

Post-16 qualifications and access to university

Paul Martin and Fiona Grundy

Thursday 14th October 2021



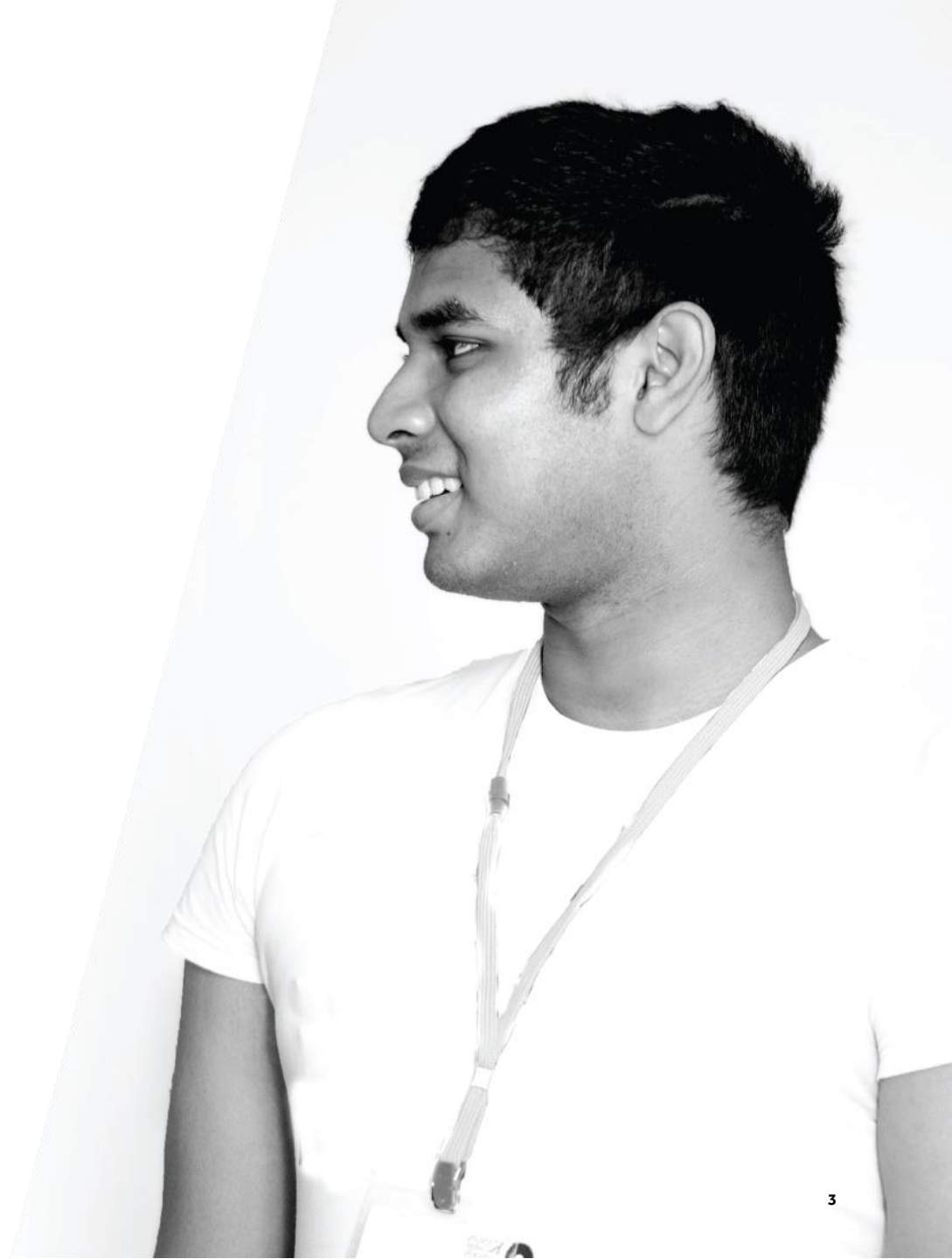
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Coming up...

- The Government's plan for reforming post-16 qualifications
- Level 3 technical qualifications
- Academic post-16 qualifications
- Supporting students to make the right choices at age 16





Planned reforms of post-16 qualifications

Planned reforms to post-16 qualifications in England

Key points

- The information we present comes predominantly from the Government's Policy Statement "Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England" which was published by the DfE in July 2021 ([hyperlink](#) below)
- The goals of this review were to try to streamline the system and create clearly defined academic and technical routes
- "We are revolutionising the system so we can move past the outdated notion that A levels are the only option for the best and brightest students, and that there is only one route up the career ladder."



Government view of technical versus academic routes

Quotes from the policy statement:

- "Many students will take different routes through the system, some taking technical options when they previously had taken academic"
- "Others who previously went on to undergraduate degrees will go on to higher technical qualifications, higher apprenticeships or straight into skilled employment"
- "Higher education will continue to play a vital role in our economy, society and culture but we must move away from an assumption that undergraduate degrees should automatically be the goal of post-16 study"





Level 3 technical qualifications

Level 3 technical qualifications

T Levels

Prestigious technical alternative to A levels providing direct entry into occupations and progression to further and higher education.

Occupational-entry qualifications

Qualifications providing entry to occupations. These will be funded for adults, and for 16 to 19 year olds where an occupation is not served by T Levels.

Other level 3 technical qualifications

These technical qualifications will build on or are derived from the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in occupational standards.

“We will align the vast majority of post-16 technical qualifications to employer-led occupational standards by the end of the decade. Employer-led occupational standards were originally developed for apprenticeships, but they will also now form the basis of technical qualifications, starting with T Levels and Higher Technical Qualifications”

Over to you!



In the chat, tell us what you know so far about T levels

You could consider:

- What subjects are available now, and in future?
- How much time will students spend on work placements?
- Can students take a mix of T levels and A levels?

 3 minutes



What are T levels?

- T levels are two year Level 3 courses which will be equivalent to three A levels
- They will offer students a mixture of classroom learning and 'on-the-job' experience during an industry placement of at least 315 hours (approximately 45 days)
- They started on a small scale in 2020, and all courses will be available by 2024



T level subject strands – currently available

- building services engineering for construction
- design, surveying and planning for construction
- digital business services
- digital production, design and development
- digital support and services
- education and childcare
- health
- healthcare science
- onsite construction
- science

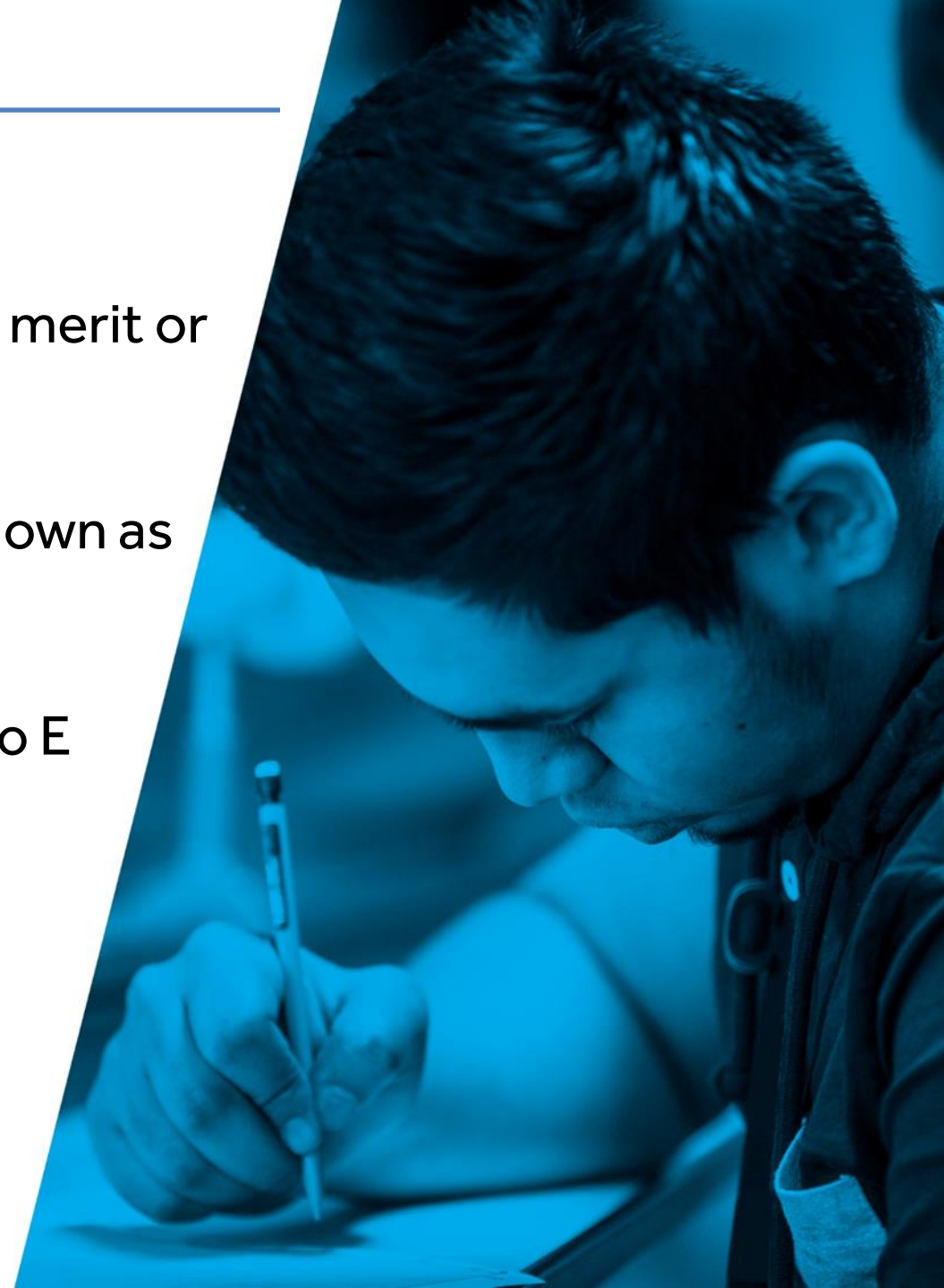
T level subject strands – coming in future

- accounting
- agriculture, land management and production
- animal care and management
- catering
- craft and design
- design and development for engineering and manufacturing
- finance
- hair, beauty and aesthetics
- human resources
- legal
- maintenance, installation and repair for engineering and manufacturing
- management and administration
- engineering, manufacturing, processing and control
- media, broadcast and production

T level grading

The T Level certificate will include:

- an overall pass grade for the T Level, shown as pass, merit or distinction
- a separate grade for the occupational specialism, shown as pass, merit or distinction
- a separate grade for the core component, using A* to E
- grades for maths and English qualifications
- details of the industry placement



What about BTEC qualifications?

It's currently very common for students to take BTEC qualifications at Level 3, such as:

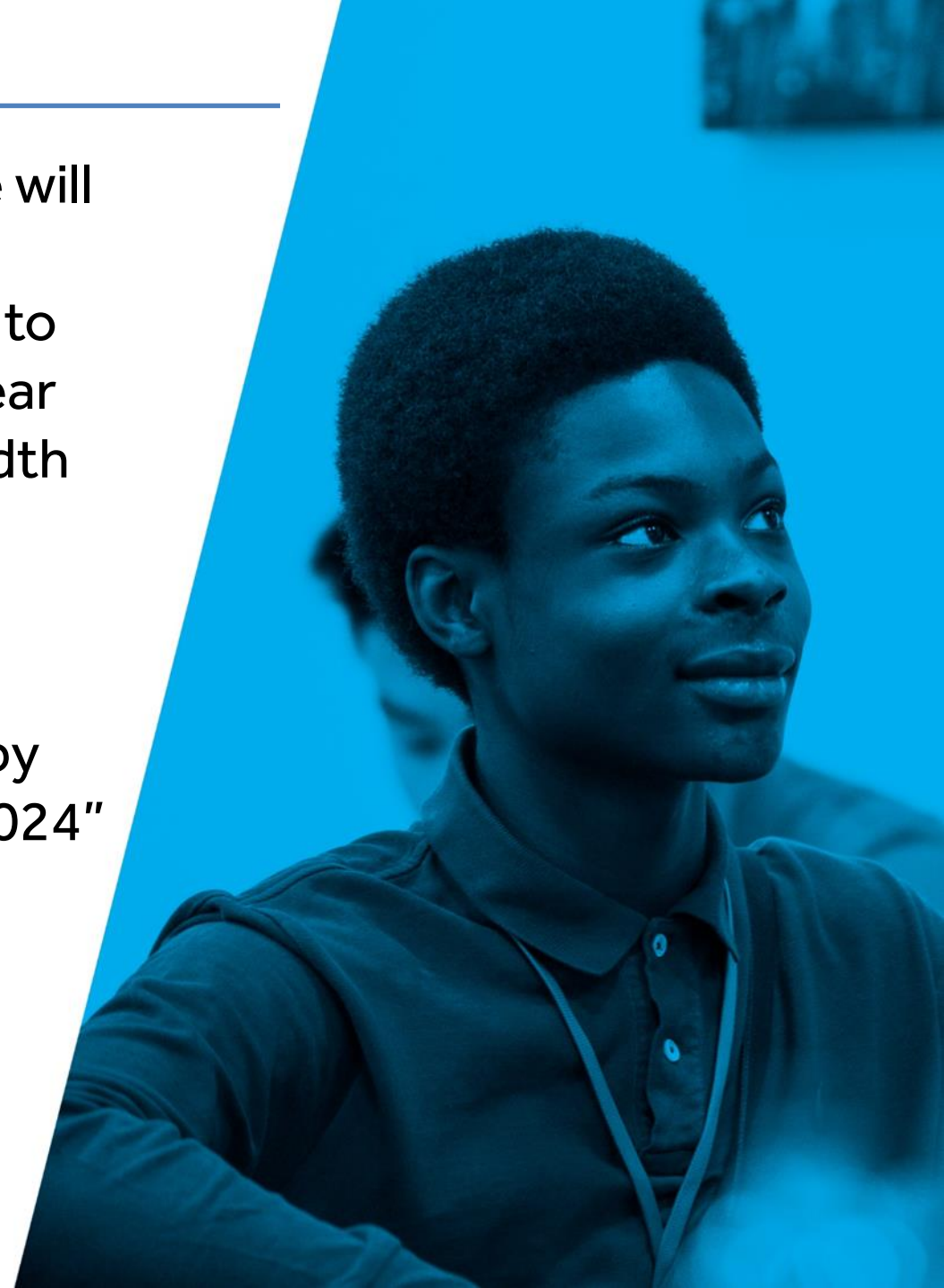
- BTEC subsidiary diploma (equivalent to one A level)
- BTEC diploma (equivalent to two A levels)
- BTEC extended diploma (equivalent to three A levels)

Fairly recently, BTEC qualifications were redesigned and more external assessment was introduced. It is also not uncommon for students to take these qualifications alongside A levels.



What about BTEC qualifications?

- “As each T Level becomes available nationwide, we will remove 16-19 funding approval from technical qualifications that overlap with them. This will help to simplify the market and ensure as many 16 to 19 year olds as possible benefit from the high quality, breadth and depth offered by T Levels.”
- “Funding approval for existing qualifications that overlap with wave 1 and 2 T levels will be removed by August 2023, for wave 3 and 4 this will be August 2024”



What about BTEC qualifications?



“Driving students to do T-levels and enforcing a binary divide between academic and vocational courses at the age of 16 is a mistake. BTECs straddle that divide and are popular with 250,000 students doing them every year. It would be a great error to remove funding for them to force students onto T-levels. My proposed amendment to the Skills Bill requires consultation with employer representatives before any such qualifications lose their funding.”

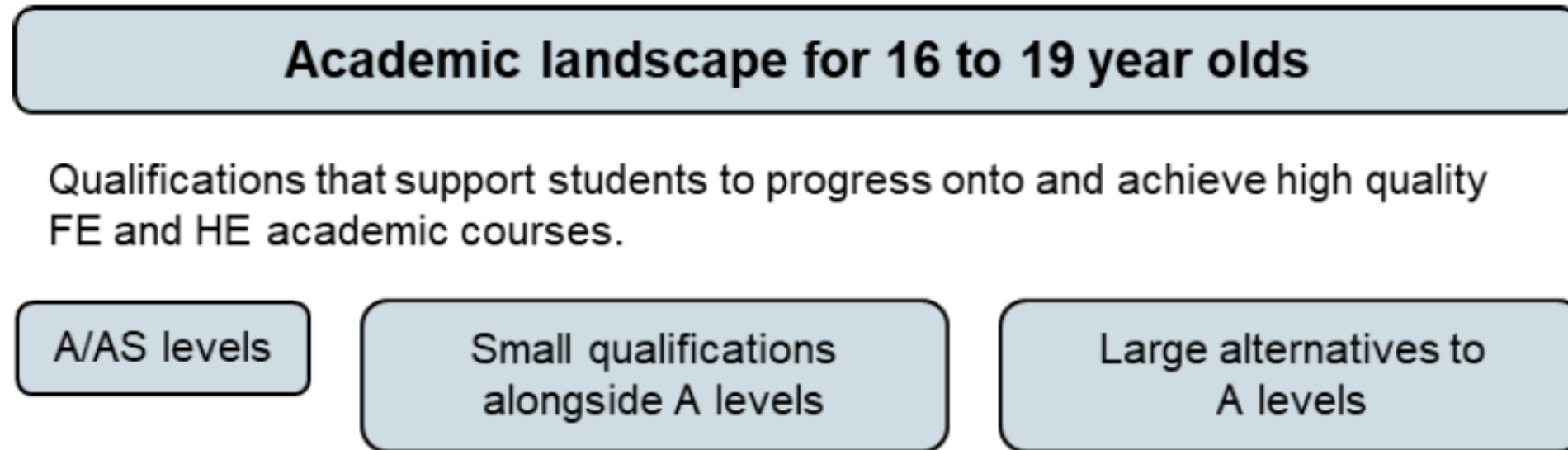
David Willetts, member of the House of Lords



Level 3 academic qualifications

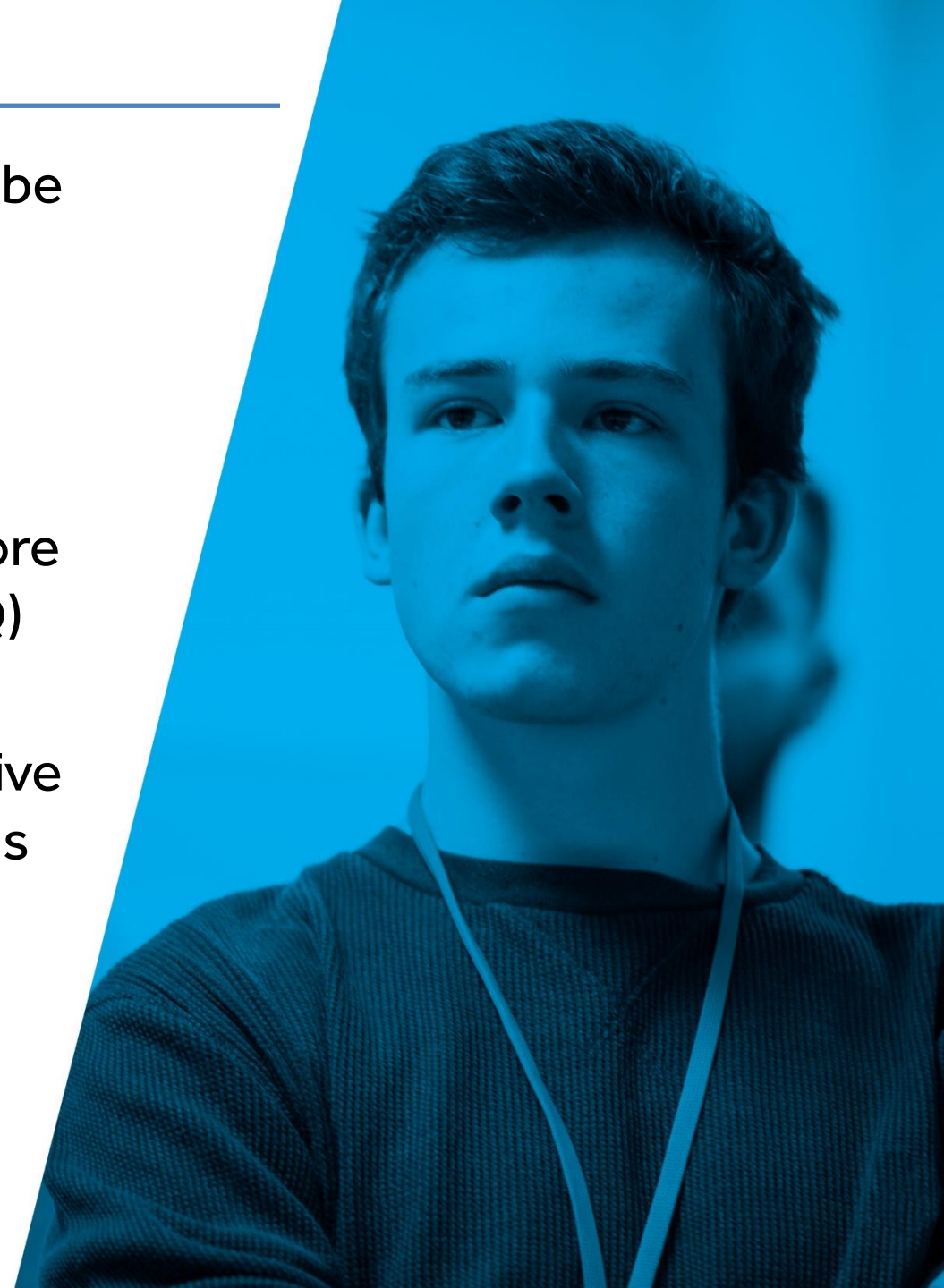
Academic qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds

Figure 4: Diagram showing the academic qualifications that we will fund in future for 16 to 19 year olds:



Level 3 academic qualifications

- **A levels:** "These world renowned qualifications will be central to the study programmes of most students taking the academic pathways to progress to university"
- **Small qualifications alongside A levels:** such as Core Maths and the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)
- **Large alternatives to A levels:** Could include creative and performing arts courses, or alternatives such as the International Baccalaureate or Access to HE diplomas



A levels

Key points

- AS levels are much less common than they used to be
- There can be a varied picture as to whether students are taking three or four A levels
- University offers are based on three A levels only
- Further Maths is typically taken as a fourth A level subject



Small qualifications alongside A levels

Such as...

- **Core Maths** – term to refer to a group of different qualifications. They are typically the same size as an AS qualification
- **Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)** – designed to extend students' abilities beyond the A level syllabus. Students lead their own projects and carry out research on a chosen topic



Large alternatives to A level

- **International Baccalaureate** – This is a very well-established and widely recognised alternative to A levels. However it is uncommon for students in UK state schools to take this
- **Access to HE** – popular with mature students who wish to go to university but don't have the necessary qualifications

On the way out...

- **Cambridge Pre-U** - launched in 2008 as an alternative to A levels but will be phased out by 2023

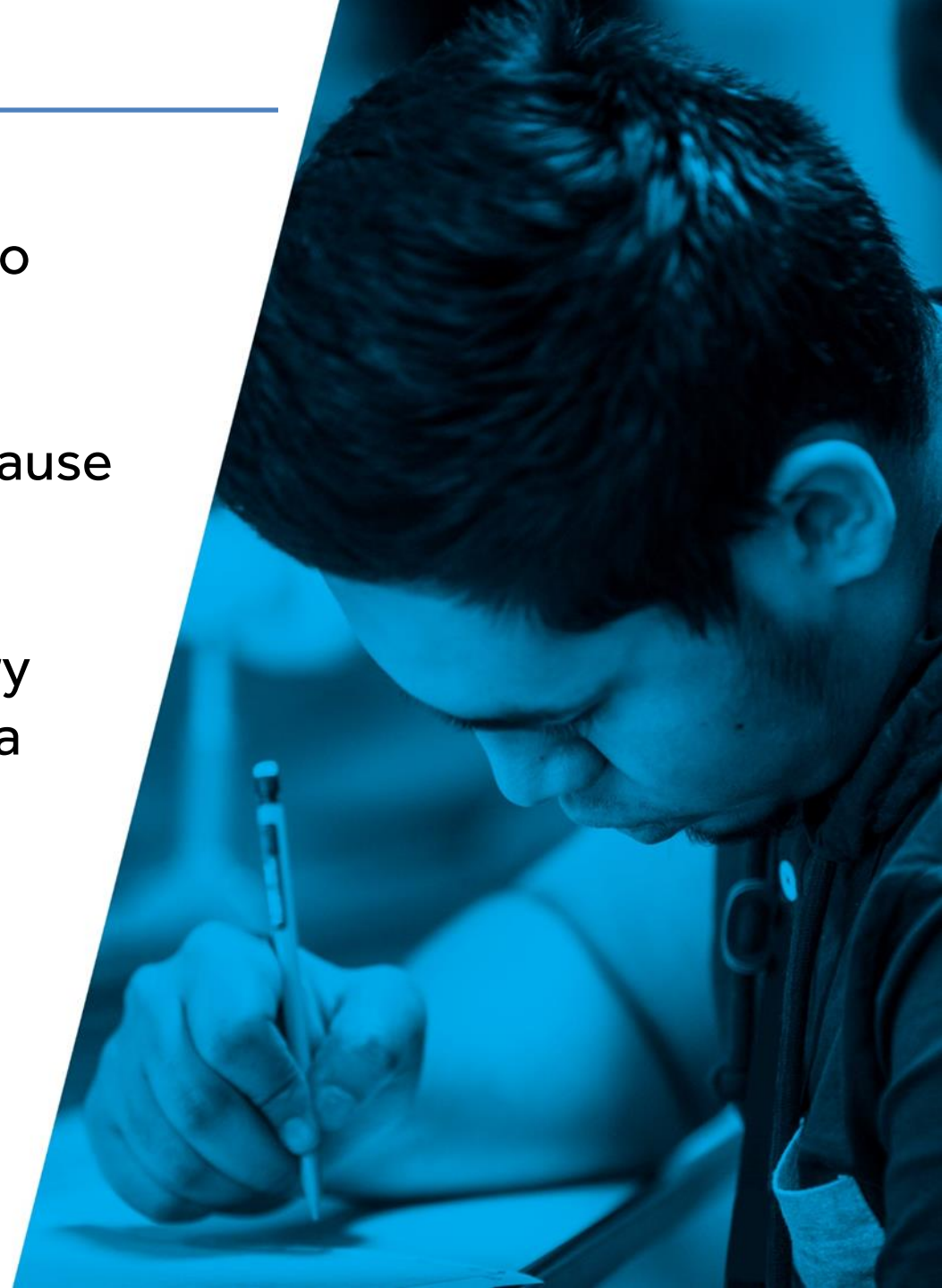




Helping students to
make the right
choices

Academic or technical?

- If a student has a very particular career in mind, a specific technical qualification could enable them to reach their career goals quickly
- However, if students specialise too early this can cause problems if they change their mind
- Academic qualifications such as A levels can be very versatile, and students might then progress down a more technical route later if they wish to



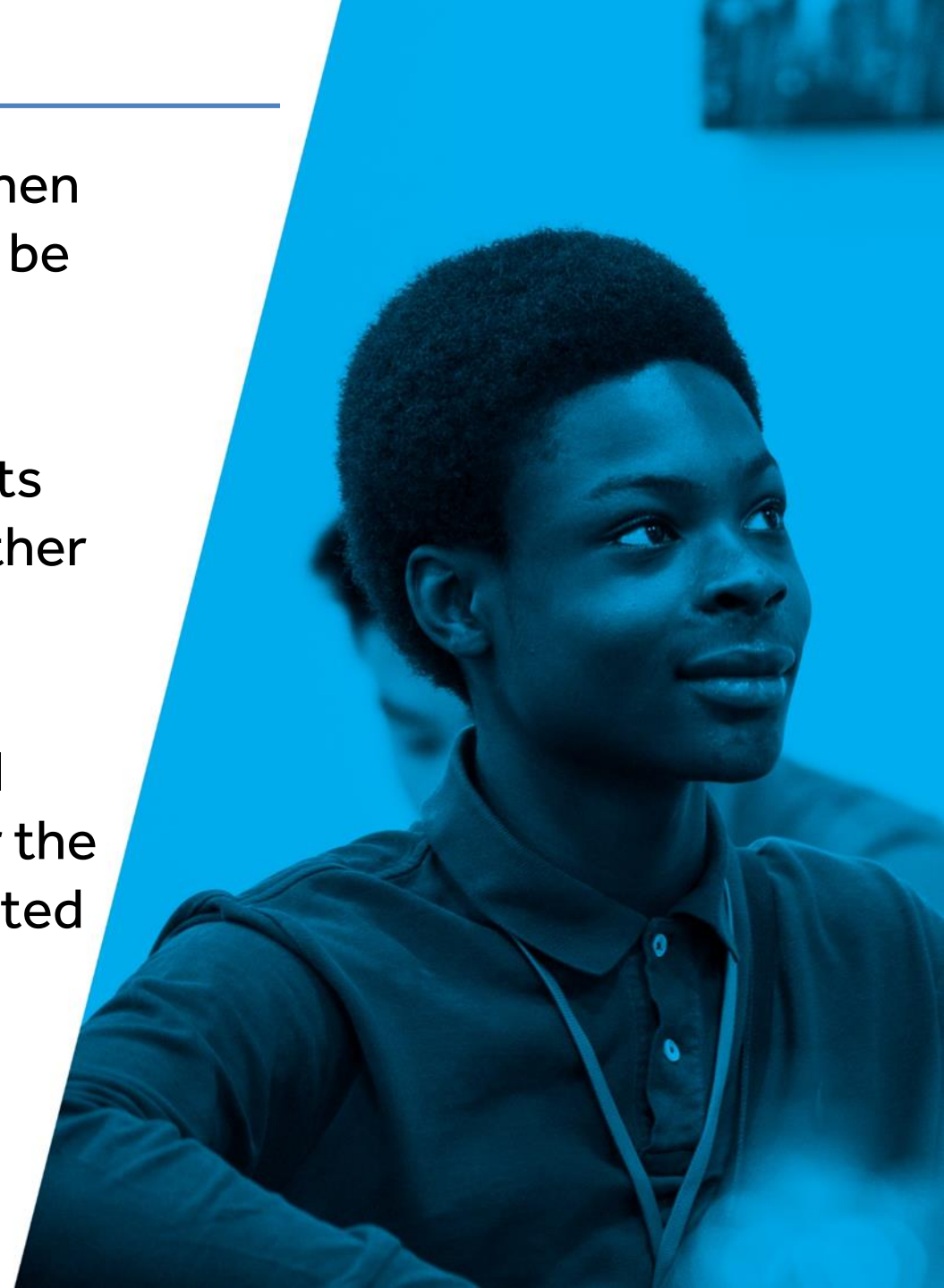
Technical qualifications and university entry

- Most Russell Group universities admit students with BTEC qualifications
- However, the content of the BTEC qualification typically needs to be related to the degree subject which the student is applying for
- Universities may be quite specific in their entry requirements and ask for particular grades in particular units of a BTEC qualification



Will universities accept T levels?

- If students are sure they want to go to university, then choosing an academic option such as A level might be the wisest move
- Technical qualifications can help to prepare students for the workplace, though they can also lead to further study too
- Not all universities have been clear on how they will treat T levels in their admissions process. However the information so far suggests that they could be treated in a similar way to BTEC qualifications



T levels and Russell Group universities

“T-Levels are not considered appropriate preparation for the Cambridge Engineering degree and are therefore not accepted for entry. Applicants with a mix of qualifications should contact a College admissions office for advice.”

University of Cambridge

“Candidates with vocational or technical qualifications equivalent to A-levels (including T-Levels) are welcome to apply, although candidates may need to take additional academic qualifications to make a competitive application.”

University of Oxford

“The University of Warwick welcomes the development T-level qualifications as a new technical route into Higher Education. We believe they could be of particular interest to learners wishing to further their academic and professional development through our Degree Apprenticeship programmes. Applicants with T-levels will be given full and fair consideration when applying to Warwick and have equal opportunities to those applying with other recognised qualifications.”

University of Warwick

Information, advice and guidance

Will Russell Group universities accept T levels?

8 September, 2021 ⌚ 6 minutes



Paul Martin
Advancing Access Project Manager

The Government is currently in the process of reforming level 3 qualifications in England and new T Level qualifications are seen as the centrepiece of these reforms. But what are T Levels? And will students who take them be able to progress to Russell Group universities?



[Link to blog](#)

A level subject choice



Take a moment to think about the factors a student should consider when making A level subject choices.

Think about:

- What information do you provide to learners?
- What advice do you provide to students who aren't sure?
- How could you improve the advice offered?

 3 minutes



Choosing the right A levels

Key points

- Students should choose subjects that they're interested in and they enjoy
- At the same time, some subjects are prerequisites for degree courses
- Some students may believe a particular subject choice will give them an advantage e.g. (A-level Law)
- The term "facilitating subject" is no longer used



Should students choose additional academic qualifications alongside A levels?

- Core Maths may be useful for students who intend to study a course with a quantitative component, e.g. psychology, social sciences, business studies, geography etc.
- The EPQ is excellent preparation for the independent study which is required at university and some students with a good grade may receive a lower A level grade offer



Russell Group Informed Choices

Accounting	Ancient History	Arabic	Archaeology	Art & Design *	Bengali	Biblical Hebrew
Classical Greek	Computing / Computer Science	Critical Thinking	Dance	Design Technology **	Drama & Theatre Studies	Dutch
English Literature	Environmental Science	Food Technology	French	Further Mathematics	General Studies	Geography
History	History of Art	ICT	Italian	Japanese	Latin	Law
Music	Music Technology	Performing Arts	Persian	Philosophy	Physics	Polish

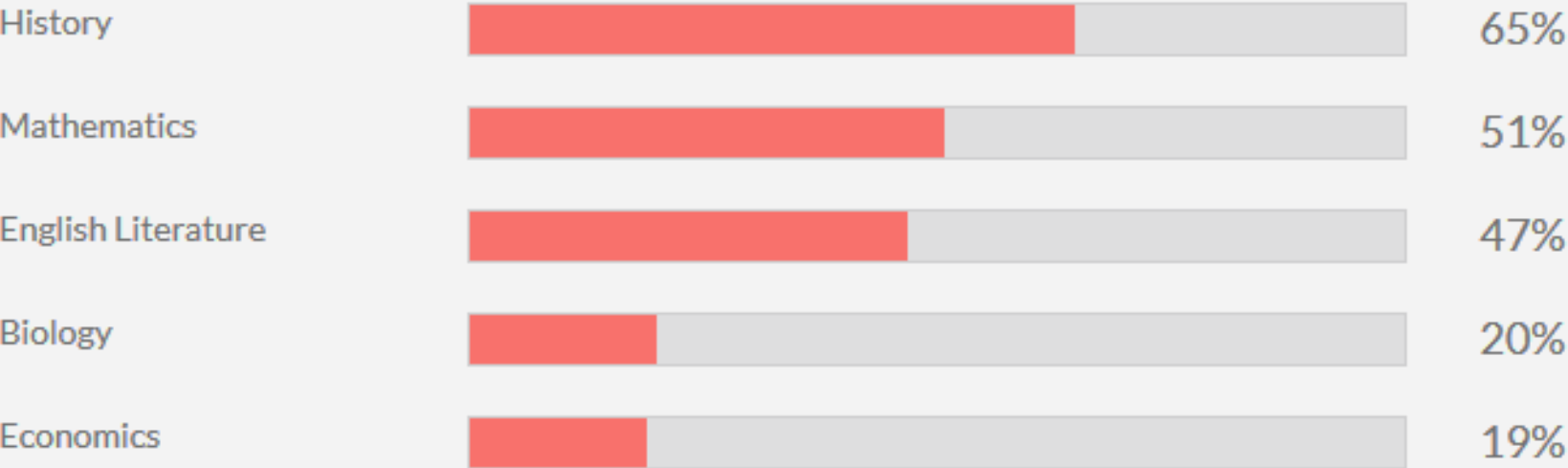
www.informedchoices.ac.uk

Previous study ?

DATA SOURCE: [HESA](#)

Law

Top 5 A-levels taken by students who study this subject at uni

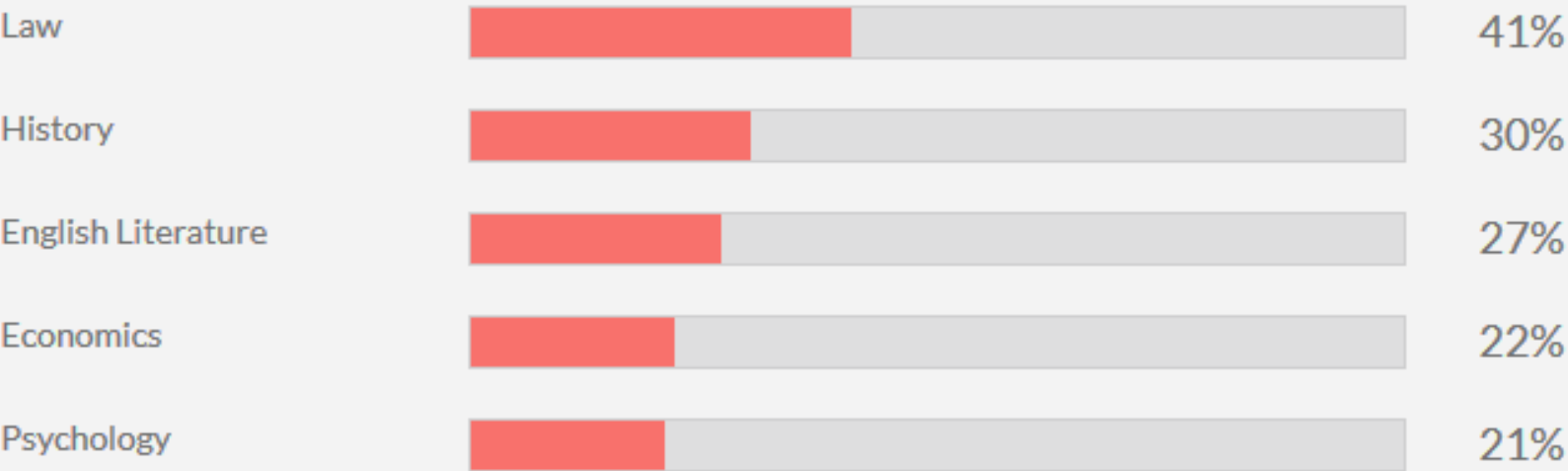


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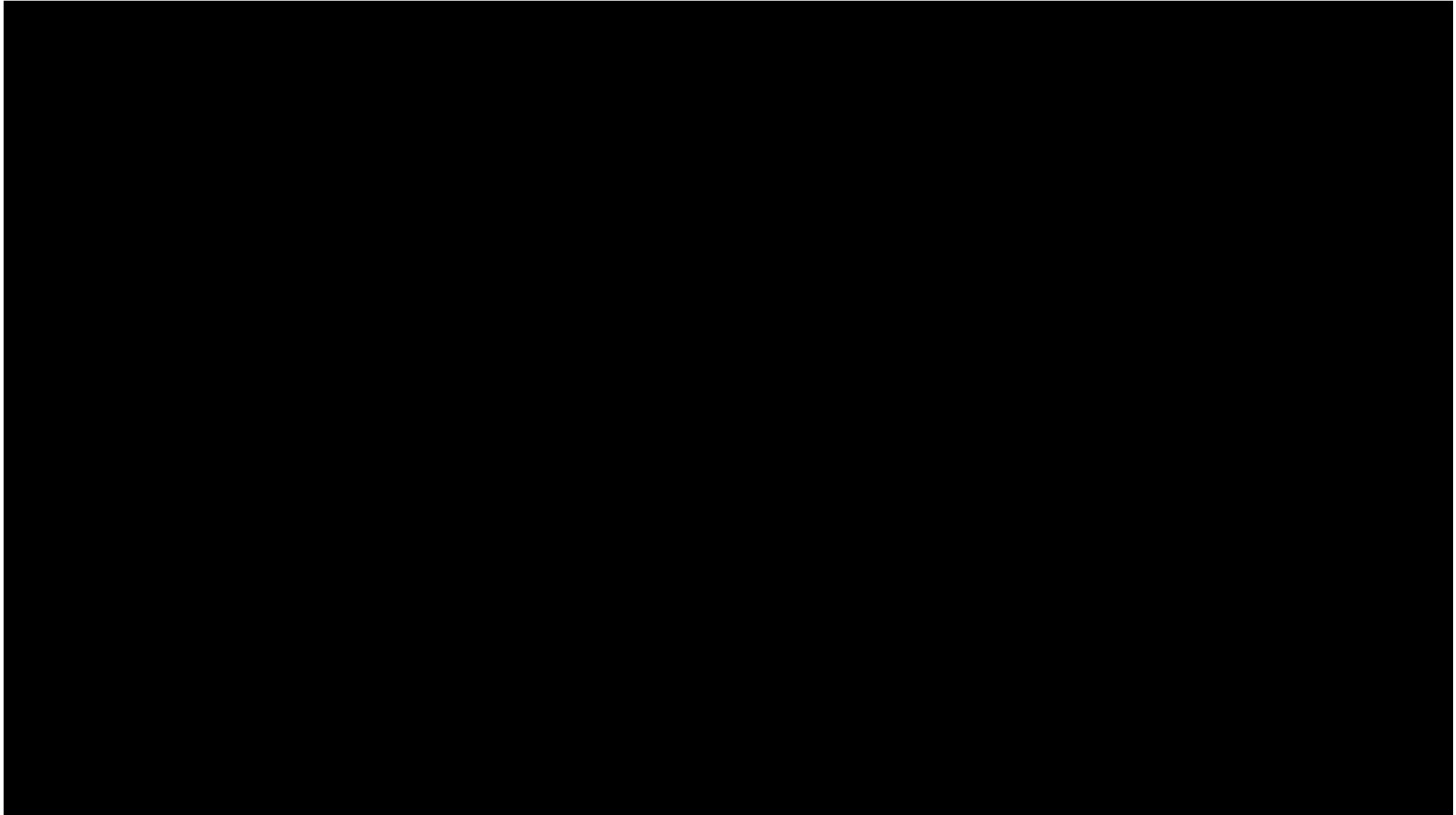


Other useful resources

- The [LMI for all](#) widget is a useful tool for exploring the future jobs market with your students
- The [National Careers Service](#) is useful for students who have a clear idea of what job they'd like to do. They can then work their way back to see which qualifications they need
- [Discover Uni](#) now contains fascinating statistics from "LEO" data where students can look up a particular degree course and see what the average earnings are both 6 months and 3 years after graduation



Advancing Access case study videos



Two apps make good use of “LEO” data...

- TheWayUp! - <https://www.thewayup.co.uk/>
- thinkuni - <https://www.thinkuni.org/>
- UCAS careers quiz - www.ucas.com/careers/careers-quiz

TheWayUp!

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An innovative new game that helps students make better, more informed choices about their future!

Using real-world data, it gamifies important life decisions including A-levels, apprenticeships and university course choices. Based upon these decisions, the game then simulates the occupations available to players and the first five years of their graduate lives!

Funded by The Department for Education, *TheWayUp!* is a fun and engaging app that provides up-to-date information on the long-term consequences of education and career choices.

UCAS

CAREERS QUIZ
Discover your ideal job



Questions?

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