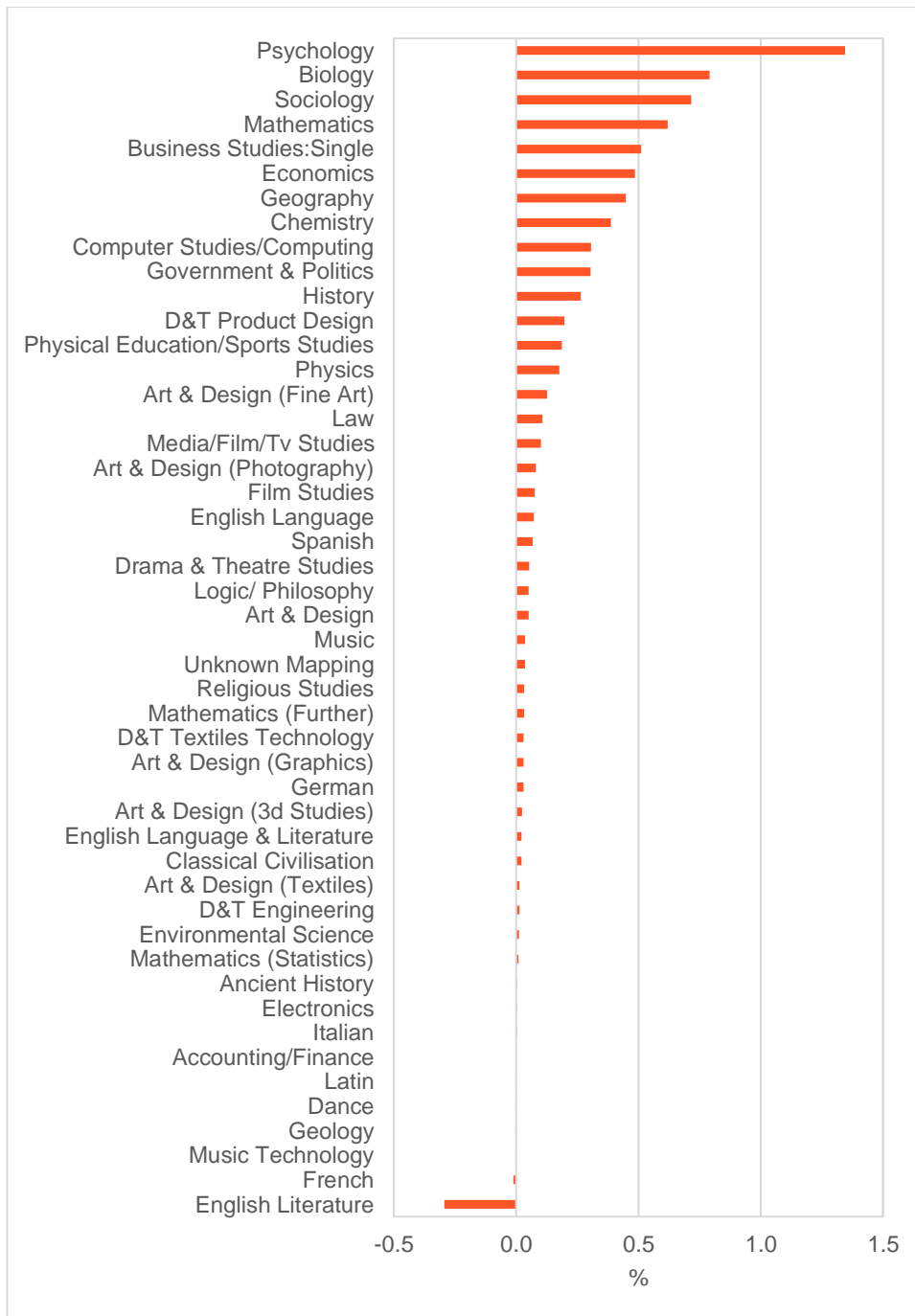
Figure 7: Uptake of individual A level subjects – comparison between the 2020 and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts
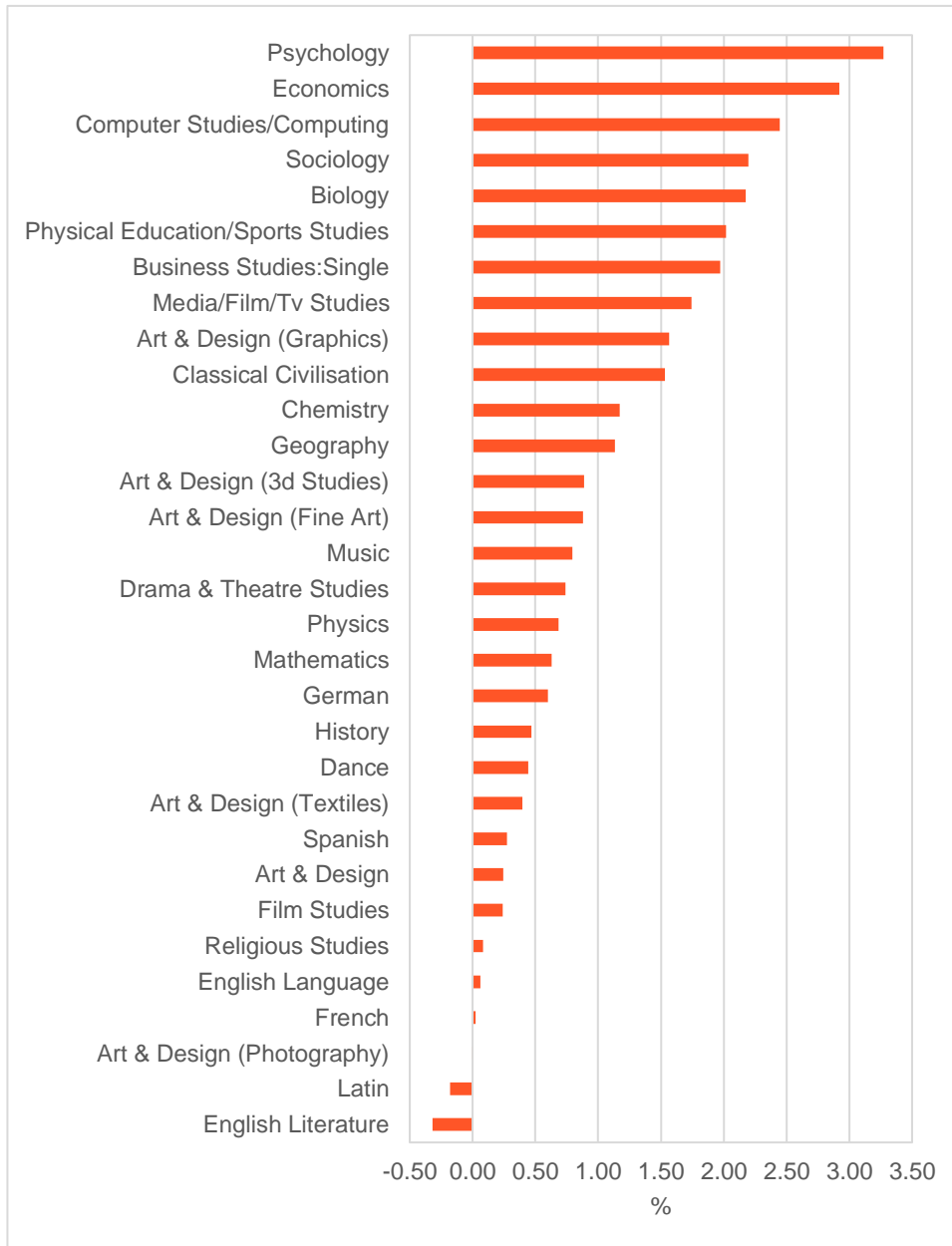
Figure 8: Progression from GCSE to A level in the same subject - comparison between the 2020 and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts

Progression to Applied Generals

The difference in the uptake of Applied Generals, by subject area, between the 2020 Key Stage 4 cohort and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort was investigated (see Table D1 in Appendix D for full details on the uptake by both cohorts of students).

The difference in uptake between cohorts was fairly small (below 0.5% in all cases). There were small increases in all subject areas, with Social Sciences reporting the highest increase in uptake, followed closely by Business, Administration and Law, and Health, Public Services and Care. The subject area with the lowest increase was Construction, Planning and the Built Environment, followed by Retail and Commercial Enterprise.

As for A levels, the progression to Applied Generals in the same subject area as the GCSE qualification was also reported (see Table D2 in Appendix D for full details on the uptake by both cohorts of students).

As for progression to individual subject areas, there were very small increases between the 2020 and 2019 cohorts in the within-subject progression from GCSE to Applied Generals, for all subject areas. The subject area with the highest increase in 2021 (taken by the 2020 Key Stage 4 cohort) with respect to the previous year was Business Administration and Law, following by Leisure, Travel and Tourism. The subject area with the smallest increase was Arts, Media and Publishing.

Key Stage 5 withdrawn and transferred learning aims

In this section of the report, an investigation into the withdrawn and transferred learning aims (for the 2020/21 academic year) of the students in the June 2020 cohort is presented. Withdrawn and transferred learning aims of the students in the June 2019 cohort (learning aims for the 2019/20 academic year) are included for comparison.

Note: These aims have not been included in the analyses reported in previous sections, which focussed on active aims only.

According to the definition provided by DfE in the PLAMS data (DfE, 2021b), a learning aim has been withdrawn if "the learner has withdrawn from the learning activities leading to the learning aim". For example, a learner had decided to study four A levels and changes their mind and drops one of them. A learning aim has been transferred if "the learner has transferred to a new learning aim. That is, the learner has withdrawn from this learning aim and as a direct result has at the same time started studying for another learning aim within the same provider". For example, a learner who is studying three A levels decides to drop Mathematics and study Psychology instead.

Table 11 gives an overall view of the number of withdrawn and transferred aims, by Key Stage 4 cohort. It shows that there were more withdrawn and transferred aims amongst students from the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort than amongst students from the 2020 cohort. Furthermore, in both cohorts, there were more transferred than withdrawn aims.

Table 11: Withdrawn and transferred learning aims, by Key Stage 4 cohort

Key Stage 5 learning aims	2019 cohort		2020 cohort	
	N	% (per student)	N	% (per student)
Withdrawn	17070	3.0	13963	2.3
Transferred	23713	4.1	21161	3.5
Withdrawn + Transferred	40783	7.0	35124	5.9
Number of KS4 students	_578530_		_598221_	

Figure 9 shows the withdrawn and transferred aims, by type of Key Stage 5 qualification (more details are given in Table E1, Appendix E). T levels were not included in the analyses due to the low numbers of students who withdrew or transferred from this type of qualification.

Looking at withdrawn aims, Figure 9 shows that the aims withdrawn by students in the 2020 cohort were more likely to come from A levels, Applied Generals or the EPQ than was the case for the 2019 cohort. Withdrawn aims were less likely to come from AS levels and from GCSEs in English or Mathematics. Patterns for transferred aims were similar.
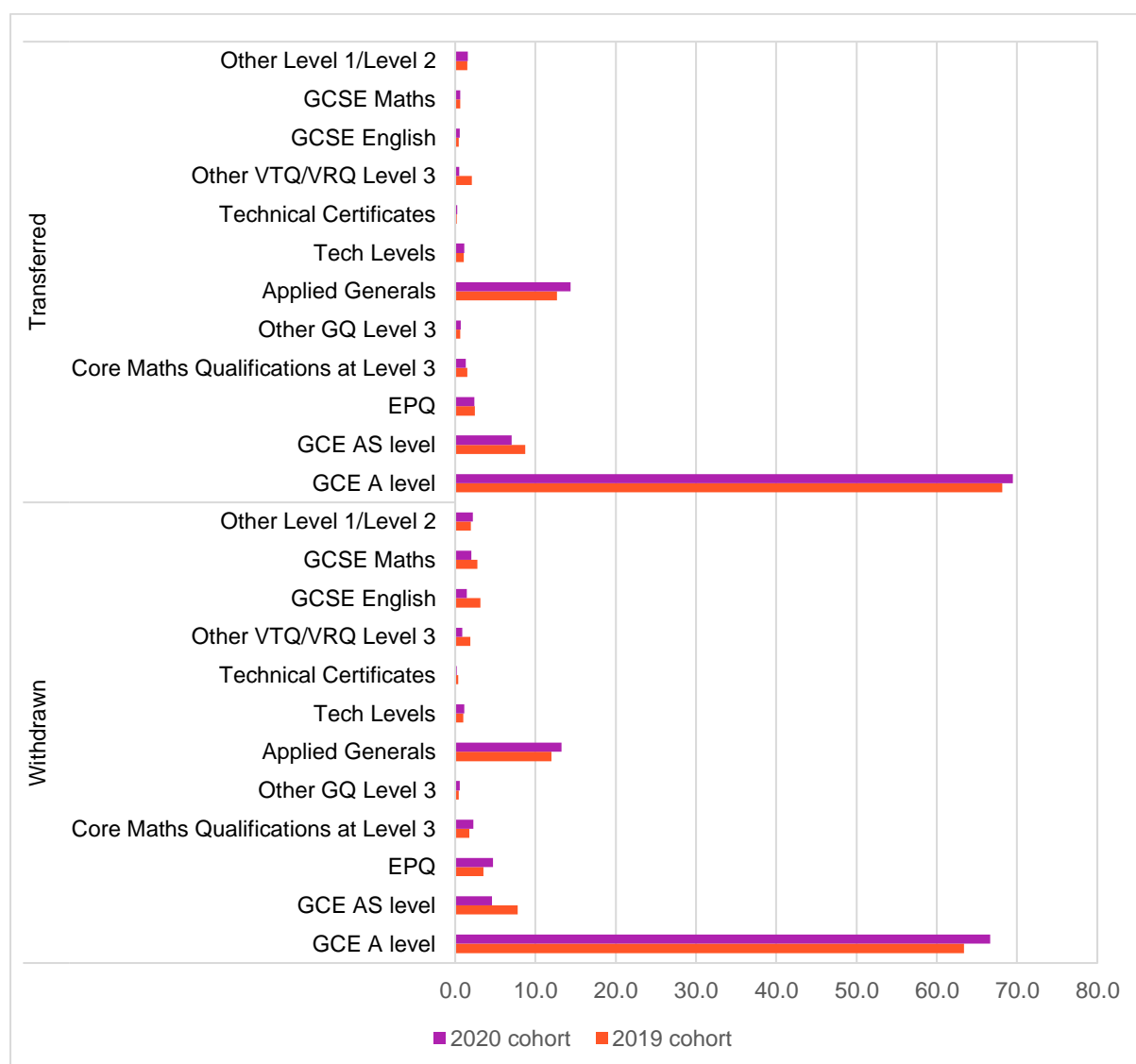
Figure 9: Withdrawn and transferred Key Stage 5 learning aims, by type of qualification and Key Stage 4 cohort

Table 12 shows that the reasons for the withdrawal of leaning aims did not change much from 2019 to 2020. The highest difference was withdrawal due to personal reasons, but the percentage of students withdrawing was just 1.4 percentage points higher in 2020.

Table 12: Reasons for withdrawal (including transferred) of Key Stage 5 learning aims, by Key Stage 4 cohort

Withdrawal Reason	2019 cohort		2020 cohort	
	N	%	N	%
Transferred	3875	22.7	3233	23.1
Injury / Illness	22	0.1	22	0.2
Personal Reasons	4332	25.4	3747	26.8
Other	7842	45.9	6170	44.1
Not known	1018	6.0	820	5.9

Table 13 and Table 14 show the characteristics of students with withdrawn or transferred aims, respectively, for both the 2019 and 2020 Key Stage 4 cohorts.

Table 13: Characteristics of students with withdrawn aims, by Key Stage 4 cohort

Students' characteristics		2019 cohort		2020 cohort	
		N	%	N	%
Gender	Female	9801	57.4	8085	57.8
	Male	7288	42.7	5907	42.2
Prior attainment	Low	2020	11.8	2020	14.4
	Medium	6197	36.3	5459	39.0
	High	8872	51.9	6513	46.6
English & Maths 9-4	No	2334	13.7	1693	12.1
	Yes	14755	86.3	12299	87.9
IDACI	Low	6385	38.4	5247	38.8
	Medium	5678	34.1	4454	32.9
	High	4574	27.5	3825	28.3
FSM	No	13358	80.2	10799	79.8
	Yes	3301	19.8	2738	20.2
SEN	SEN statement	891	5.4	810	6.0
	EHCP	91	0.6	94	0.7
	No SEN	15677	94.1	12633	93.3
Ethnicity	White	11332	68.9	9125	68.4
	Asian	2632	16.0	2085	15.6
	Chinese	80	0.5	81	0.6
	Black	1043	6.3	919	6.9
	Mixed	1005	6.1	817	6.1
	Other	354	2.2	315	2.4
Type of school	Comprehensive	14306	85.8	11661	85.1
	Secondary Modern	511	3.1	460	3.4
	Selective	1432	8.6	1116	8.2
	Independent	404	2.4	421	3.1
	Other	30	0.2	39	0.3

Table 14: Characteristics of students with transferred aims, by Key Stage 4 cohort

Students' characteristics		2019 cohort		2020 cohort	
		N	%	N	%
Gender	Female	13107	55.2	11424	54.0
	Male	10629	44.8	9751	46.1
Prior attainment	Low	1983	8.4	2588	12.2
	Medium	9534	40.2	9278	43.8
	High	12219	51.5	9309	44.0
English & Maths 9-4	No	2552	10.8	1857	8.8
	Yes	21184	89.3	19318	91.2
IDACI	Low	9280	40.0	7471	36.2
	Medium	7588	32.7	6864	33.3
	High	6331	27.3	6298	30.5
FSM	No	18947	81.6	16611	80.4
	Yes	4288	18.5	4054	19.6
SEN	SEN statement	1094	4.7	1179	5.7
	EHCP	154	0.7	112	0.5
	No SEN	21987	94.6	19374	93.8
Ethnicity	White	15445	67.4	13188	64.6
	Asian	3996	17.4	3799	18.6
	Chinese	114	0.5	116	0.6
	Black	1598	7.0	1559	7.6
	Mixed	1241	5.4	1195	5.9
	Other	535	2.3	553	2.7
Type of school	Comprehensive	19794	85.1	17931	86.3
	Secondary Modern	707	3.0	597	2.9
	Selective	2254	9.7	1755	8.5
	Independent	475	2.0	457	2.2
	Other	24	0.1	36	0.2

Table 13 shows that the biggest differences between both cohorts was in the prior attainment of the students. Interestingly, in both years, there were more students with higher prior attainment amongst those withdrawing aims than students with medium or low attainment. However, there were higher percentages of low and medium attainers amongst those withdrawing aims in 2020 than in 2019.

Despite differences between cohorts being very small (in most cases less than one percentage point), there was a slightly higher percentage of students from high deprivation backgrounds amongst those withdrawing aims in 2020 than in 2019. The eligibility for free school meals indicator, as a proxy for students' deprivation, confirms this finding.

Differences over time in the gender, special educational needs, ethnicity and school type composition of this group of students were fairly small.

Table 14 shows that for transferred aims, as for students with withdrawn aims, the biggest difference between the 2019 and 2020 Key Stage 4 cohorts was in the prior attainment, with a much lower percentage of those transferring aims in 2020 having high prior attainment than in 2019 (difference of 7.5 percentage points).

However, Table 14 reveals some slightly different patterns to those seen in Table 13. For example, there was a slightly higher percentage of male students amongst those transferring aims in 2020 than in 2019. Regarding socio-economic deprivation, there was a slightly higher percentage of students from high deprivation backgrounds amongst those transferring aims in 2020 than in 2019, and a smaller percentage of students from low deprivation backgrounds. The ethnicity distribution of the group of students with transferred aims was also slightly different, with a lower percentage of white students and a higher percentage of Asian students transferring aims in 2020 than in 2019. Differences over time in the special educational needs or school type composition of this group of students were fairly small.

Table 15 and Table 16 show the withdrawn and transferred aims, by A level subject, respectively. Note that only subjects with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort are shown in the tables.

Table 15 shows, for example, that in 2020, 12% of the transferred A level aims were in Psychology, 9.3% in Mathematics and 7.6% in Biology. On the contrary, only 1% of the transferred aims corresponded to Art & Design and to English Language & Literature.

A very similar pattern was found in 2019, with differences between cohorts not being very big (between -1.5% and 1.5%) – see Figure 10. However, there were some subjects that were more/less likely than others to be withdrawn in 2020 than in the previous year. For example, Psychology, Sociology and Mathematics were more likely to be withdrawn in 2020 than in 2019. On the other hand, Religious Studies and English Literature were more likely to be withdrawn in 2019 than in 2020.

Table 16 and Figure 11 show very similar results for the transferred A level aims.

Table 15: Withdrawn A level learning aims, by subject and Key Stage 4 cohort (only subjects with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort)

A level subject	2019 cohort		2020 cohort		Difference 2020-2019
	N	%	N	%	
English Literature	676	6.3	460	4.9	-1.3
Religious Studies	403	3.7	256	2.8	-1.0
History	611	5.7	473	5.1	-0.6
Mathematics (Further)	328	3.0	240	2.6	-0.5
Art & Design (Fine Art)	188	1.7	132	1.4	-0.3
Business Studies: Single	503	4.7	408	4.4	-0.3
Chemistry	645	6.0	536	5.8	-0.2
Geography	513	4.7	423	4.5	-0.2
English Language & Literature	126	1.2	93	1.0	-0.2
Law	133	1.2	103	1.1	-0.1
French	137	1.3	111	1.2	-0.1
Art & Design	108	1.0	92	1.0	0.0
Government & Politics	294	2.7	255	2.7	0.0
English Language	283	2.6	248	2.7	0.0
Biology	815	7.5	708	7.6	0.1
Physics	491	4.5	429	4.6	0.1
Economics	482	4.5	423	4.5	0.1
Media/Film/TV Studies	198	1.8	182	2.0	0.1
Physical Education/Sports Studies	159	1.5	153	1.6	0.2
Computer Studies/Computing	140	1.3	136	1.5	0.2
D&T Product Design	112	1.0	113	1.2	0.2
Art & Design (Photography)	123	1.1	125	1.3	0.2
Spanish	112	1.0	121	1.3	0.3
Drama & Theatre Studies	102	0.9	114	1.2	0.3
Mathematics	931	8.6	867	9.3	0.7
Sociology	640	5.9	669	7.2	1.3
Psychology	1161	10.7	1128	12.1	1.4

Table 16: Transferred A level learning aims, by subject and Key Stage 4 cohort (only subjects with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort)

A level subject	2019 cohort		2020 cohort		Difference 2020-2019
	N	%	N	%	
English Literature	1165	7.2	850	5.8	-1.4
Biology	1271	7.9	1059	7.2	-0.7
Religious Studies	655	4.1	510	3.5	-0.6
Physical Education/Sports Studies	307	1.9	210	1.4	-0.5
Drama & Theatre Studies	174	1.1	131	0.9	-0.2
Media/Film/TV Studies	357	2.2	297	2.0	-0.2
Geography	672	4.2	589	4.0	-0.2
History	844	5.2	749	5.1	-0.1
Business Studies: Single	687	4.3	607	4.1	-0.1
Logic/ Philosophy	112	0.7	90	0.6	-0.1
English Language & Literature	202	1.3	173	1.2	-0.1
Chemistry	811	5.0	728	5.0	-0.1
D&T Product Design	186	1.2	161	1.1	-0.1
Physics	758	4.7	684	4.7	0.0
Economics	786	4.9	711	4.8	0.0
French	200	1.2	180	1.2	0.0
Film Studies	111	0.7	101	0.7	0.0
Spanish	196	1.2	179	1.2	0.0
Law	224	1.4	208	1.4	0.0
Art & Design (Photography)	222	1.4	206	1.4	0.0
Computer Studies/Computing	282	1.7	261	1.8	0.0
Art & Design	141	0.9	141	1.0	0.1
Art & Design (Fine Art)	213	1.3	210	1.4	0.1
English Language	512	3.2	521	3.5	0.4
Sociology	1026	6.4	991	6.7	0.4
Mathematics (Further)	280	1.7	318	2.2	0.4
Government & Politics	480	3.0	503	3.4	0.5
Psychology	1536	9.5	1552	10.6	1.1
Mathematics	1362	8.4	1414	9.6	1.2

Figure 10: Withdrawn A level learning aims, by subject (only subjects with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort) - comparison between the 2020 and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts
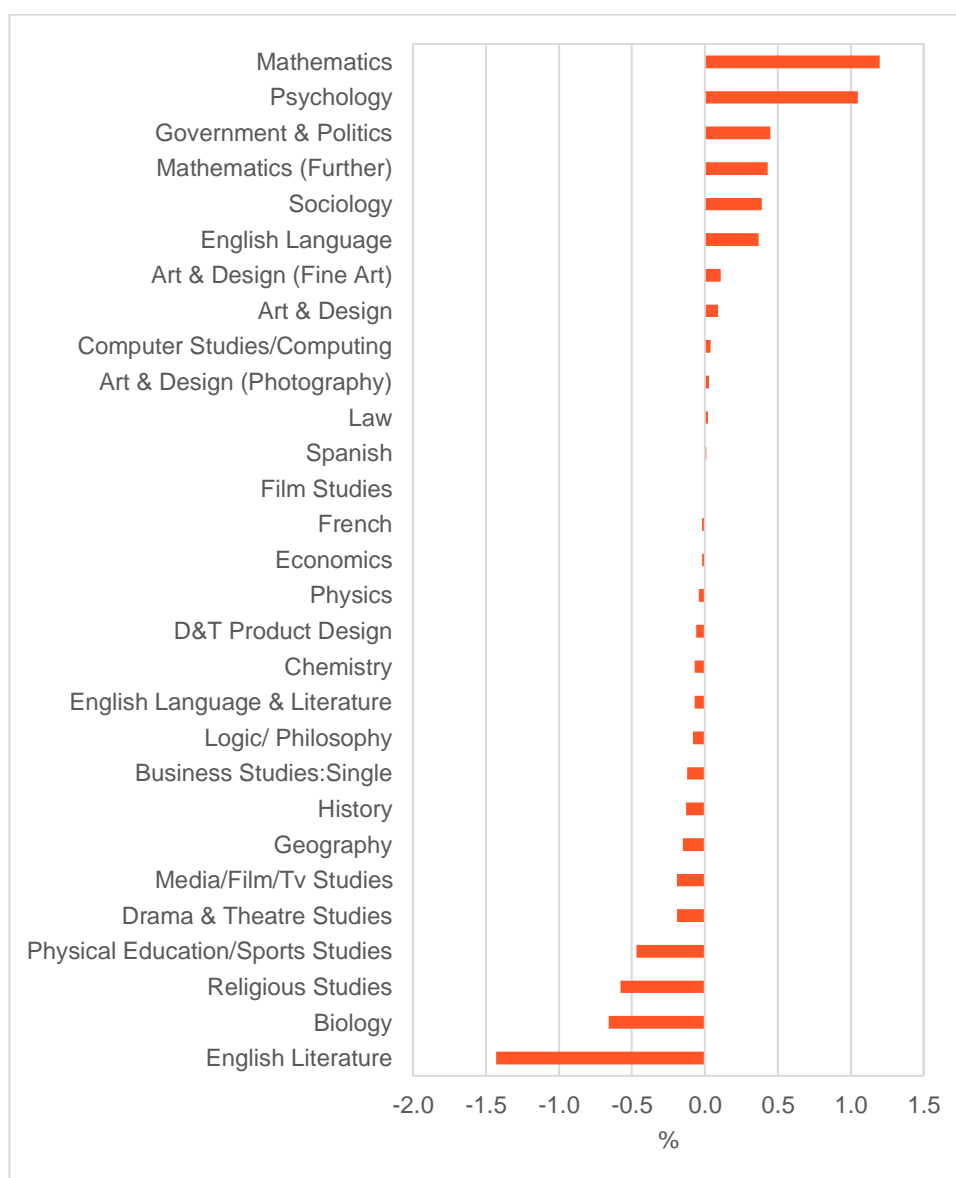
Figure 11: Transferred A level learning aims, by subject (only subjects with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort) - comparison between the 2020 and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts

The analyses presented above could be reflecting changes in uptake of A level learning aims (*e.g.*, Psychology becoming more popular). An alternative approach is to consider what percentage of the students starting each A level learning aim subsequently withdrew or transferred, in each year. Figure 12 and Figure 13 below, show the difference between the percentage of students within each A level learning aim who withdrew or transferred, respectively, in 2020 compared with 2019 (see Table E2 and E3 in Appendix E for the numbers of students, rather than the percentages).

For most subjects, Figure 12 shows that the percentage of students withdrawing was very similar in both years (difference below 1%). The subjects with the biggest differences (lowest percentages of students withdrawing in 2020 compared with in 2019) were Religious

Studies, Art & Design (Fine Art) and Further Mathematics. In all subjects other than Drama & Theatre Studies, the percentage of students withdrawing from an A level learning aim in 2020 was lower than in 2019.

Figure 13 shows a similar result for the percentage of students transferring from each A level learning aim. In this case, the subjects with the biggest differences (lowest percentages of students transferring in 2020 compared to in 2019) were Logic/Philosophy, Physical Education/Sport Studies, and Religious Studies. In all subjects other than Further Mathematics, the percentage of students transferring in 2020 was lower than in 2019.
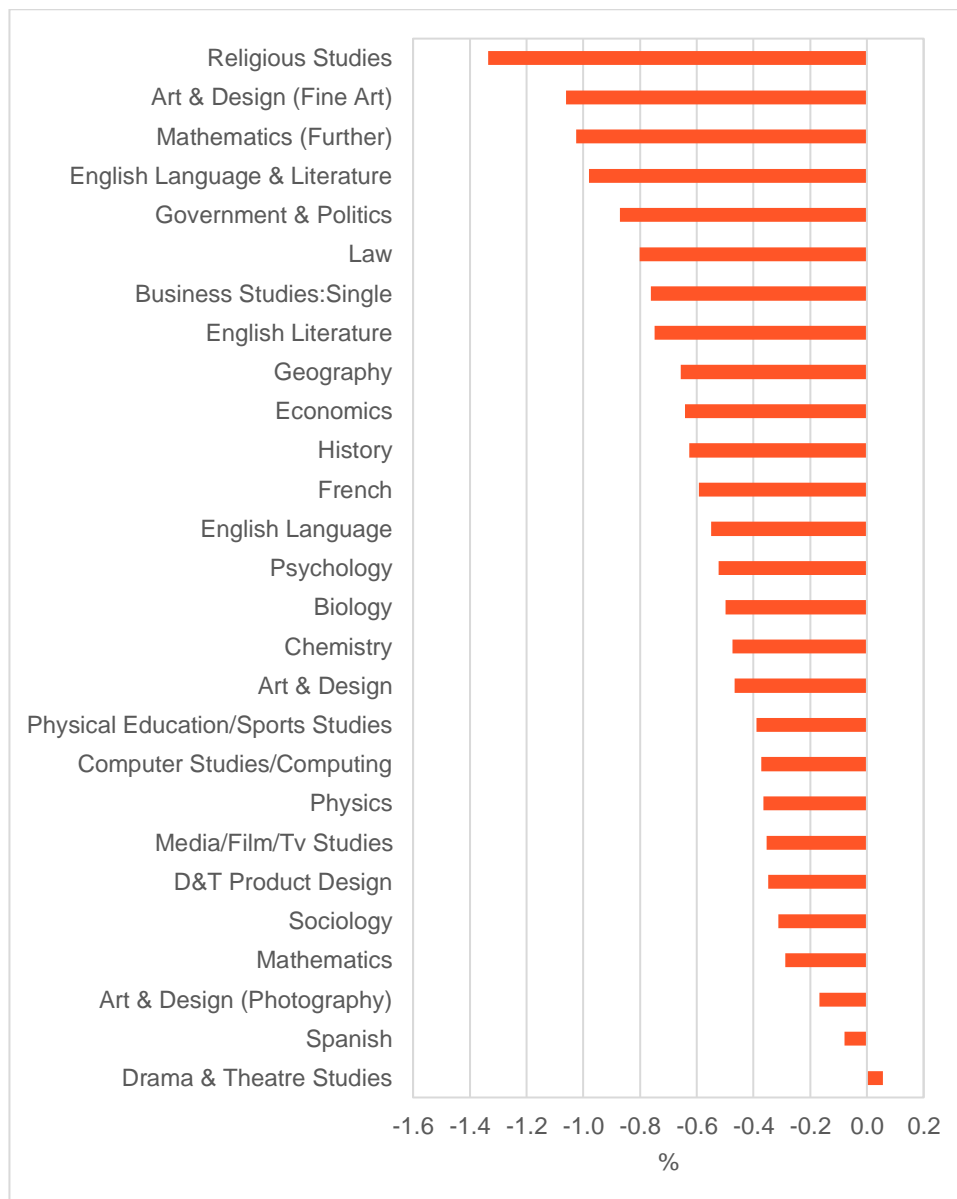
Figure 12: Withdrawn A level learning aims: percentage of students within each A level learning aim who withdrew (only subjects with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort) - comparison between the 2020 and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts

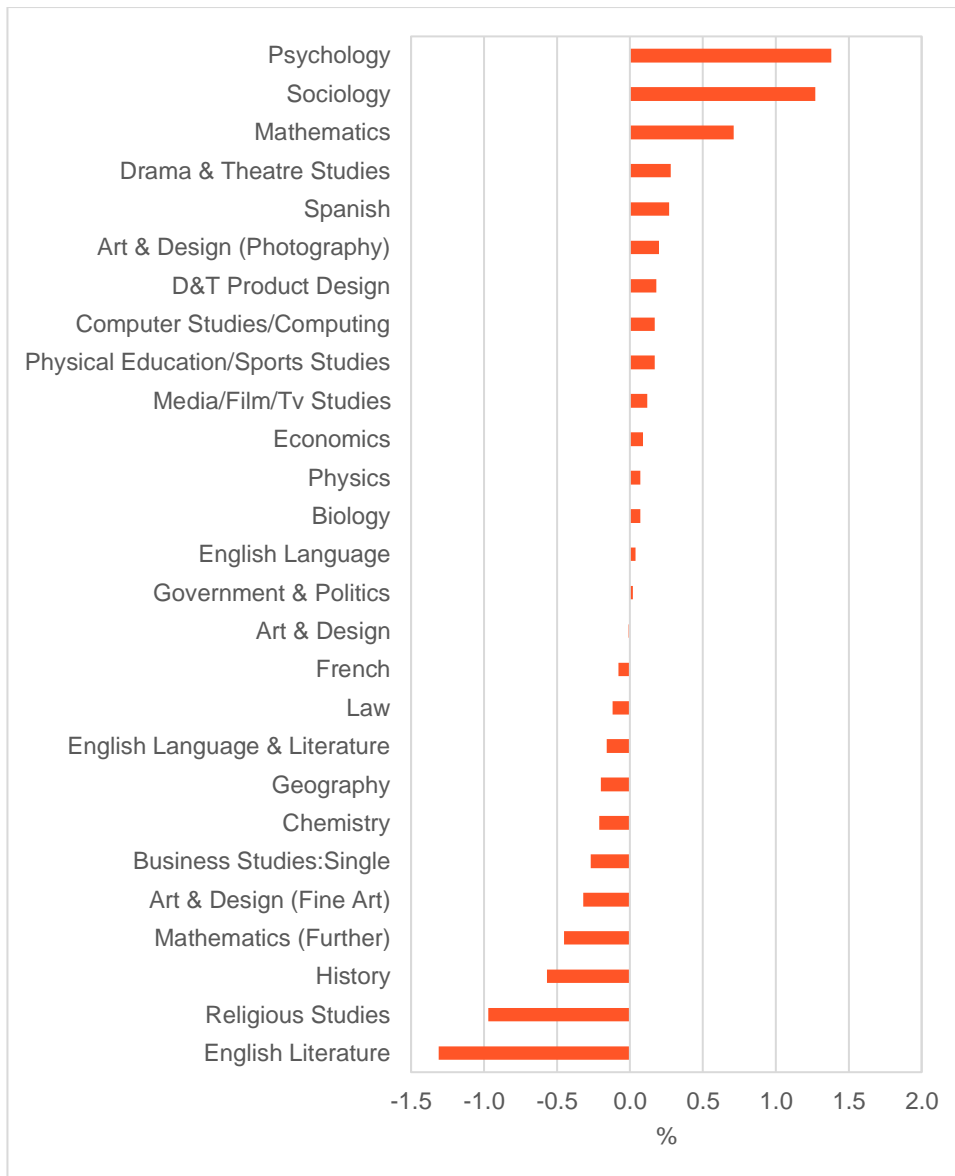Figure 13: Transferred A level learning aims: percentage of students within each A level learning aim who transferred (only subjects with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort) - comparison between the 2020 and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts

Table 17 and Table 18 show the withdrawn and transferred aims, by Applied General subject area, respectively. Note that only subjects with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort are shown in the tables.

Table 17 shows, for example, that in 2020, 26% of the transferred Applied General aims were in the area of Business, Administration and Law, and 20% in Health, Public Services and Care. On the other hand, just under 7% of the transferred aims were in subjects related to Arts, Media and Publishing, and Information and Communication Technology. Table 18 shows similar patterns for the transferred aims.

Table 17: Withdrawn Applied General learning aims, by subject area and Key Stage 4 cohort (only subject areas with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort)

Applied General subject area	2019 cohort		2020 cohort		Difference 2020-2019
	N	%	N	%	
Business, Administration and Law	567	27.7	487	26.4	-1.4
Health, Public Services and Care	448	21.9	374	20.2	-1.7
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	292	14.3	262	14.2	-0.1
Science and Mathematics	261	12.8	249	13.5	0.7
Social Sciences	145	7.1	181	9.8	2.7
Arts, Media and Publishing	147	7.2	126	6.8	-0.4
Information and Communication Technology	133	6.5	123	6.7	0.2

Table 18: Transferred Applied General learning aims, by subject area and Key Stage 4 cohort (only subject areas with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort)

Applied General subject area	2019 cohort		2020 cohort		Difference 2020-2019
	N	%	N	%	
Business, Administration and Law	817	27.2	785	25.8	-1.4
Health, Public Services and Care	473	15.8	641	21.1	5.3
Science and Mathematics	541	18.0	480	15.8	-2.3
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	435	14.5	458	15.1	0.6
Information and Communication Technology	215	7.2	255	8.4	1.2
Arts, Media and Publishing	247	8.2	227	7.5	-0.8
Social Sciences	177	5.9	140	4.6	-1.3

Regarding differences between cohorts, Figure 14 and Figure 15 show that differences in the percentages of students withdrawing/transferring Applied General learning aims between cohorts were bigger than for A level (between -2.0% and 3.0% for withdrawn aims and between -3.0% and 6.0% for transferred aims).

In particular, Figure 14 shows that aims in the areas of Social Sciences were more likely to be withdrawn in 2020 than in 2019. On the other hand, aims in the areas of Health, Public Services and Care, and Business, Administration and Law were more likely to be withdrawn in 2019 than in 2020. These patterns were different when looking at transferred aims instead. In particular, Figure 15 shows that aims in the area of Health, Public Services and Care, and Business, Administration and Law were more likely to be transferred in 2020 than in 2019 and that aims in the areas of Science and Mathematics, and Business, Administration and Law were more likely to be transferred in 2019 than in 2020.
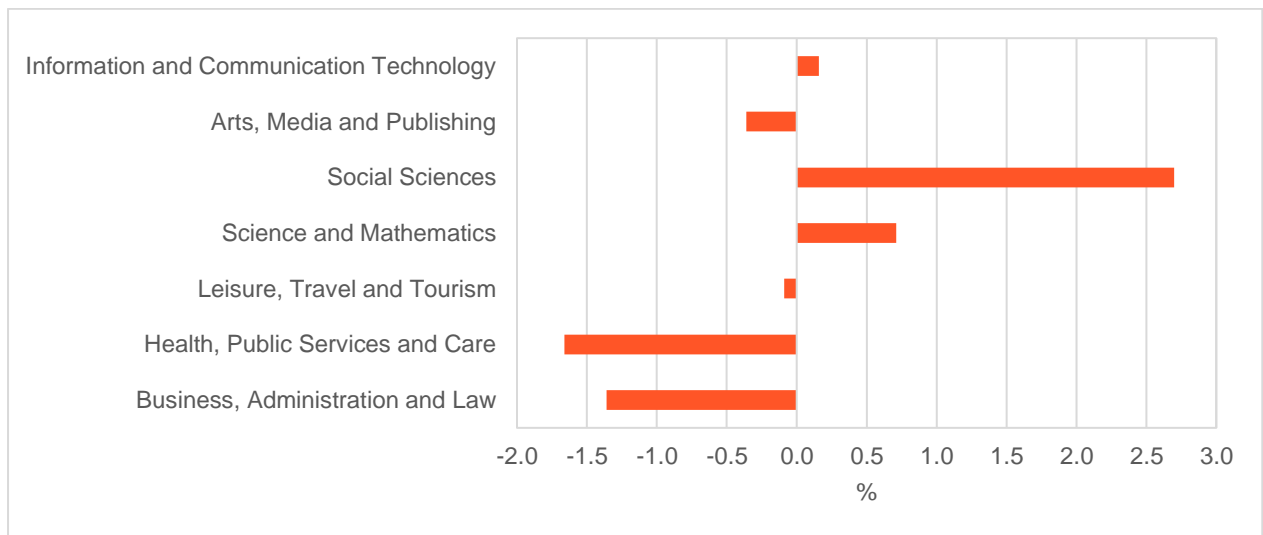
Figure 14: Withdrawn Applied General leaning aims, by subject area (only subject areas with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort) - comparison between the 2020 and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts

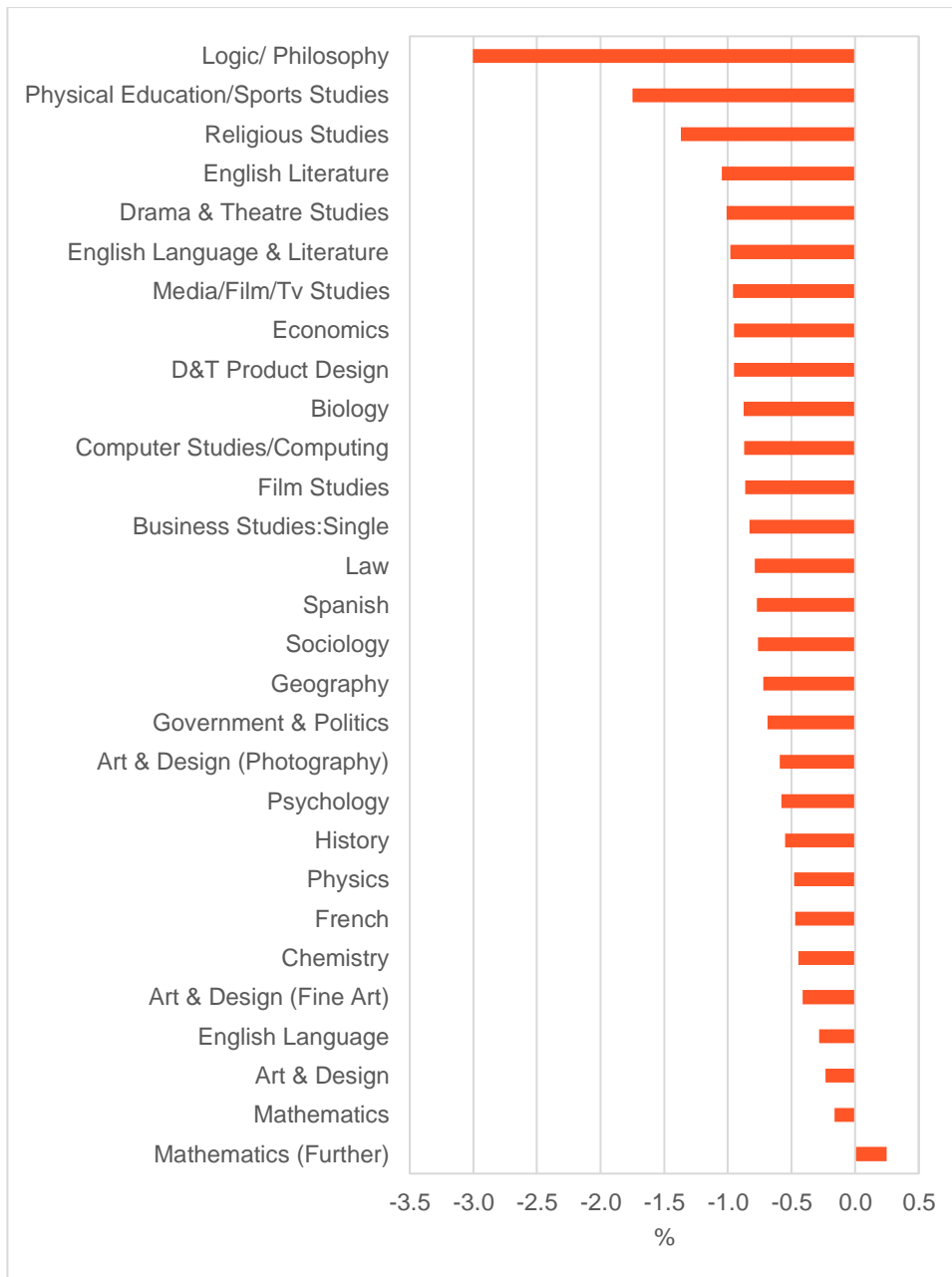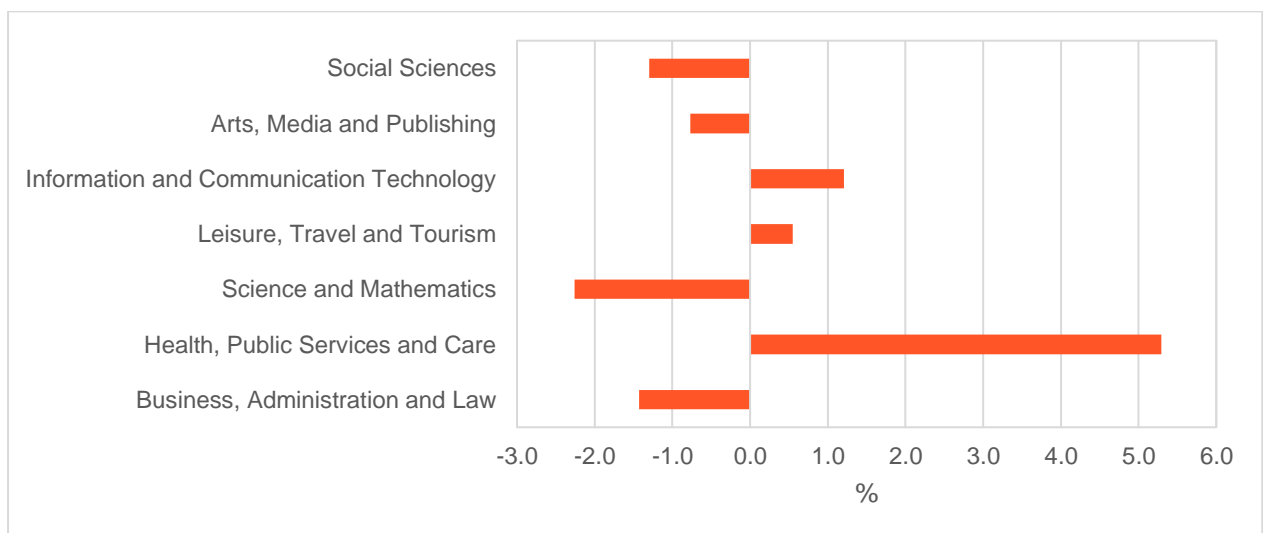Figure 15: Transferred Applied General learning aims, by subject area (only subject areas with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort) - comparison between the 2020 and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts

As for the A levels, the analyses presented above could be reflecting changes in uptake of Applied Generals. Figure 16 and Figure 17 below show the difference between the percentage of students within each Applied General subject area who withdrew or transferred, respectively, in 2020 compared with 2019 (see Table E4 and E5 in Appendix E for the numbers of students, rather than the percentages).
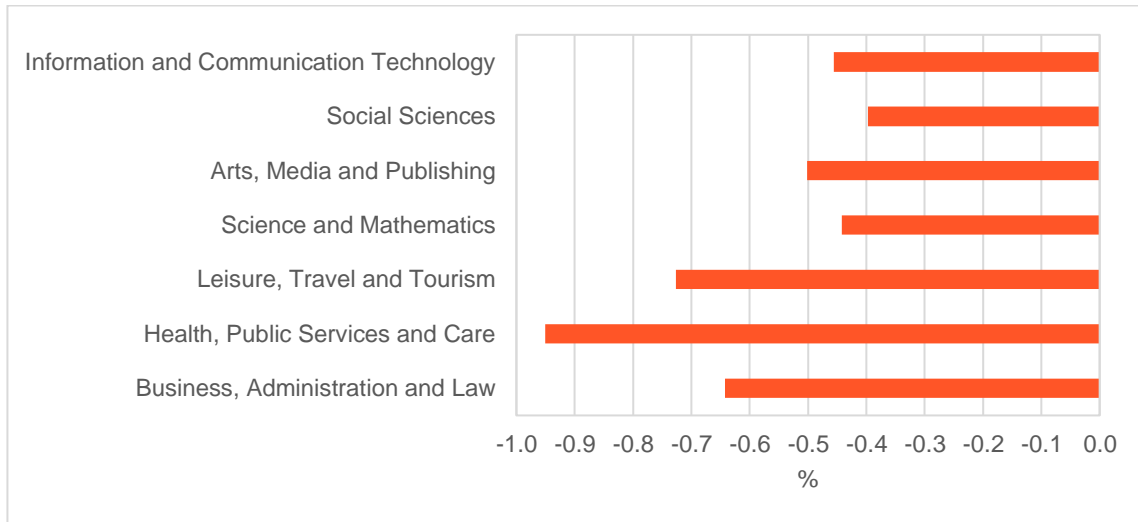
Figure 16: Withdrawn Applied General learning aims: percentage of students within each Applied General subject area who withdrew (only subject areas with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort) - comparison between the 2020 and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts
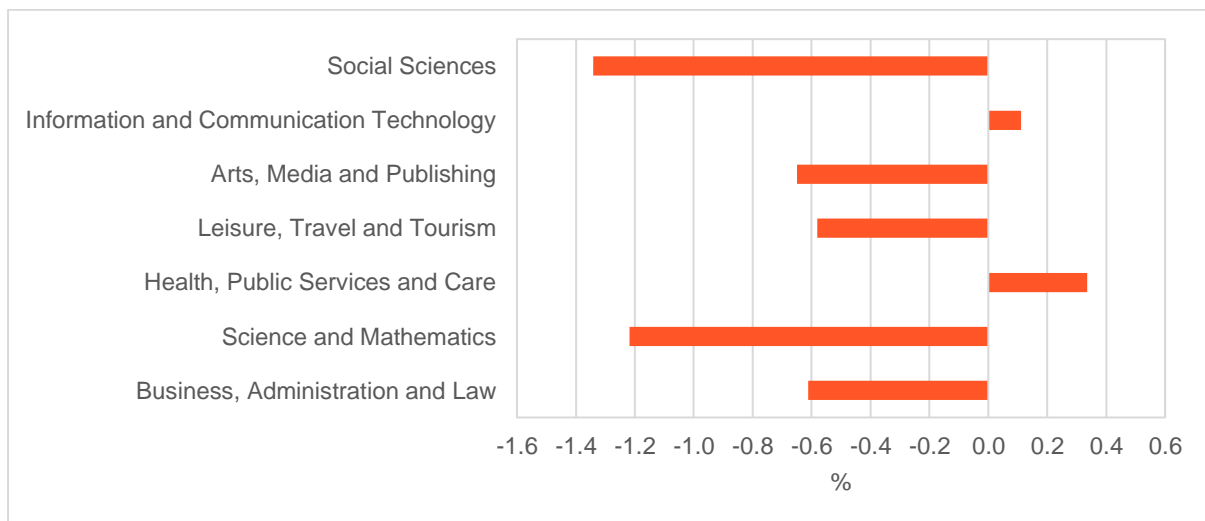
Figure 17: Transferred Applied General learning aims: percentage of students within each Applied General subject area who transferred (only subject areas with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort) - comparison between the 2020 and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts

For most subject areas, Figure 16 shows that the percentage of students withdrawing was very similar in both years (difference below 1%). The subject area with the biggest difference (lowest percentages of students withdrawing in 2020 compared to in 2019) was Health, Public Services and Care.

Figure 17 shows a similar result for the percentage of students transferring from each Applied General subject area. In this case, the subject areas with the biggest difference (lowest percentages of students transferring in 2020 compared to in 2019) were Social Sciences, and Science and Mathematics. Health, Public Services and Care, and ICT, were the only subject areas in which a higher percentage of students transferred in 2020 than in 2019.

Summary and conclusions

This research has helped understand the progression to post-16 study of the students who sat GCSEs and/or other Level 1/2 qualifications in June 2020 and how the awarding of CAGs impacted the destinations (*e.g.*, qualifications and subjects) of different demographic and socio-economic groups.

Meaningful progression is a matter of policy concern and it is important to accurately understand how the progress of the June 2020 cohort has been affected by the cancellation of exams and, in particular, whether any specific groups have been disadvantaged. If groups of students in the June 2020 cohort have been disadvantaged in terms of their progression, it is important to discover this as soon as possible, in order to inform mitigation efforts by stakeholders: most importantly, schools and policymakers.

Overall progression to Key Stage 5

- There were no big changes in the proportion of learners who went on to post-16 study (Key Stage 5) after completing Year 11 in 2020: students at the end of Year 11 in June 2020 were slightly more likely to continue onto post-16 learning in 2020/21 than students at the end of Year 11 in the previous year. This small increase could be partly due to more students getting the grades they needed in summer 2020, following the award of CAGs.
  Note that, as explained previously, the coverage of the PLAMS data (under-representation of students from certain types of centres) might lead to the underestimation of the progression to Key Stage 5 learning aims. However, there is no reason to believe that the under-representation *changed* between 2019 and 2020.

- The percentage of low and medium attainers progressing to post-16 study was higher amongst the 2020 cohort than amongst the 2019 cohort. Furthermore, although progression rates to post-16 study increased for all students, independently of their socio-economic background, the increase was slightly higher for the most deprived students than for the least deprived students.

- The progression to post-16 study among students who had achieved at least grade 4 in English and maths fell slightly in 2020. However, many more students had achieved this standard in 2020 than in 2019.

Key Stage 5 active learning aims

- Following the award of CAGs for GCSEs in 2020, it was expected that more students would have opted to start A levels. This could be partly due to more pupils getting the GCSE grades they needed. This research confirmed that a higher percentage of students from the 2020 cohort than from the 2019 cohort progressed to studying at least one A level, and, in particular, that a higher percentage of students from the 2020 cohort were taking three or more A levels.

- There was higher progression in 2020 than in 2019 to Applied General qualifications (*e.g.*, BTECS and Cambridge Technicals).

- The prior attainment profile of A level students, as well as of students with Applied Generals and the EPQ, was lower for students in the 2020 cohort than for students in the previous year – this could result in lower grades in these qualifications when exams take place in June 2022.

- There was an increase in students from the most deprived backgrounds continuing to AS/A levels and Applied Generals in 2020 than in 2019.

- Students from the 2020 cohort taking GCSEs in English and Maths at Key Stage 5 were from more highly deprived areas than the students from the 2019 cohort.

- There were higher percentages of students taking Level 2 qualifications in Key Stage 5 (*e.g.*, GCSE English and Maths or other Level 1 / Level qualifications) from the 2020 cohort than the 2019 cohort that had special educational needs (either a SEN statement or a EHC plan).

- Regarding the ethnic background of students, lower percentages of progressing students were white in the 2020 cohort compared to the 2019 for the following qualifications at Key Stage 5: Applied Generals, AS levels, GCSE English, Tech Levels and Technical Certificates. Furthermore, for all the qualification types, the percentages of students with a mixed background were higher amongst the 2020 cohort than the 2019 cohort, and percentages of black students were similar or higher amongst the 2020 cohort than the 2019 cohort.

- When looking at progression to specific A level subjects or Applied Generals subject areas, this research showed that:
    - differences in uptake in A level subjects between cohorts were small (between -0.5% and 1.5%). The subjects with the highest increase in 2021 (taken by the 2020 Key Stage 4 cohort) with respect to the previous year were: Psychology, Biology, Sociology and Mathematics.
    - differences in uptake in Applied General subject areas between cohorts were also small (below 0.5%). There were small increases in all subject areas, with Social Sciences reporting the highest increase in uptake.

Key Stage 5 withdrawn and transferred learning aims

- There were more withdrawn and transferred aims amongst students from the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort than amongst students from the 2020 cohort. Furthermore, in both cohorts, there were more transferred than withdrawn aims.

- The aims withdrawn or transferred from by students in the 2020 cohort were more likely to come from A levels, Applied Generals or the EPQ than was the case for the 2019 cohort. Withdrawn and transferred aims were less likely to come from AS levels and from GCSEs in English or Mathematics.

- There were more students with higher prior attainment amongst those withdrawing aims than students with medium or low attainment in both cohorts. However, there were higher percentages of low and medium attainers amongst those withdrawing aims in 2020 than in 2019. Regarding socio-economic deprivation, there was a slightly higher percentage of students from high deprivation backgrounds amongst those withdrawing aims in 2020 than in 2019. Differences over time in the gender,

special educational needs, ethnicity or school type composition of this group of students were fairly small.

There were some slightly different patterns, particular in the gender and ethnicity distributions, amongst students who transferred aims. For example, there was a slightly higher percentage of male students amongst those transferring aims in 2020 than in 2019; and there was a lower percentage of white students and a higher percentage of Asian students transferring aims in 2020 than in 2019.

- The percentages of students withdrawing or transferring from each A level subject, or from each Applied General subject area, were very similar in both years, and in almost all subjects slightly lower in 2020 than in 2019. While the proportion of all withdrawn or transferred learning aims that were from A levels and Applied Generals was higher in 2020 than in 2019, the rates of withdrawal or transfer (as percentages of students starting a learning aim in each subject) were lower.

In conclusion, the above findings show that the proportions of students who progressed to post-16 learning aims after completing Year 11 in 2020 were similar to previous years, albeit with an increase in A level learning aims. In particular, progression from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 in 2020 was similar to progression in 2019, the last year not affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. We should, however, be cautious not to over-interpret this finding, as it is possible that the impact of the pandemic on post-16 progression is not fully reflected in the PLAMS data for this cohort. There are a couple of potential reasons for this. Firstly, students might have fully planned which post-16 qualifications/subjects to study prior to the CAGs being awarded and followed through with their choices (*i.e.*, not altered their plans based on CAGs). Alternatively, school sixth forms and colleges admissions might have been more lenient than in the past to make sure that the 2020 cohort was supported through the journey to the next step in their education and allowed more students to start post-16 courses. These factors could explain why we saw little impact on the immediate progression of the 2020 cohort, but leave open the question of how the pandemic impacted the cohort's progression once they reached then end of Key Stage 5, as well as the impact on subsequent cohorts.

This work was a first look at the progression of the June 2020 Key Stage 4 cohort. When the 2022 June Key Stage 5 results become available, retention and performance should be investigated, and this will provide a more complete picture of the progression of the 2020 cohort.

Regarding retention, this research has shown, contrary to what might have been expected, that there were more withdrawn and transferred aims amongst students from the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort than amongst students from the 2020 cohort at the beginning of the following academic year (Year 12). This might of course change by the end of Key Stage 5. This could be the case, for example, if students who got the GCSE grades they needed in the summer (due to the awarding of the CAGs, which could have been slightly generous) realise, during Key Stage 5, that their grades did not have the same meaning as in normal series and that their post-16 courses were not right for them.

In terms of performance, it might be possible that, at the end of Key Stage 5, the students from the 2020 Key Stage 4 cohort achieve lower grades in their qualifications (*e.g.*, A levels; Applied Generals; …) than students in previous cohorts. Such finding would need to be discussed, however, in light of the difference in the cohorts progressing to post-16 education before and after the start of the pandemic (*e.g.*, students with lower prior attainment

progressing to A level; most A level students not having taken public examinations before) and in light of the 2022 grading strategy, which will see exam adaptations to support students and make exams fairer for them, and exam boards setting grade boundaries based on a profile that reflects a midpoint between 2021 and pre-pandemic grading (see, for example, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/ofquals-approach-to-grading-exams-and-assessments-in-summer-2022-and-autumn-2021 for details on Ofqual's approach to grading exams and assessments in June 2022).

Although the effects of the pandemic on progression for the 2020 cohort were small, the evidence from this research suggests that it has affected some groups of learners (*e.g.,* those from low socio-economic background or from some ethnic minority groups) more than others. In the light of this, admissions and selection processes to post-16 (and further and higher) education should be carried out in ways which attend to the needs of each individual and make sure that all students, independently of their background, progress swiftly onto their next step in education.

The effects of the disruption caused by the covid-19 pandemic will be felt for years to come, and support for those affected will be needed to minimise the effects. Therefore, research looking at the progression (not only to post-16 education, but to Higher Education as well) should continue in order to provide timely evidence to inform any mitigation efforts (whether educational interventions, guidance or adaptations to assessment) and make sure that no student is disadvantaged.

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Appendix A: Key Stage 5 learning aims

Table A1: Types of qualifications taken during Key Stage 5

Qualification	2019 cohort			2020 cohort		
	N	% (out of aims)	% (out of students)	N	% (out of aims)	% (out of students)
Applied Generals	75010	11.4	13.0	92069	13.1	15.4
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3	6915	1.1	1.2	7496	1.1	1.3
EPQ	21924	3.3	3.8	22603	3.2	3.8
GCE A level	434853	65.9	75.2	495278	70.3	82.8
GCE AS level	51297	7.8	8.9	34362	4.9	5.7
GCSE English	13602	2.1	2.4	8500	1.2	1.4
GCSE Maths	15830	2.4	2.7	12344	1.8	2.1
Other GQ Level 3	4924	0.8	0.9	4391	0.6	0.7
Other Level 1/Level 2	12230	1.9	2.1	10340	1.5	1.7
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3	13204	2.0	2.3	6657	1.0	1.1
T Levels	0	0.0	0.0	105	0.0	0.0
Tech Levels	7952	1.2	1.4	8873	1.3	1.5
Technical Certificates	1773	0.3	0.3	1363	0.2	0.2
Number of aims	*659514*			*704381*		
Number of Key Stage 4 students	*578530*			*598221*		
Number (%) of Key Stage 4 students with at least one Key Stage 5 aim	*203767 (35.2%)*			*220313 (36.8%)*		

Table A2: Number of aims per student (Key Stage 5)

Number of aims	2019 cohort		2020 cohort	
	N	%	N	%
1	7291	3.6	8475	3.9
2	16158	7.9	17021	7.7
3	109511	53.7	124961	56.7
4	63621	31.2	63146	28.7
5	6552	3.2	6097	2.8
6	440	0.2	410	0.2
7	103	0.1	176	0.1
8+	91	0.0	27	0.0

Table A3: Number of A levels per student (Key Stage 5)

Number of A levels	2019 cohort		2020 cohort	
	N	%	N	%
0	43590	21.4	38537	17.5
1	19357	9.5	21175	9.6
2	27071	13.3	31125	14.1
3	94044	46.2	106508	48.3
4	19313	9.5	22534	10.2
5+	392	0.2	434	0.2

Appendix B: Key Stage 5 learning aims, by students' characteristics

Table B1: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and gender

Qualification	Number of students				Percentage of students			
	2019 cohort		2020 cohort		2019 cohort		2020 cohort	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Applied Generals	39273	35737	47908	44161	52.4	47.6	52.0	48.0
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3	3415	3500	3658	3838	49.4	50.6	48.8	51.2
EPQ	12811	9113	13191	9412	58.4	41.6	58.4	41.6
GCE A level	234945	199908	266345	228933	54.0	46.0	53.8	46.2
GCE AS level	28638	22659	17793	16569	55.8	44.2	51.8	48.2
GCSE English	5126	8476	3017	5483	37.7	62.3	35.5	64.5
GCSE Maths	9651	6179	7216	5128	61.0	39.0	58.5	41.5
Other GQ Level 3	2585	2339	2136	2255	52.5	47.5	48.6	51.4
Other Level 1/Level 2	5686	6544	4361	5979	46.5	53.5	42.2	57.8
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3	6114	7090	3262	3395	46.3	53.7	49.0	51.0
T Levels	0	0	60	45	0.0	0.0	57.1	42.9
Tech Levels	2441	5511	2660	6213	30.7	69.3	30.0	70.0
Technical Certificates	797	976	566	797	45.0	55.0	41.5	58.5

Table B2: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and prior attainment - average GCSE and equivalent point score per entry (number of students)

Qualification	Number of students					
	2019 cohort			2020 cohort		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Applied Generals	14956	47662	12392	25066	53065	13938
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3	426	3220	3269	700	3518	3278
EPQ	547	6127	15249	880	7324	14399
GCE A level	8606	128837	297409	16128	167069	312081
GCE AS level	1067	14700	35530	1313	11317	21732
GCSE English	9274	4000	328	7152	1246	102
GCSE Maths	9677	5812	340	9283	2952	109
Other GQ Level 3	416	2020	2488	613	1673	2105
Other Level 1/Level 2	9615	1540	1075	8176	1234	930
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3	3619	7218	2366	1993	3068	1596
T Levels	0	0	0	28	-	-
Tech Levels	1929	4628	1395	2698	4787	1388
Technical Certificates	1563	188	22	1218	-	-

Table B3: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and prior attainment - students who achieved standard 9-4 passes in English and Maths GCSEs

Qualification	Number of students				Percentage of students			
	2019 cohort		2020 cohort		2019 cohort		2020 cohort	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Applied Generals	15325	59685	14581	77488	20.4	79.6	15.8	84.2
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3	277	6638	232	7264	4.0	96.0	3.1	96.9
EPQ	928	20996	843	21760	4.2	95.8	3.7	96.3
GCE A level	19405	415448	17476	477802	4.5	95.5	3.5	96.5
GCE AS level	2339	48958	1073	33289	4.6	95.4	3.1	96.9
GCSE English	10010	3592	6920	1580	73.6	26.4	81.4	18.6
GCSE Maths	15196	634	11763	581	96.0	4.0	95.3	4.7
Other GQ Level 3	478	4446	423	3968	9.7	90.3	9.6	90.4
Other Level 1/Level 2	9708	2522	7733	2607	79.4	20.6	74.8	25.2
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3	3660	9544	1423	5234	27.7	72.3	21.4	78.6
T Levels	0	0	14	91	0.0	0.0	13.3	86.7
Tech Levels	1877	6075	1621	7252	23.6	76.4	18.3	81.7
Technical Certificates	1507	266	1082	281	85.0	15.0	79.4	20.6

Table B4: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and socio-economic deprivation - IDACI (number of students)

Qualification	Number of students					
	2019 cohort			2020 cohort		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Applied Generals	23801	25340	24938	28810	30836	31338
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3	3143	2193	1433	3415	2343	1582
EPQ	10398	6805	4208	10657	6984	4406
GCE A level	192330	136804	95525	215057	154937	112991
GCE AS level	19431	17228	13365	11667	11850	10184
GCSE English	3115	4524	5760	1709	2834	3868
GCSE Maths	3499	5184	6888	2742	4030	5457
Other GQ Level 3	1848	1671	1266	1601	1520	1153
Other Level 1/Level 2	2410	3998	5645	2127	3371	4707
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3	3856	4469	4621	2150	2269	2058
T Levels	0	0	0	24	31	49
Tech Levels	2360	2686	2804	2551	2934	3292
Technical Certificates	282	612	869	224	487	642

Table B5: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and socio-economic deprivation (free school meals eligibility)

Qualification	Number of students				Percentage of students			
	2019 cohort		2020 cohort		2019 cohort		2020 cohort	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Applied Generals	56834	17385	70118	20989	76.6	23.4	77.0	23.0
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3	5810	970	6281	1075	85.7	14.3	85.4	14.6
EPQ	18871	2573	19410	2664	88.0	12.0	87.9	12.1
GCE A level	366930	58349	416906	66775	86.3	13.7	86.2	13.8
GCE AS level	42089	7985	28005	5722	84.1	15.9	83.0	17.0
GCSE English	9047	4383	5348	3075	67.4	32.6	63.5	36.5
GCSE Maths	10164	5448	7962	4288	65.1	34.9	65.0	35.0
Other GQ Level 3	4012	807	3559	718	83.3	16.7	83.2	16.8
Other Level 1/Level 2	7505	4573	6392	3832	62.1	37.9	62.5	37.5
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3	9895	3072	5078	1407	76.3	23.7	78.3	21.7
T Levels	0	0	73	31	0.0	0.0	70.2	29.8
Tech Levels	5997	1865	6677	2110	76.3	23.7	76.0	24.0
Technical Certificates	1091	672	802	551	61.9	38.1	59.3	40.7

Table B6: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and special educational needs (number of students)

Qualification	Number of students					
	2019 cohort			2020 cohort		
	EHCP	SEN statement	No SEN	EHCP	SEN statement	No SEN
Applied Generals	591	5224	68404	728	7299	83080
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3	36	363	6381	43	416	6897
EPQ	91	912	20441	120	1078	20876
GCE A level	2188	17779	405312	2383	21912	459386
GCE AS level	210	2104	47760	155	1444	32128
GCSE English	332	2330	10768	354	1773	6297
GCSE Maths	372	2429	12811	381	2283	9587
Other GQ Level 3	31	302	4486	40	270	3967
Other Level 1/Level 2	655	2366	9057	706	2330	7188
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3	151	1252	11564	97	709	5679
T Levels	0	0	0	0	14	90
Tech Levels	85	720	7057	130	942	7715
Technical Certificates	44	377	1342	53	278	1022

Table B7: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and ethnicity (number of students)

| Qualification | Number of students | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2019 cohort | | | | | | 2020 cohort | | | | | |
	Asian	Black	Chinese	White	Mixed	Other	Asian	Black	Chinese	White	Mixed	Other
Applied Generals	9238	5811	196	53150	3597	1432	11784	7646	220	63825	4539	1944
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3	829	346	21	5120	305	82	820	367	26	5615	349	91
EPQ	2860	956	156	15774	1105	328	2823	1087	138	16246	1171	372
GCE A level	61205	24766	3341	297880	23717	8991	71682	30554	3595	332135	28179	10971
GCE AS level	9294	4536	385	30961	2914	1422	7050	3346	276	19556	1990	1154
GCSE English	2022	1406	48	8700	677	409	1344	959	28	5160	490	330
GCSE Maths	2358	1950	11	9794	914	404	1786	1460	14	7682	784	358
Other GQ Level 3	352	266	36	3633	328	152	225	222	24	3270	338	134
Other Level 1/Level 2	1779	1297	21	7851	649	374	1522	1134	22	6508	571	353
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3	1051	924	26	9925	680	235	259	467	21	5130	434	99
T Levels	0	0	-	0	0	-	12	18	-	55	-	-
Tech Levels	832	605	31	5737	418	131	950	825	17	6205	502	156
Technical Certificates	419	180	-	1032	76	-	284	151	-	789	-	-

Table B8: Key Stage 5 aims, by qualification type and school type

Qualification	Number of students							
	2019 cohort				2020 cohort			
	Comprehensive	Secondary Modern	Selective	Independent	Comprehensive	Secondary Modern	Selective	Independent
Applied Generals	66993	4355	1522	690	82775	5457	1474	851
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3	5826	145	467	122	6335	157	509	124
EPQ	16706	573	3724	451	17492	665	3556	505
GCE A level	346483	11228	58250	9122	396951	13525	63498	11021
GCE AS level	43024	1465	5398	1183	29511	551	3586	600
GCSE English	12428	658	104	116	7819	418	21	27
GCSE Maths	14477	813	25	158	11357	632	10	44
Other GQ Level 3	2852	1083	892	93	2461	770	977	93
Other Level 1/Level 2	10851	619	279	81	9069	606	257	53
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3	11560	736	396	208	5699	367	119	151
T Levels	0	0	-	-	104	0	-	-
Tech Levels	7390	258	96	82	8196	397	72	74
Technical Certificates	1567	187	-	-	1192	146	-	-

Appendix C: Progression from GCSE to A levels

Table C1: Uptake of individual A level subjects - comparison between the 2020 and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts

A level subject	2019 cohort		2020 cohort		Change 2020 - 2019
	N	% (of students)	N	% (of students)	
English Literature	23137	4.0	22190	3.7	-0.3
French	4164	0.7	4241	0.7	0.0
Music Technology	616	0.1	628	0.1	0.0
Geology	250	0.0	251	0.0	0.0
Dance	615	0.1	631	0.1	0.0
Latin	242	0.0	248	0.0	0.0
Accounting/Finance	603	0.1	630	0.1	0.0
Italian	102	0.0	119	0.0	0.0
Electronics	120	0.0	138	0.0	0.0
Ancient History	148	0.0	177	0.0	0.0
Mathematics (Statistics)	91	0.0	149	0.0	0.0
Environmental Science	133	0.0	202	0.0	0.0
D&T Engineering	191	0.0	274	0.0	0.0
Art & Design (Textiles)	1035	0.2	1151	0.2	0.0
Classical Civilisation	828	0.1	989	0.2	0.0
English Language & Literature	3503	0.6	3762	0.6	0.0
Art & Design (3d Studies)	387	0.1	550	0.1	0.0
German	1455	0.3	1681	0.3	0.0
Art & Design (Graphics)	1623	0.3	1855	0.3	0.0
D&T Textiles Technology	685	0.1	886	0.1	0.0
Mathematics (Further)	9025	1.6	9529	1.6	0.0
Religious Studies	10382	1.8	10942	1.8	0.0
Unknown Mapping	36	0.0	252	0.0	0.0
Music	2072	0.4	2365	0.4	0.0
Art & Design	4789	0.8	5260	0.9	0.1
Logic/ Philosophy	1159	0.2	1505	0.3	0.1
Drama & Theatre Studies	5013	0.9	5509	0.9	0.1
Spanish	4321	0.7	4872	0.8	0.1
English Language	8663	1.5	9391	1.6	0.1
Film Studies	2728	0.5	3273	0.5	0.1
Art & Design (Photography)	5761	1.0	6438	1.1	0.1
Media/Film/TV Studies	8261	1.4	9158	1.5	0.1
Law	5000	0.9	5818	1.0	0.1
Art & Design (Fine Art)	6361	1.1	7334	1.2	0.1
Physics	23451	4.1	25323	4.2	0.2
Number of GCSE candidates		*577793*		*597895*	

Table C1 (continued): Uptake of individual A level subjects - comparison between the 2020 and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts

A level subject	2019 cohort		2020 cohort		Change 2020 - 2019
	N	% (of students)	N	% (of students)	
Physical Education/Sports Studies	6842	1.2	8202	1.4	0.2
D&T Product Design	5509	1.0	6882	1.2	0.2
History	26404	4.6	28908	4.8	0.3
Government & Politics	8931	1.5	11055	1.8	0.3
Computer Studies/Computing	7953	1.4	10064	1.7	0.3
Chemistry	31655	5.5	35077	5.9	0.4
Geography	20844	3.6	24252	4.1	0.4
Economics	17830	3.1	21350	3.6	0.5
Business Studies: Single	19215	3.3	22935	3.8	0.5
Mathematics	48863	8.5	54272	9.1	0.6
Sociology	24298	4.2	29427	4.9	0.7
Biology	37281	6.5	43308	7.2	0.8
Psychology	41567	7.2	51054	8.5	1.3
Number of GCSE candidates		*577793*		*597895*	

Table C2: Progression from GCSE to A level in the same subject - comparison between the 2020 and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts

GCSE / A level subject	2019 cohort		2020 cohort		Change (%)	With the GCSE subject (N)	
	N	%	N	%	2020 - 2019	2019	2020
English Literature	22390	4.4	21462	4.0	-0.3	513758	531328
Latin	238	2.7	227	2.5	-0.2	8765	8944
Art & Design (Photography)	1729	5.8	1990	5.8	0.0	29940	34493
French	3901	3.2	3944	3.2	0.0	121348	121771
English Language	8543	1.6	9218	1.6	0.1	546233	566776
Religious Studies	8450	4.1	8510	4.1	0.1	207827	205074
Film Studies	299	6.7	328	6.9	0.2	4474	4739
Art & Design	2667	4.6	2810	4.9	0.2	57783	57844
Spanish	3998	4.2	4483	4.4	0.3	96298	101253
Art & Design (Textiles)	492	5.3	589	5.7	0.4	9316	10371
Dance	426	4.8	450	5.3	0.4	8795	8511
History	25172	9.8	27766	10.2	0.5	257615	271208
German	1381	3.4	1590	4.0	0.6	40878	39984
Mathematics	48105	8.8	53342	9.4	0.6	546970	566032
Physics	18861	12.2	19886	12.8	0.7	155183	154886
Drama & Theatre Studies	4244	7.5	4668	8.2	0.7	56558	56629
Music	1858	5.5	2124	6.3	0.8	33602	33585
Art & Design (Fine Art)	4233	6.6	4908	7.5	0.9	64400	65859
Art & Design (3d Studies)	45	1.2	120	2.1	0.9	3800	5788
Geography	20282	8.2	23606	9.3	1.1	246963	252567
Chemistry	25397	16.3	27145	17.4	1.2	156076	155603
Classical Civilisation	142	4.2	206	5.8	1.5	3346	3568
Art & Design (Graphics)	605	7.1	745	8.7	1.6	8533	8606
Media/Film/TV Studies	2478	8.2	2813	9.9	1.8	30282	28333
Business Studies: Single	10221	11.8	12293	13.8	2.0	86439	89091
Physical Education/Sports Studies	5685	7.3	6726	9.3	2.0	77795	72131
Biology	26744	16.8	30190	19.0	2.2	159165	159084
Sociology	2844	14.1	3397	16.3	2.2	20205	20874
Computer Studies/Computing	6864	9.1	8550	11.6	2.5	75170	73845
Economics	1646	28.3	1925	31.3	2.9	5809	6159
Psychology	2476	17.7	2922	21.0	3.3	14004	13947

Appendix D: Progression from GCSE to Applied Generals

Table D1: Uptake of Applied Generals subject areas - comparison between the 2020 and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts

Applied General subject area	2019		2020		Change 2020 - 2019
	N	% (students)	N	% (students)	
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	81	0.0	100	0.0	0.0
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	624	0.1	808	0.1	0.0
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	986	0.2	1580	0.3	0.1
Information and Communication Technology	5393	0.9	6197	1.0	0.1
Arts, Media and Publishing	6564	1.1	7491	1.3	0.1
Science and Mathematics	9282	1.6	10842	1.8	0.2
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	9987	1.7	12499	2.1	0.4
Health, Public Services and Care	13537	2.3	16852	2.8	0.5
Business, Administration and Law	21211	3.7	24810	4.2	0.5
Social Sciences	5919	1.0	9075	1.5	0.5
Number of GCSE candidates		*577793*		*597895*	

Table D2: Progression from GCSE to Applied Generals in the same subject area - comparison between the 2020 and the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohorts

GCSE / Applied General subject area	2019		2020		Change (%)	With the GCSE subject (N)	
	N	%	N	%	2020 - 2019	2019	2020
Arts, Media and Publishing	3876	1.3	4254	1.4	0.1	307519	314831
Information and Communication Technology	1555	2.1	1677	2.3	0.2	75170	73845
Social Sciences	2719	1.0	4247	1.5	0.5	272977	279600
Science and Mathematics	2340	0.5	10788	1.0	0.5	484741	1049966
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	4224	5.4	4326	6.0	0.6	77795	72131
Business, Administration and Law	5091	5.9	6311	7.1	1.2	86439	89091

Appendix E: Key Stage 5 withdrawn and transferred learning aims

Table E1: Withdrawn and transferred learning aims, by type of qualification and Key Stage 4 cohort

Qualification	Withdrawn				Transferred			
	2019 cohort		2020 cohort		2019 cohort		2020 cohort	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Applied Generals	2046	12.0	1848	13.2	3000	12.7	3043	14.4
Core Maths Qualifications at Level 3	295	1.7	318	2.3	350	1.5	286	1.4
EPQ	598	3.5	656	4.7	583	2.5	505	2.4
GCE A level	10822	63.4	9315	66.7	16168	68.2	14704	69.5
GCE AS level	1328	7.8	644	4.6	2066	8.7	1493	7.1
GCSE English	535	3.1	206	1.5	106	0.5	118	0.6
GCSE Maths	474	2.8	283	2.0	142	0.6	126	0.6
Other GQ Level 3	81	0.5	75	0.5	150	0.6	153	0.7
Other Level 1/Level 2	335	2.0	305	2.2	352	1.5	331	1.6
Other VTQ/VRQ Level 3	318	1.9	124	0.9	490	2.1	112	0.5
Tech Levels	170	1.0	159	1.1	257	1.1	236	1.1
Technical Certificates	68	0.4	30	0.2	49	0.2	54	0.3

Table E2: Withdrawn A level learning aims, by subject and Key Stage 4 cohort (only subjects with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort)

A level subject	2019 cohort			2020 cohort			Difference
	N withdrawn	N (all aims)	% withdrawn	N withdrawn	N (all aims)	% withdrawn	2020-2019
Drama & Theatre Studies	102	5297	1.9	114	5754	2.0	0.1
Spanish	112	4632	2.4	121	5173	2.3	-0.1
Art & Design (Photography)	123	6106	2.0	125	6769	1.8	-0.2
Mathematics	931	51160	1.8	867	56569	1.5	-0.3
Sociology	640	25966	2.5	669	31087	2.2	-0.3
D&T Product Design	112	5812	1.9	113	7158	1.6	-0.3
Media/Film/TV Studies	198	8832	2.2	182	9637	1.9	-0.4
Physics	491	24715	2.0	429	26439	1.6	-0.4
Computer Studies/Computing	140	8376	1.7	136	10462	1.3	-0.4
Physical Education /Sports Studies	159	7309	2.2	153	8566	1.8	-0.4
Art & Design	108	5056	2.1	92	5513	1.7	-0.5
Chemistry	645	33114	1.9	536	36350	1.5	-0.5
Biology	815	39409	2.1	708	45112	1.6	-0.5
Psychology	1161	44268	2.6	1128	53737	2.1	-0.5
English Language	283	9468	3.0	248	10163	2.4	-0.5
French	137	4503	3.0	111	4532	2.4	-0.6
History	611	27861	2.2	473	30203	1.6	-0.6
Economics	482	19103	2.5	423	22486	1.9	-0.6
Geography	513	22032	2.3	423	25290	1.7	-0.7
English Literature	676	24984	2.7	460	23507	2.0	-0.7
Business Studies: Single	503	20406	2.5	408	23950	1.7	-0.8
Law	133	5358	2.5	103	6129	1.7	-0.8
Government & Politics	294	9705	3.0	255	11813	2.2	-0.9
English Language & Literature	126	3831	3.3	93	4029	2.3	-1.0
Mathematics (Further)	328	9637	3.4	240	10088	2.4	-1.0
Art & Design (Fine Art)	188	6765	2.8	132	7679	1.7	-1.1
Religious Studies	403	11441	3.5	256	11708	2.2	-1.3

Table E3: Transferred A level learning aims, by subject and Key Stage 4 cohort (only subjects with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort)

A level subject	2019 cohort			2020 cohort			Difference
	N transferred	N (all aims)	% transferred	N transferred	N (all aims)	% transferred	2020-2019
Mathematics (Further)	280	9637	2.9	318	10088	3.2	0.2
Mathematics	1362	51160	2.7	1414	56569	2.5	-0.2
Art & Design	141	5056	2.8	141	5513	2.6	-0.2
English Language	512	9468	5.4	521	10163	5.1	-0.3
Art & Design (Fine Art)	213	6765	3.1	210	7679	2.7	-0.4
Chemistry	811	33114	2.4	728	36350	2.0	-0.4
French	200	4503	4.4	180	4532	4.0	-0.5
Physics	758	24715	3.1	684	26439	2.6	-0.5
History	844	27861	3.0	749	30203	2.5	-0.5
Psychology	1536	44268	3.5	1552	53737	2.9	-0.6
Art & Design (Photography)	222	6106	3.6	206	6769	3.0	-0.6
Government & Politics	480	9705	4.9	503	11813	4.3	-0.7
Geography	672	22032	3.1	589	25290	2.3	-0.7
Sociology	1026	25966	4.0	991	31087	3.2	-0.8
Spanish	196	4632	4.2	179	5173	3.5	-0.8
Law	224	5358	4.2	208	6129	3.4	-0.8
Business Studies: Single	687	20406	3.4	607	23950	2.5	-0.8
Film Studies	111	2906	3.8	101	3419	3.0	-0.9
Computer Studies/Computing	282	8376	3.4	261	10462	2.5	-0.9
Biology	1271	39409	3.2	1059	45112	2.3	-0.9
D&T Product Design	186	5812	3.2	161	7158	2.2	-1.0
Economics	786	19103	4.1	711	22486	3.2	-1.0
Media/Film/TV Studies	357	8832	4.0	297	9637	3.1	-1.0
English Language & Literature	202	3831	5.3	173	4029	4.3	-1.0
Drama & Theatre Studies	174	5297	3.3	131	5754	2.3	-1.0
English Literature	1165	24984	4.7	850	23507	3.6	-1.0
Religious Studies	655	11441	5.7	510	11708	4.4	-1.4
Physical Education /Sports Studies	307	7309	4.2	210	8566	2.5	-1.7
Logic/ Philosophy	112	1313	8.5	90	1629	5.5	-3.0

Table E4: Withdrawn Applied General learning aims, by subject area and Key Stage 4 cohort (only subject areas with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort)

Subject area	2019 cohort			2020 cohort			Difference
	N withdrawn	N (all aims)	% withdrawn	N withdrawn	N (all aims)	% withdrawn	2020-2019
Business, Administration and Law	567	22896	2.5	487	26555	1.8	-0.6
Health, Public Services and Care	448	15005	3.0	374	18379	2.0	-1.0
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	292	10935	2.7	262	13481	1.9	-0.7
Science and Mathematics	261	10320	2.5	249	11930	2.1	-0.4
Arts, Media and Publishing	147	7033	2.1	126	7931	1.6	-0.5
Social Sciences	145	6273	2.3	181	9456	1.9	-0.4
Information and Communication Technology	133	5752	2.3	123	6626	1.9	-0.5

Table E5: Transferred Applied General learning aims, by subject area and Key Stage 4 cohort (only subject areas with counts over 100 in the 2019 Key Stage 4 cohort)

Subject area	2019 cohort			2020 cohort			Difference
	N transferred	N (all aims)	% transferred	N transferred	N (all aims)	% transferred	2020-2019
Business, Administration and Law	817	22896	3.6	785	26555	3.0	-0.6
Science and Mathematics	541	10320	5.2	480	11930	4.0	-1.2
Health, Public Services and Care	473	15005	3.2	641	18379	3.5	0.3
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	435	10935	4.0	458	13481	3.4	-0.6
Arts, Media and Publishing	247	7033	3.5	227	7931	2.9	-0.6
Information and Communication Technology	215	5752	3.7	255	6626	3.8	0.1
Social Sciences	177	6273	2.8	140	9456	1.5	-1.3