

Historical Association

Survey of History in Schools in England 2017

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1. Summary

1.1 Data on which this report is based

This survey was conducted during the summer term 2017. Responses were received from 313 history teachers working in 287 different schools, including 217 non-selective state funded schools (comprehensive schools, academies and free schools), 18 grammar schools, 45 independent schools, and five sixth-form colleges. Given that four-fifths of respondents (82%) had been teaching for more than five years and over half (55%) were heads of history department, the opinions presented tend to be those of experienced practitioners.

1.2 Key Stage 3 history

Continuing impact of the revised National Curriculum

Most state-maintained schools (78%) report that their Key Stage 3 curriculum is at least 'broadly compliant' with the National Curriculum for history, and this proportion is little different from that reported two years ago, suggesting that academies and free schools are not generally taking advantage of the freedom open to them to devise their own curriculum (although selective schools may be slightly more willing to do so). Nonetheless, it is clear that the National Curriculum operates more as an advisory framework than a shared programme of study.

Approaches to assessment at Key Stage 3

Two years ago most schools were still working with some form of assessment system linked to the previous (National Curriculum) level descriptors. These approaches have largely been abandoned now. While around one-fifth of schools report that they have devised a system that still relies on level descriptors of some kind, and another 29% claim to be using a 'different system', the most significant influence on assessment appears to have been the introduction of the new GCSE specifications. Within non-selective state-funded secondary schools, 44% report that they are now using a system of assessment at Key Stage 3 that is based on GCSE grading.

The impact of GCSE on Key Stage 3 assessment, content and length

The impact of the new GCSE specifications is also being felt in a variety of other ways, with most schools of all kinds reporting that their teaching at Key Stage 3 has been influenced in relation to the kinds of questions that they ask students to tackle (77%); the way in which they use sources (64%); and the way in which they introduce students to different historical interpretations (61%). History departments are also influenced by the content of the new GCSE specifications. While around a quarter of schools report that they are deliberately seeking to *avoid* content repetition, a majority (53%) report that they are choosing Key Stage 3 content to provide necessary background for the topics that students will study at GCSE. A significant minority (44%) explain that their approach also

goes further than this, in that they are deliberately constructing a curriculum that will allow them to *revisit*, at GCSE, topics that students have already studied at Key Stage 3.

The nature of the GCSE specifications also has an influence on the ways in which content is framed, in that around one-third of schools (36%) report that they have deliberately chosen to tackle history on different timescales within the Key Stage 3 curriculum, including some study units or schemes of work that examine particular topics or periods in depth, others that span a broader period and at least one that encompasses a wide sweep of time (reflecting the depth, breadth and development studies required in all GCSEs). It is interesting to note, however, that inclusion of the study of the 'historic environment' at GCSE does not seem to have exerted such an influence, in that only 19% of schools report teaching about the history of a particular locality. (This is despite the fact that a local history study unit is officially included within the National Curriculum).

Of more concern is the influence of the new GCSEs in prompting more schools to reduce the length of their Key Stage 3 curriculum. The proportion of respondents overall reporting that they now allocate only two years to Key Stage 3 is 44%, which represents a 9% increase on last year's figure of 32%. When asked *specifically* about whether the introduction of the new specifications had *altered* their allocation of time to Key Stage 3, 16% of comprehensives, academies and free schools reported that they had either reduced Key Stage 3 to two years, or that they had decided to start GCSEs part-way through Year 9, and a further 13% were planning to do so. The respective proportions were higher in grammar schools, at 12% and 25% respectively. In both cases another 11% of respondents reported that their schools were considering making similar sorts of changes. This is a matter of profound regret to the Historical Association since changes of this kind have a significant impact on young people's access to history by reducing the period of secondary education in which the subject is taught to *all* young people.

1. 3 GCSE

Teachers' responses to the new GCSE specifications

Analysis of teachers' concerns about the new GCSE specifications makes it very clear why more and more schools are concluding Key Stage 3 early and allocating more time to GCSE: 75% of respondents regard the amount of content to be covered as essentially unmanageable. They have even more concerns about the suitability of the courses for the full range of students in their schools: 90% disagreed that the courses were appropriate for early stage learners of English as an Additional Language (EAL) and 86% viewed them as inappropriate for those with low prior attainment. These concerns are particularly important when the government has just renewed its commitment to the EBacc suite of subjects, stipulating that 75% of the Year 10 cohort should be pursuing them by 2022 (and 90% by 2025).

While problems about the availability of new textbooks and access to sample assessment materials may be temporary issues that will be resolved over time, it is clear that this academic year has been extremely difficult for teachers. In many cases (61%) teachers report that textbooks were not published at the point when they needed them, and even when the books were published some 49% of schools report that they have not been able to afford to buy enough of them. In relation to assessment, 59% of respondents complained that their exam board had not provided them with sufficiently clear information about the kinds of standards expected and 61% were concerned that

they had not been offered enough examples of sample assessments to understand for themselves or make clear to their students what would be required.

Although preparation for the new exams has demanded a great deal of teachers, with 88% required to develop their own substantive knowledge in order to begin teaching them, it is important to acknowledge that generally history teachers continue to regard the *range* of types of content covered as appropriate for young people growing up in Britain today. This kind of support has remained constant over recent years (i.e. since the revised national content criteria were first published) despite teachers' acute concerns about the extent of the curriculum change with which they are wrestling and the demands created by the sheer amount of content and the inaccessibility of the assessment format for the full range of learners.

The extent of non-specialist teaching at GCSE

The proportion of schools reporting that some GCSE teaching is being undertaken by non-specialists (21%) is very slightly higher than that reported two years ago (19%) and clearly higher than the lowest proportion recorded (15%) in 2012. Given the nature of the demands that the new courses represent, the fact that *any* school is having to ask non-specialist teachers to take on such teaching is very serious, as is the disparity between non-selective and selective schools in this respect.

The degree of freedom that students can exercise in relation to GCSE choice

The government's use of the EBacc as an accountability measure, encouraging schools to channel students towards the suite of subjects that it includes, certainly seems to be influencing the nature of the GCSE option systems that schools construct. The proportion of students given a completely free choice about whether or not to pursue history has fallen from 58% of schools in 2014 to 49% in 2016 and to 43% this year. Unfortunately this fall has also been accompanied by an increasing tendency for schools to make students choose *between* history and geography which now happens in 10% of schools (although the majority allow students to choose one or the other *or* both).

Linked with the issue of freedom of choice is the question of whether schools allow all students who express an interest in history to pursue the subject at GCSE. The good news here is that the introduction of the Progress 8 measure (alongside the EBacc, which obviously only recognises achievement at grade C and above) does now seem to have begun reversing the trend for schools to steer certain students *away* from the subject. Although the trajectory is not yet a clear one, the proportion of schools reporting that some students are actively discouraged or even prevented from taking the subject is now lower than it has been for the past four years, at 32%. Unsurprisingly, given teachers' concerns about the nature of the new GCSE specifications, the grounds on which some schools continue to steer students away relate primarily to students' low prior attainment (15% of schools); the difficulties faced by early stage EAL learners (10%); low levels of literacy (10%) and the construction of vocational pathways for some students that do not include a history option (9%). It is therefore unsurprising, given the nature of these concerns, that many teachers regard the Progress 8 measure with a high degree of ambivalence. While it is undoubtedly leading, in *some* contexts (though certainly not all), to a more active promotion of the subject to lower attainers, many history teachers are alarmed by the fact that they now have to teach classes that encompass students with a much wider range of attainment than previously and for which they feel

unprepared. The lack of appropriate published resources is a particular concern here, along with the lack of access for teachers to appropriate kinds of professional development.

The nature of courses offered at Key Stage 4

The fact that the IGCSE is no longer counted in the accountability measures set by the government (Progress 8 and EBacc) has clearly influenced schools' choices about their Key Stage 4 curriculum. While 45% of independent school respondents offer the IGCSE, only one school in the state-maintained sector has continued to offer this qualification.

1.4 A-level history

The proportion of students within Year 12 and 13 taking history

The dramatic decline in the number of entries for AS and A-level history revealed this summer in the publication of the examination statistics by the Joint Council for Qualifications is both reflected in, and explained by, the responses of schools to the survey questions about their approaches to the new linear A-level structure. The de-coupling of the AS and A-level exams has had the negative impact on history numbers that 58% of respondents predicted in 2015, illustrated, for example, by the fact that in 2017 just over 70% of non-selective state funded schools reported fewer than 20% of Year 12 students were doing history, compared with only around 60% of such schools in 2015. This trend is repeated in the grammar schools, in the private school sector and in the sixth-form colleges.

When the de-coupling first took place, most schools reported that they wanted to continue offering AS-level and that is the policy that most of them operated for students who completed their A-levels in 2017: 71% of all schools entered all their Year 12 history students for AS-level (in 2016) and a further 9% offered their students the option of taking the AS-level exam. With their Year 12 cohort the following year (i.e. this year, 2017), only 40% of schools entered all of them for AS-level, while 14% offered students the choice of taking the exam. These proportions are likely to fall further next year, since most respondents who explained what they expected to happen suggested that their school's policy now was for most students simply to embark on three A-level courses from the outset. Since history benefited significantly from the introduction of AS-levels in 2000, with many students taking it as a fourth subject and then opting to continue with it in light of their enjoyment of the subject and/or their success at AS-level, it is unsurprising now that schools' decisions to follow a three A-level model have led to a significant reduction both in the number of students taking AS-level *and* in the total number of entries for A-level.

The experience of teaching the linear A-level history

While most respondents (53%) report that their experience of teaching the new A-levels has been mixed, 39% report that their experience has essentially been a positive one. The main reason for their enthusiasm relates to the range of content available, while a few teachers commented positively on the fact that students could continue to undertake a personal investigation and on the way in which historical interpretations were treated within the new examinations. Collectively their responses seem to reflect a desire for the new specifications to be implemented successfully.

As at GCSE, there were, however, concerns about the lack of exemplar materials from the exam boards and a range of other concerns related to assessment, ranging from a lack of clarity about the

standards expected in relation to the different objectives, to the moderation processes for the independent investigation and the nature of some exam questions. Content overload features quite prominently among teachers' comments and concerns are also noted (by 19 teachers) about the late publication or poor quality of new textbooks. Considering the amount of change happening in schools and the nature of the changes it is perhaps surprising that there are only five comments about the demands on staff workload, with a further five comments about staff needing to develop their subject knowledge to teach new topics.

1.5 Teachers' concerns

Since 2016-17 was the year in which the new A-levels were first examined as well the year in which all schools (regardless of the length of their Key Stage 4 curriculum) were teaching the new GCSE specification for the first time to Year 10, it unsurprising that 87% of respondents identify the combination of curriculum changes that they were facing as a current or serious concern. The fact that this proportion is slightly lower than that reported last year (93%) may suggest that the pressures are *beginning* to ease, with only one more year of major change ahead.

Linked with concerns about curriculum changes are worries about inadequate funds to buy the necessary new resources, identified as a current or serious concern by 73% of respondents, and anxieties about the lack of opportunity to attend relevant CPD, noted by 60% of them. Here the issue is not simply a financial one or the reluctance of schools to release teachers during the school day, but a view, held by 54% of respondents, that relevant kinds of courses or support were simply not being offered.

Although the proportions of teachers reporting concerns about other issues are much smaller, it is important to note that nearly a fifth of respondents (19%) are currently concerned about the amount of history being taught by non-specialists, while 37% are worried about the lack of high-quality applicants for history posts that they had advertised. Of the 87 respondents who reflect on their involvement in the process of advertising history vacancies, it is alarming that only one quarter report that they had a good field of applicants. Fifty respondents claim that the field was limited and some 25 schools report that they had three or fewer applicants for a history post.

In relation to the quality of job applicants, it is also important to highlight the fact that 10% of the non-selective and 17% of the selective state-funded schools represented in the sample report that they employed history teachers *without* Qualified Teacher Status (although it is not known how many of these teachers were pursuing employment-based routes to a teaching qualification).

The reported effects of budget cuts

While independent schools have been largely immune from the effects of budget cuts (with only two respondents reporting an increase in class sizes at Key Stage 3), all other types of school report some increases, which they attribute to the financial pressures that their schools were facing. This has happened most often at Key Stage 3 (as experienced by 26% of schools), and slightly less often at GCSE (reported by 19.4%) and relatively infrequently at A-level (10.5%).

Most schools have *not* had to reduce their history offer as a result of budget cuts but six schools (all comprehensives) report that they have removed history from their A-level options. Another 32 schools (including two grammar schools and two independent schools) report their fears that this

might happen in the future. This is a matter of grave concern in terms of the restrictions it imposes on young people's opportunities to pursue the subject.

Decisions to reduce the amount of face-to-face teaching offered in history are reported by rather more schools: 29 in total, including six grammar schools but none in the independent sector. In ten cases this reduction is reported at A-level (mainly in grammar schools, as noted above) but reductions are also reported in four cases at GCSE and in nine cases at Key Stage 3. Again, this is a matter of considerable regret.

2. Nature of the survey

The findings reported here are based on the response of history teachers in England to an online survey sent by the Historical Association to all schools and colleges teaching students in the 11–18 age range. The survey was conducted during the summer term 2017.

2.1 Number of responses

Responses were received from 313 history teachers working in a range of different contexts. While some responses – such as teachers’ concerns – were analysed at an individual level, multiple responses from teachers within the same school were eliminated to ensure that each school was counted only once in response to questions about the nature of provision for history at different key stages. These school-level responses were analysed in relation to different types of schools: state-maintained non-selective schools (comprehensives, academies and free schools); state-maintained grammar schools, independent schools and sixth-form colleges.

In previous years we looked at academy schools (both pre- and post-2010) as a specific type of school, in comparison to other types of schools. However the rapid expansion in the number of academies means that any distinction between them and comprehensives is no longer appropriate, so these categories have been amalgamated for the purposes of analysis. Although free schools were listed as a separate category, and we have seen a small increase in the number of free schools responding to the survey, the figures are still small, so these have also been subsumed into the broad category of ‘comprehensive/academy/free’. Where there are distinctive findings related to history provision in free schools, this is highlighted in the text.

2.2 The range of schools represented

Of the 313 respondents, 238 are from comprehensive/academy schools (including seven from free schools), 20 from grammar schools, 48 from independent schools, five from sixth-form colleges and two from institutions categorised as ‘other’ (one tutorial college and one pupil referral unit).

When counting the number of responses from individual schools the total is reduced to 287. These include 217 comprehensive/academy/free schools, 18 grammar and 45 independent schools along with five sixth-form colleges and two ‘others’.

Responses to questions about teaching history at Key Stage 3 (traditionally the first three years of secondary school for students aged 11–14, but increasingly reduced in many schools to the first two years of secondary provision for students aged 11–13) were received from 263 individual schools: 204 comprehensive, academy and free schools, 18 grammar schools and 41 independent schools. Responses to questions about provision at Key Stage 4 (conventionally ages 14–16) were received from 265 schools; while 186 individual schools and sixth-form colleges reported on their A-level history provision.

2.3 Ethnicity of respondents

Of the 313 individual respondents, 308 replied to the question about ethnicity. The vast majority, 290 (94.2%), described themselves as White, including 279 White British and five White Irish. Five respondents described themselves as being of mixed heritage (1.6%), one described their ethnic

background as Black (0.3%), three as Asian (0.9%) and one as Chinese (0.3%). One respondent ticked the 'other' category rather than any of the other options listed and seven respondents preferred not to disclose their ethnicity.

2.4 The experience of the teachers

The overwhelming majority of the teachers who responded to questions about the length of their experience – 253 (82.1%) – had been teaching for over five years. A further 41 (13.3%) had been teaching between one and five years, with the remainder being NQTs (13) or in training (1).

Of the respondents, 171 (54.6%) are designated as the lead teacher or head of department for history, 90 (28.8%) as mainscale teachers, 30 (9.6%) as members of senior leadership teams (SLT) and a further 21 (6.7%) with other forms of responsibility in school.

3. Key Stage 3 history

3.1 Continuing impact of the revised National Curriculum

The revised National Curriculum has been a formal requirement for all local authority maintained schools since September 2014; however responses to the survey, presented in Figure 1, show that relatively few schools now claim to follow the curriculum closely.

Figure 1 2017: The extent to which respondents' schools were following the National Curriculum for Key Stage 3

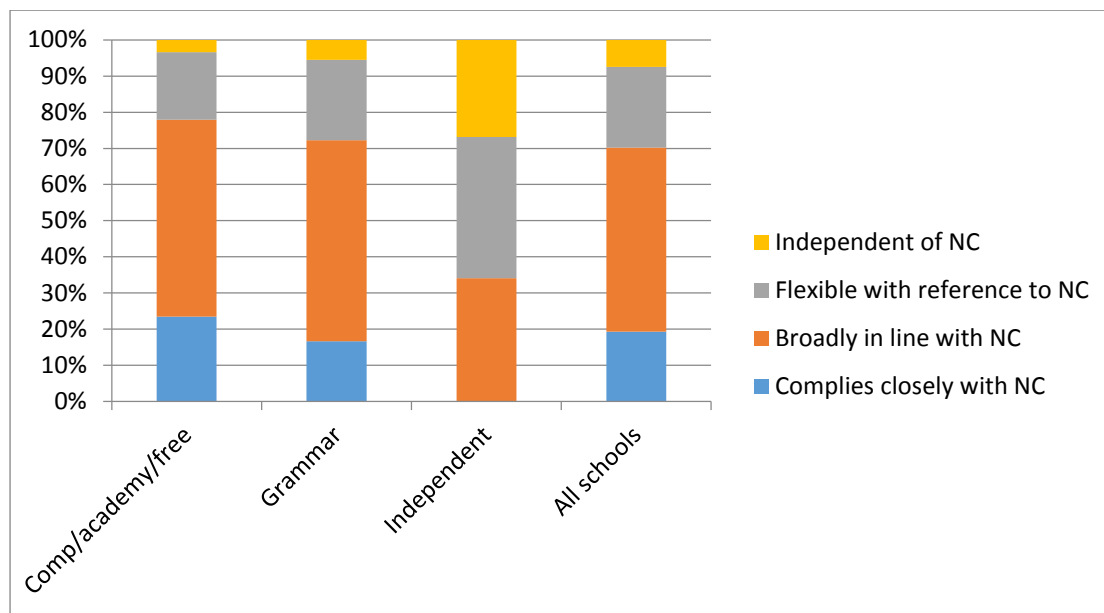
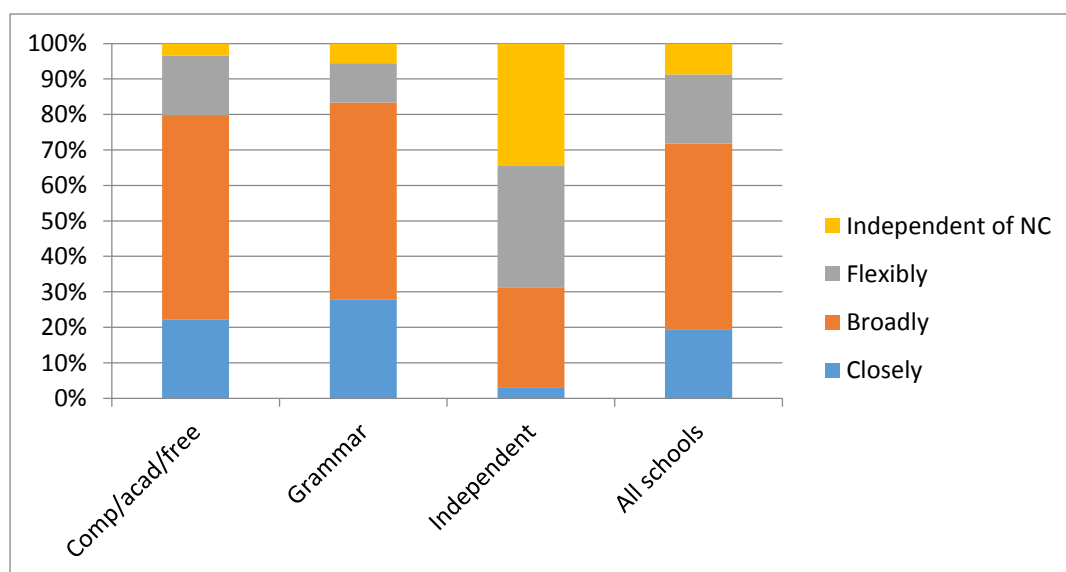


Figure 2 2015: The extent to which respondents' schools were following the National Curriculum for Key Stage 3



As the figures show, around 20% of respondents report that they are following the National Curriculum very closely, and this figure is essentially consistent with that reported two years ago, shown in Figure 2. Another 55% of comprehensive, academy and free schools in 2017 claim to follow the National Curriculum broadly (although academies and free schools have no obligation to do so), suggesting that not many of them have so far opted to exercise the flexibility that has been granted to them. This flexibility is much more fully embraced by independent schools, none of which claimed this year to comply closely with the National Curriculum.

3.2 Approaches adopted to assessment at Key Stage 3

The removal in 2014 of the prescribed level descriptors that had been in use since 2008 (and in previous versions since the first introduction of the National Curriculum for history in 1991) gave schools freedom to devise their own models of assessment, with no specific recommendations or guidance about the nature of the new system they might adopt.

The figures from 2015 (set out in Figure 3) show that a year after the change many schools were still working with some form of assessment system linked to the previous level descriptors. The figures for 2017, shown in Figure 4, reveal a significant shift in the approaches being adopted, with 106 schools reporting that they have extended GCSE-style grading or criteria back into Key Stage 3. This suggests that the GCSE specifications and examination approaches are having a major impact on the shape and nature of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. It is also interesting to note the number of schools reporting the use of some other system. In total 88 schools out of 263 that responded to this question in the 2017 survey indicated they were using a different system. Of these, 21 schools had also purchased a generic software package to support assessment processes, although it is not clear whether these packages included an ‘off-the-peg’ set of levels or grade descriptors.

Figure 3 2015: The approaches to assessment being used within Key Stage 3

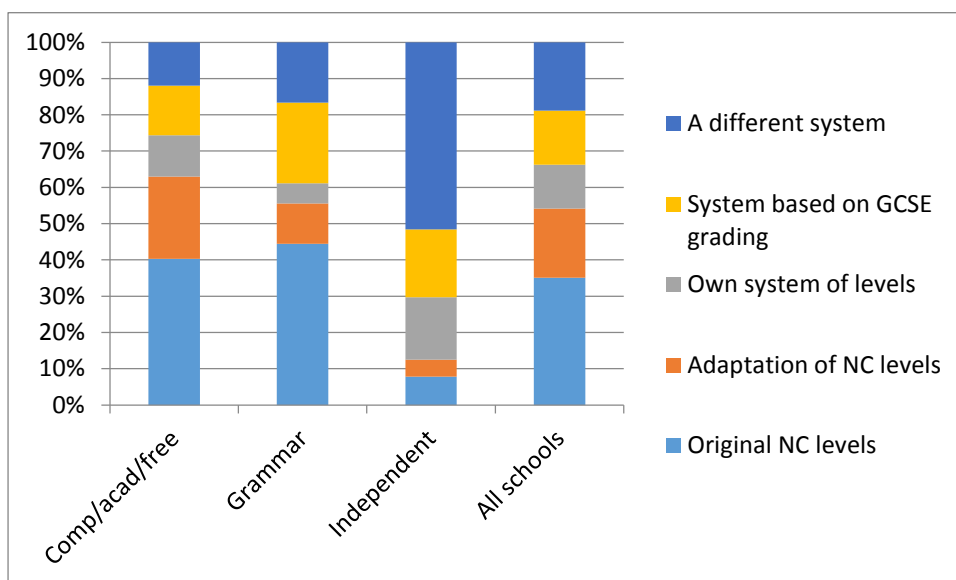
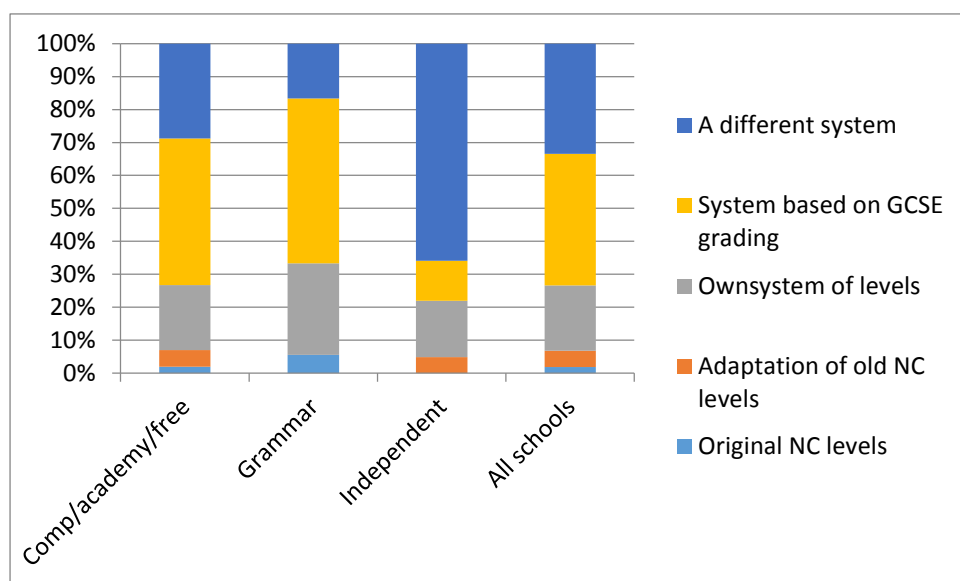


Figure 4 2017: The approaches to assessment being used within Key Stage 3



While these responses suggest that GCSEs are becoming a major influence on how schools approach assessment issues, other responses indicate that GCSEs are also having a wider impact on curriculum thinking.

3.3 The impact of GCSE on Key Stage 3

The specific ways in which teachers report that they have begun to approach their Key Stage 3 curriculum in light of the new GCSE specifications are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 2017: The ways in which GCSE is influencing the nature of assessment at Key Stage 3
Number of responses (as a percentage of the schools that answered this question)¹

Type of school	The kinds of questions that we ask students to tackle (to reflect the style and focus of new GCSE questions)	The way in which we use sources in KS3 history	The way in which we introduce students to different historical interpretations at KS3	The number of KS3 schools that answered this question
Comprehensive	153 (79.7%)	125 (65.1%)	124 (64.6%)	192
Free	2 (66.7%)	3 (100%)	2 (66.7%)	3
Grammar	13 (76.5%)	8 (47.1%)	5 (29.4%)	17
Independent	13 (59.1%)	14 (63.6%)	12 (54.5%)	22
All	181 (77.4%)	150 (64.1%)	143 (61.1%)	234

The vast majority of schools report that they are adopting GCSE-style questions at Key Stage 3. This raises some concerns about a process of extended ‘teaching to the test’, especially as many

¹ The percentages add up to more than 100 as schools could tick more than one response.

respondents report that the way in which they teach (and presumably assess) the use of sources and historical interpretations is also shaped by the nature of the processes required at GCSE. Given the work that many history teachers have invested over the years in devising ‘authentic’ ways of working with sources and developing interesting ways to teach historical interpretations at Key Stage 3, the manner in which GCSE is now beginning to dominate practices at Key Stage 3 raises fears of a rather reductive approach to teaching these aspects of historical thinking.

Another way in which the GCSE is shaping Key Stage 3 is linked to curriculum content choices. In the past history teachers have been criticised for choosing to repeat the same content at different key stages – adopting a recurring ‘Hitler and the Henrys’ approach. While such criticism obviously ignores the potential value of revisiting topics from different perspectives and with greater depth and sophistication, it remains a matter of legitimate concern if schools are unduly restricting the range of students’ knowledge in order to build sufficiently deep and secure knowledge for exam success. Since the scope of the new GCSE content means that there are now *more* potential overlaps between Key Stage 3 and GCSE topics, the survey invited teachers to comment on how their choice of GCSE topics was impacting on the decisions that they were making at Key Stage 3.

*Table 2 2017: The way in which GCSE is influencing the choice of content at Key Stage 3
Number of responses (as a percentage of the schools that answered this question)²*

Type of school	Specific content - avoid repetition	Specific content - revisit aspects at GCSE	Specific content - background for GCSE	Number of KS3 schools that answered this question
Comprehensive	48 (25.5%)	90 (46.9%)	101 (52.6%)	192
Free	0 (0.0%)	2 (66.7%)	3 (100.0%)	3
Grammar	5 (29.4%)	5 (29.4%)	10 (58.8%)	17
Independent	11 (50.0%)	6 (27.3%)	10 (45.5%)	22
All	64 (27.4%)	103 (44.0%)	124 (53.0%)	234

As can be seen in Table 2, relatively few schools are concerned to *avoid* revisiting content taught at Key Stage 3 within their GCSE course. A greater number of schools report that they are deliberately seeking either to include such revisiting, or – the majority response in each case – to choose Key Stage 3 content that would provide useful contextual knowledge for students’ GCSE topics. Since the survey did not include precise details about each school’s curriculum choices, we cannot comment on how restrictive their choices actually are, but this may be worth monitoring and reviewing.

Another kind of influence is the nature or scale of the different topics included at Key Stage 3. Eighty-five out of 234 schools indicate that they are building in opportunities to give students experience of breadth, depth and thematic studies. It is interesting to note, however, the very limited impact of GCSE on study of local history at Key Stage 3. Although the new GCSE includes a compulsory study of ‘the historic environment’ only 45 out of 234 schools report that this has an

² The percentages add up to more than 100 as schools could tick more than one response.

influence on their content choices at Key Stage 3. (This is despite the fact that the 2014 national curriculum also includes a local history requirement).

3.4 The length of the Key Stage 3 curriculum

As in previous years we asked respondents to make clear how long their Key Stage 3 curriculum lasts, distinguishing between two- and three-year programmes. We had previously noted a degree of stability in the number of schools reporting a three- and two-year Key Stage 3. However the responses for 2017, set out in Table 3, show a significant shift towards shortening Key Stage 3 (and thereby potentially lengthening GCSE teaching to three years). This is most pronounced in comprehensive, academy and free schools. Although the number of free schools that responded to the survey was very small, two-thirds of those that did have adopted a two-year Key Stage 3.

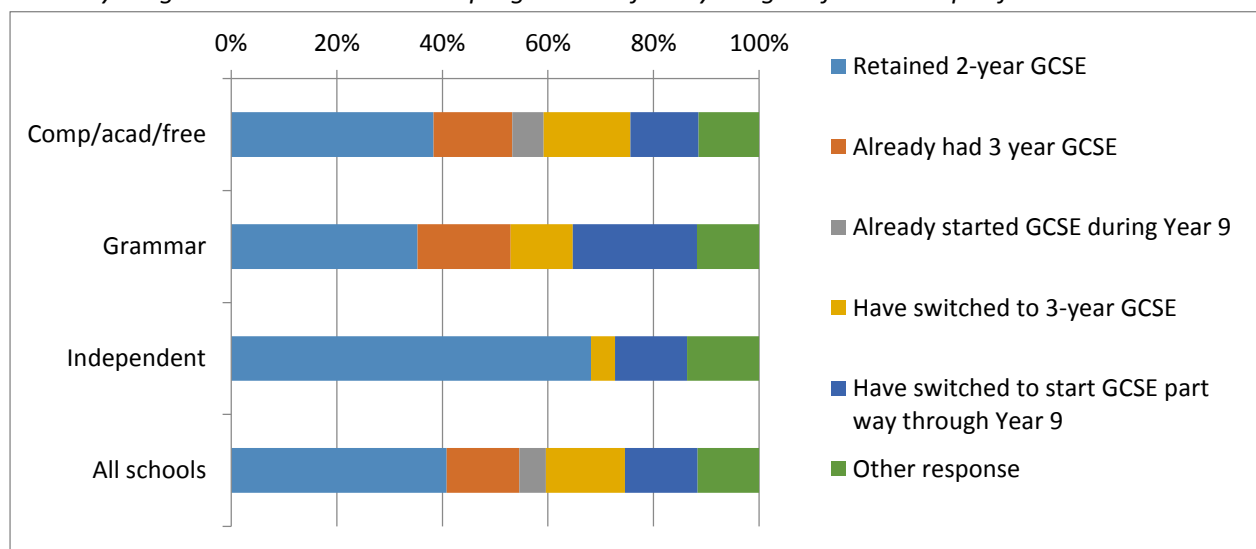
Table 3 The length of the Key Stage 3 programme in respondents' schools

Year	Type of school	3-year Key Stage 3		2-year Key Stage 3	
2017	Comprehensives, academies & free	113	55.9%	89	44.1%
2016	<i>Comprehensives academies & free</i>	159	68.5%	73	31.5%
2015	<i>Comprehensives and academies</i>	180	75.9%	57	24.1%
2014	<i>Comprehensive and academies</i>	174	75.6%	56	24.3%
2017	Grammar	12	66.7%	4	33.3%
2016	<i>Grammar</i>	19	86.3%	3	13.6%
2015	<i>Grammar</i>	9	56.3%	7	43.8%
2014	<i>Grammar</i>	5	62.5%	3	37.50%
2017	Independent	35	85.4%	6	14.6%
2016	<i>Independent</i>	40	93.0%	3	7.0%
2015	<i>Independent</i>	49	89.1%	6	10.9%
2014	<i>Independent</i>	34	89.5%	4	10.5%
2017	All schools	162	60.7%	6	39.3%
2016	<i>All schools</i>	219	73.5%	79	26.5%
2015	<i>All schools</i>	238	77.3%	70	22.7%
2014	<i>All schools</i>	213	77.2%	63	22.8%

When we asked specifically about the impact of the new GCSEs on school's decisions about the length of their Key Stage 3 curriculum and how long they allocated to GCSE it became clearer that the demands of the new GCSEs were prompting more schools to consider decreasing the amount of time that students spend studying the full range of subjects so that they can focus for longer on the those that they intend to take for GCSE. As Figure 5 reveals, less than 40% of state-maintained schools confidently report that they have retained a two-year GCSE programme. Around 15% of such schools declare that they had already introduced a three-year GCSE programme (before the new specifications were introduced) and a further 5% of non-selective schools (comprehensives, academies and free schools) had decided to start GCSE part-way through Year 9. Since the introduction of the new specifications, decisions to extend the GCSE programme by cutting a whole

or part of a year out of Key Stage 3 had been made by a further 29.3% of non-selective schools and 35.3% of grammar schools. Among the schools that answered 'other', the trend towards making the same transition is clear. Where they explain what they mean by 'other' 13 schools are considering or now planning to implement a longer GCSE; three are planning to cover GCSE content in Year 9 (before students choose their options and give up certain subjects); three actually refer to 'a five-year GCSE'. Other individual responses refer to increased hours allocated to GCSEs or to a mix of two and three-year programmes to stagger exams. One upper school reports that it has no chance to lengthen its GCSE courses but implies that it would like to do so if this were possible.

Figure 5 2017: The decisions that schools report they have taken or are taking about the length of their Key Stage 3 curriculum and GCSE programme of study in light of the new specifications



Taken together with the results reported above, it is clear that GCSEs are becoming a major influence on the decisions schools make at Key Stage 3 history, most probably with the intention of maximising GCSE outcomes.

3.5 The extent of non-specialist teaching at Key Stage 3

Tables 4 and 5 show the proportion of history lessons reported to be taught by non-specialists in Years 7 and 8. Year 7 was specifically chosen since it is most likely that schools deploying non-specialists will assign them to the lowest year of secondary schooling, retaining specialist teachers for those years in which students make their GCSE options (Year 8 or Year 9) and for their teaching of GCSE classes. As can be seen there is no clear pattern across different types of school or in relation to the length of the Key Stage 3 curriculum.

The figures in Table 4 present a complex picture. In some respects there is stability, for example around a third of comprehensive, academy and free schools require no non-specialists to teach history in Year 7. However there seems to be a gradual shift within these types of schools towards more non-specialist teaching; where schools are having to employ non-specialists, the proportion of schools in which over 45% of classes are taught by non-specialists is around a fifth in 2017. The situation in the grammar school and independent sector looks more positive, with larger numbers of schools not requiring extensive use of non-specialist history teachers.

In previous years we have not reported the figures for non-specialist teaching in Year 8 classes, partly because such teaching in this year group appeared to be less extensive and also because it had remained stable. The figures for 2017, however (presented in Table 5), show a small increase in the proportion of comprehensive, academy and free schools, reporting larger numbers of classes in Year 8 being taught by non-specialists. Although the figures do not point to a sharp increase, they suggest that some schools may be starting to struggle to recruit sufficient history specialists or that budget cuts mean that other staff are being required to teach history. A similar pattern is also starting to emerge in the data for Year 9 classes. In 2016 just over 70% of comprehensive, academy and free schools reported no non-specialist teachers being used, but in 2017 the figure was only 63%. This problem seems to be emerging gradually, and given the current financial climate and issues over recruitment and retention in teaching more generally, it is likely to become more of a concern in the future.

*Table 4 The proportion of history lessons in Year 7 taught by non-specialists
(Including schools with both a two-year and a three-year KS3)*

	Type of school	0%	>15%	16-30%	31-45%	46-60%	60+%	Total respondents
2017	Comprehensives, academies and free schools	66 (34.2%)	41 (21.2%)	31 (16.1%)	18 (9.3%)	17 (8.8%)	20 (10.4%)	193
2016	<i>Comprehensives and academies</i>	72 (33%)	66 (30.3%)	32 (14.7%)	25 (11.5%)	15 (6.9%)	14 (6.4%)	224
2015	<i>Comprehensive and academies</i>	89 (34.1%)	60 (23%)	45 (17.2%)	29 (11.1%)	19 (7.3%)	19 (7.3%)	261
2017	Grammar	11 (61.1%)	3 (16.7%)	2 (11.1%)	0	1 (5.6%)	1 (5.6%)	18
2016	<i>Grammar</i>	10 (45.5%)	4 (18.2%)	4 (18.2%)	2 (9.1%)	2 (9.1%)	0	22
2015	<i>Grammar</i>	7 (41.2%)	1 (5.9%)	2 (11.8%)	2 (11.8%)	4 (23.5%)	1 (5.9%)	17
2017	Independent	31 (81.6%)	5 (13.2%)	0	0	0	2 (5.3%)	38
2016	<i>Independent</i>	25 (59.5%)	2 (4.8%)	6 (14.3%)	3 (7.1%)	1 (2.4%)	5 (11.9%)	42
2015	<i>Independent</i>	46 (75.4%)	3 (4.9%)	4 (6.6%)	2 (3.3%)	3 (4.9%)	3 (4.9%)	61
2017	All schools	108 (43.4%)	49 (19.7%)	33 (13.3%)	18 (7.2%)	18 (7.2%)	23 (9.2%)	249
2016	<i>All schools</i>	107 (37.2%)	72 (25%)	42 (14.6%)	30 (10.4%)	18 (6.3%)	19 (6.6%)	288
2015	<i>All schools</i>	142 (41.9%)	64 (18.9%)	51 (15%)	33 (9.7%)	26 (7.7%)	23 (6.8%)	339

Table 5: The proportion of history lessons in Year 8 taught by non-specialists in schools
(Including schools with both a two-year and a three-year KS3)

Year	Type of school	0%	>15%	16-30%	31-45%	46-60%	60+%	Total respondents
2017	Comprehensives, academies and free schools	82 (42.7%)	44 (22.9%)	23 (12%)	15 (7.8%)	11 (5.7%)	17 (8.9%)	192
2016	Comprehensives and academies	97 (44.1%)	54 (24.5%)	33 (15%)	17 (7.7%)	10 (4.5%)	9 (4.1%)	220
2017	Grammar	14 (77.8%)	2 (11.1%)	1 (5.6%)	1 (5.6%)	0	0	18
2016	Grammar	14 (63.6%)	4 (18.2%)	3 (13.6%)	0	1 (4.5%)	0	22
2017	Independent	32 (84.2%)	5 (13.2%)	0	0	0	1 (2.6%)	38
2016	Independent	30 (69.8%)	3 (7%)	4 (9.3%)	1 (2.3%)	1 (2.3%)	4 (9.3%)	42
2017	All schools	128 (51.6%)	51 (20.6%)	24 (9.7%)	16 (6.5%)	11 (4.4%)	18 (7.3%)	248
2016	All schools	141 (49.5%)	61 (21.4%)	40 (14%)	18 (6.3%)	12 (4.2%)	13 (4.6%)	285

3.6 Time allocation at Key Stage 3

The amount of time given to the teaching of history in Key Stage 3 continued to vary. In 2012 just over 55% of respondents from all schools reported that pupils had more than 75 minutes of history per week; this figure rose to 58% in 2014, and 64% in 2015, but is around 60% in 2017. Interestingly in 2017, respondents from comprehensive, academy and free schools report devoting more curriculum time to history than grammar and independent schools. In 2017 around 62% of comprehensives, academy and free schools provide more than 75 minutes of history teaching a week compared to 55% of the grammar schools in the survey and 48% of independent schools. As previously reported, schools with a two-year Key Stage 3 are more likely to provide more curriculum time for history teaching each week than schools with a longer Key Stage 3 (although this is unlikely to result in students following a two-year Key Stage 3 curriculum actually having the same amount of time overall to study history as a student in a school with a three-year Key Stage 3). In 2017 just over 40% of comprehensive, academy and free schools with a condensed Key Stage 3 provide more than 90 minutes of history teaching a week, compared to 25% of those with a traditional three-year Key Stage 3.

The number of schools altering the amount of time given to history in the curriculum does seem to be increasing again. In 2015 we reported that 22% of schools had done this (compared to 13% in 2014), but this has increased to 30% in 2017. Of these schools 17% have chosen to decrease the amount of time given to history whereas 13% which have increased it. Schools with a condensed Key Stage 3 are also more likely to have altered time allocations (37% compared to 23% of those with a

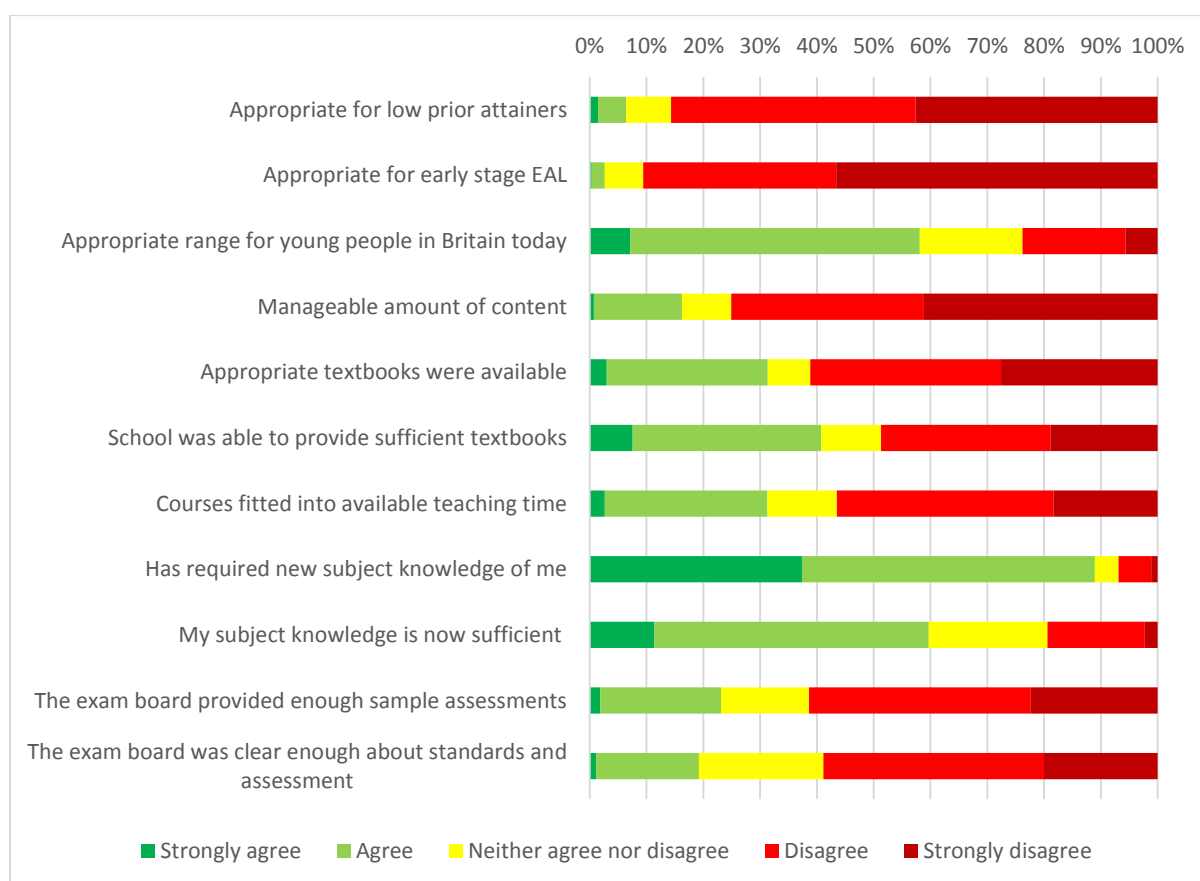
three-year Key Stage 3). It is also noticeable that around a fifth of schools in the selective and independent sectors have been going through a process of reducing the amount of time for teaching history, with only one independent school reporting an increase in teaching time. Overall 22% of grammar schools and 18% of independent schools report that they have reduced teaching time for the subject.

4. GCSE

4.1 Teachers' responses to the new GCSE specifications

Since 2016-17 was the first year in which *all* schools, regardless of the length of their Key Stage 4 curriculum, would be teaching the new GCSE specifications, we began by asking them about their experience of the courses. Respondents were asked to indicate how far they agreed with a number of statements about the new specifications, some of them picking up on concerns that had been expressed when the courses were first developed and others reflecting the extent to which they had been able to access the necessary resources and support. The range of responses, from 265 individual teachers in each case, is shown in Figure 6. The teachers were also invited to offer any further comments that they wished to make and 76 respondents chose to do so.

Figure 6 2017: The extent to which respondents (from all school types) agree with a range of claims about their experience of the new GCSE courses



As in previous years, when teachers have reported considerable enthusiasm for the *range* of content and the idea of studying history on different scales, respondents remain essentially positive about the content choices available to them, regarding the courses as appropriate for young people growing up in twenty-first-century Britain (a view endorsed by 58% of the respondents). The extent of their agreement with this claim contrasts markedly with their views of the *amount* of content that they have to cover (which 75% of respondents regard as unmanageable) and the damaging effect

that this has on the way in which many of them now feel constrained to teach. Both these perspectives are illustrated by the following comments:

The course is now huge and there is a staggering amount of content to teach with a vast array of question types that the pupils need to be prepared for. Whilst the content is interesting, it has become a bit of a slog to get through it all.

[Teacher 270, comprehensive/academy/free]

The content is vast. We're covering it but have had to change our approach to teaching – it is much more teacher led and often involves highlighting notes given out to students rather than them doing research or their own enquiries. I expect that was Mr Gove's purpose all along. It's not a philosophy I agree with at all and I can't remember in 13 years of teaching enjoying a course less.

[Teacher 49, comprehensive/academy/free]

Less than a third of the teachers (31%) are confident that they could fit the content that they are required to teach into the time allocated to the subject, and 54% entirely reject the suggestion that this would be possible for them. Alongside these concerns about content overload a number of teachers note in their comments that the wide variety of question types also creates additional demands, with students required to identify what kind of answer is expected in relation to many more different question stems:

There is a larger range of question types that makes teaching them alongside the increased content very difficult.

[Teacher 200, comprehensive/academy/free]

Some of the exam questions require students to jump through too many hoops e.g. to write a narrative account that isn't actually a narrative account. Despite going on training courses we have had to work out what the exam board wants for some of the questions. The Crime and Punishment unit is huge and we have been advised that we don't have to teach it all – but Edexcel couldn't say which areas of content we could safely exclude.

[Teacher 202, comprehensive/academy/free]

Unsurprisingly, given this sense of overload, the vast majority of respondents are also concerned about the appropriateness of the courses for those with low prior attainment (with 86% regarding the course as inappropriate for them) and for EAL learners without a good command of English (for whom 91% of respondents regard it as inappropriate). Concerns about the nature of the demands that the course presents are raised even by those teaching in grammar schools:

Far, far too much content. I work in a grammar school and they find it difficult to keep up, I do not envy colleagues in non-selective sector. Just makes history even more onerous, scary and inaccessible to non-academic students, which is a travesty.

[Teacher 72, grammar]

Very few teachers feel adequately supported by the exam boards in terms of the provision of detailed assessment criteria and sample assessment materials, although a few individuals suggest that the lack of clarity about how marks for particular questions would relate to grade boundaries is the fault of the government rather than a failure on the part of the awarding bodies. Only 19% of respondents agree that they have been given sufficient clarity about the assessment criteria and only 23% agree that they have seen sufficient sample assessment materials to understand what is required. Particular concerns are expressed in some comments about the unrealistic nature of some of the sample answers provided by their exam board and about the failure to exemplify answers that reached the higher levels:

I am hoping that sample materials will improve this year as exemplars were clearly written by examiners and seemed utterly unrealistic in terms of language and knowledge for GCSE students in their first year.

[Teacher 162, comprehensive/academy/free]

I don't think the exam board know themselves everything they want from the top level answers.

[Teacher 172, comprehensive/academy/free]

While some respondents have been able to find the information that they need from their particular exam board, others complain that the process of securing that information has been extremely demanding:

I feel that we have had a very good response from AQA about the assessment criteria - but you need to work hard to get it (go to conferences/email the exam board etc.)

[Teacher 95, comprehensive/academy/free]

Less than a third of respondents (31%) report that textbooks to meet the requirements of the new courses were available at the point when they needed them. Even if they had been, almost half of respondents note that they have not been able to afford new books for the courses. There are important differences between different types of schools here, with only 38% of respondents in comprehensives, academies and free schools reporting that their school could afford to buy sufficient textbooks, compared with 50% of those in grammar schools and 61% of those in independent schools. In some cases departments have decided to ask the students to pay for their own textbooks; in others they have been creating their own resources or using online materials provided by the board, which are also a source of dissatisfaction:

Our exam board has not, and will not, be publishing some textbooks for some options leaving electronic guides which are very brief as our only option. Then when you look at the SAMS [sample assessments] and mark-schemes students are supposed to know things that are not in the electronic guide!

[Teacher 243, comprehensive/academy/free]

But even the newly-published textbooks raise concerns, with some teachers reporting factual errors within them and others pointing to wide discrepancies between different books validated by the

same board, which left them extremely confused about the depth and nature of the knowledge that their students would actually require:

Total shambles. I just phoned the exam board to let them know they had mixed up two castles in their official guidance document. Also their textbooks have acknowledged errors, as do their specimen questions.

[Teacher 66, grammar]

The exam board has validated two different textbooks with different content/topics and a totally different depth of content. The spec is made vague and non-specific as a result. The exam board courses stated that 1 or 2 lessons would be sufficient for Hitler's rise to power but the content in the books contradicts this. There are no key questions in the spec so there are no clues to the focus or themes of the content. Sample questions in the textbooks focus on tiny and obscure parts of the course implying depth is needed despite it not being specified in the syllabus.

[Teacher 13, comprehensive/academy/free]

The lack of textbooks for those with lower levels of literacy is also highlighted as a particular concern:

When I asked the exam board about suggested text for lower ability pupils or EAL pupils I was told to 'use the revision guides' because they 'break it down more' but the words are equally complex. There are no resources made for the lower end of the grade spectrum.

[Teacher 152, comprehensive/academy/free]

The other dimension of teachers' experience reflected in Figure 6 is the sheer extent of the professional learning in which they have had to engage. Among respondents, 88% have been required to develop their own subject knowledge in order to teach the new courses (in addition to all the work necessary to create resources for their students). While some anxiety remains about whether they have yet done enough (with only 60% clearly confident that they have been able to master all that is required), it is clear that teachers have invested extraordinary efforts in expanding their own substantive knowledge. The overwhelming impression given is of their considerable resilience and commitment in the face of extensive demands that have been sustained for many years, with these extensive GCSE reforms preceded by significant changes at A-level and the introduction of the revised National Curriculum.

In concluding this section, it is perhaps also important to acknowledge that alongside the frustration expressed by many teachers, a small number took the opportunity to re-state their commitment to the range of content included, celebrating the inclusion of breadth, depth and thematic study within the GCSE and the stimulating new content that it had been possible to choose. As one respondent remarked, despite the struggle to fit it into the time allocated and the uncertainty about how it would all play out in the exams,

I love the concept. The new thematic study, the interpretations, the new content is all really interesting.

[Teacher 259, Independent]

That this is not simply the view of those working in better resourced contexts, is confirmed by the following comment from a teacher in a comprehensive school:

We have chosen OCR specification B. I think it offers a genuinely exciting take on both content and assessment. We are really enjoying developing and teaching the course.

[Teacher 128, comprehensive/academy/free]

4.2 The extent of non-specialist teaching at GCSE

In light of the concerns discussed below about reduced school budgets, the survey asked respondents to identify how many of those teaching GCSE history in their school were specialist history teachers. Table 6 illustrates that while the vast majority (78.5%) of schools are able to provide specialist history teachers for all their GCSE classes, there are some schools of all types that require some of their GCSE lessons to be taught by teachers without a history-specific qualification. Although the figure of 78.5% is not much lower than that reported two years ago (81%), it represents quite a significant drop from the highest level recorded in previous surveys (85% in 2012).

Table 6 2017: The proportion of those teaching GCSE history classes who were not specialist history teachers

Type of school	No non specialists teaching at GCSE	Up to 25% non-specialists	25-50% non-specialists	51-75% non-specialists	76% or more non-specialists
Comp/grammar/free	76.7%	14.1%	6.8%	1.5%	1.0%
Grammar	92.3%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Independent	83.3%	7.1%	4.8%	0.0%	4.8%
All schools	78.5%	12.6%	6.1%	1.1%	1.5%

Grammar schools appear to be the best staffed in this respect with only one school (representing 7.7% of the 13 grammar school respondents) reporting any non-specialist teaching at GCSE – and even that applied to fewer than 25% of those teaching history. In contrast, several of the comprehensive, academies and free schools indicated that a much higher proportion of their GCSE teachers were non-specialists: 14 reporting that to be the case for 26-50% of their GCSE teachers; two reporting it for 51-75% of their GCSE teachers and a further two for more than 75%.³ Given the extensive work on subject knowledge development required by the new specifications, even for experienced specialist teachers, the demands on those without such specialist knowledge are likely

³ The high proportion of non-specialist history teaching reported by independent school respondents seems to be accounted for by two small institutions offering specific special needs provision

to be particularly acute, with their job made even more difficult by the lack of appropriate textbooks reported above.

4.3 The degree of freedom that students can exercise in relation to GCSE choices

For several years we have been tracking the effects of the introduction of different performance measures on the options systems that schools provide for their students and the way in which history is positioned within them. We have sought to monitor the range of choices that students are given and the extent to which certain students are being actively discouraged or steered away from the subject.

Since the EBacc accountability measure was first introduced, there has been a national increase in the proportion of students taking history at GCSE, from around 30% to 40% of the cohort. We were pleased to note in reporting on earlier surveys that this seemed to have been achieved without pitting history against geography. While many schools did compel at least some of their students to take one of the two humanities subjects included in the EBacc, most allowed them to continue with both if they so wished. More recently the government has declared its ambition for 90% of the cohort to be taking the EBacc suite of subjects.⁴ It is evident from Table 7 that schools are increasingly restricting students' choices in response to these expectations. While 57.9% of schools responding to the survey in 2014 reported that students were given a completely free choice about whether or not to pursue history GCSE, this proportion has fallen rapidly in the last two years: to 49% in 2016 and 42.5% in 2017. Unfortunately, the increase in prescription also seems to mean that more students are being forced to choose *between* history and geography, although this proportion remains relatively low, with only 10% of schools requiring *all* students to choose between the two subjects and just one reporting that *some* students are required to make that choice.

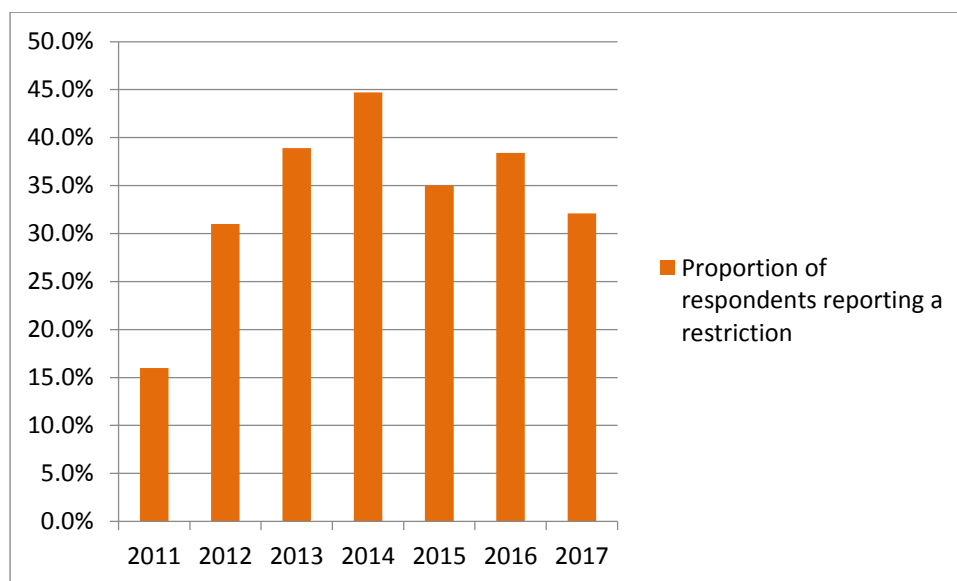
Table 7: The kinds of choice that survey respondents report are given to students about taking history at GCSE

	A requirement that all students must take						A requirement that some students must take						A completely free choice about history		Total
	History		History or Geog		History &/or Geog		History		History or Geog		History &/or Geog				
2017	5	1.9%	26	10.0%	85	32.6%	0	0.0%	1	0.4%	33	12.6%	111	42.5%	261
2016	3	1.0%	16	5.6%	84	29.2%	3	1.0%	5	1.7%	34	11.8%	141	49.0%	288
2015	8	2.1%	10	2.7%	83	22.3%	3	0.8%	5	1.3%	50	13.4%	214	57.4%	373
2014	0	0%	7	2.6%	44	16.5%	7	2.6%	8	3.0%	46	17.3%	154	57.9%	266

⁴ The target of 90% uptake was initially proposed for 2020, but following a period of consultation (and delays caused by the general election), the government has recently announced a phased series of targets, stipulating that 75% of Year 10 should be taking the EBacc range of subjects by 2022 and 90% by 2025. For details see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ambition-for-vast-majority-of-students-to-study-core-academic-gcses>

We have also been concerned that the increase in GCSE uptake following the introduction of the EBacc performance measure coincided with evidence from the survey suggesting that more schools were imposing restrictions on certain students, depriving those who were thought unlikely to achieve a grade C of the opportunity to take the subject. As Figure 7 demonstrates, the proportion of schools reporting that some students were actively discouraged or steered away from the subject rose steadily from 16% in 2011 to 45% in 2014. In 2015 it fell for the first time (to 35%), which we interpreted as a possible effect of the announcement of the new Progress 8 measure which would – as the name implies – recognise the progress that students had made (in relation to their achievement in Key Stage 2 SATs) rather than simply acknowledging students’ attainment. Such an interpretation was called into question by the responses to last year’s survey, since the proportion reporting a restriction on certain students’ pursuit of GCSE rose again in 2016 to 38%, although this was perhaps a reflection of teachers’ awareness of the demands of the new GCSE specifications. Despite teachers’ continuing concerns about those demands (reported above), and the very mixed view that teachers’ themselves give of the impact of Progress 8 (which is discussed below), the proportion of schools reporting that they are steering certain students away from the subject has fallen again this year to 32%. This is welcome news, although the strains that this imposes on teachers, given the lack of accessible resources, must also be acknowledged and addressed.

Figure 7: The proportion of schools reporting that some students were actively discouraged or steered away from taking following a history GCSE course in Key Stage 4



As in previous years, we asked schools to indicate the particular grounds on which they tend to steer certain students away from the subject. As shown in Table 8, the most common reason given (advanced by 15.1% of all schools) is that the students’ current attainment is too low for entry to be regarded as worthwhile. The other most common reasons advanced related to EAL students who would struggle with written English (advanced by 10.4% of schools); low levels of literacy (9.7%) and the fact that the school operated a pathway system with history not offered for those following a ‘vocational’ trajectory (8.9%). A smaller proportion of schools (5.0%) also state that they would steer students away from the subject if they were predicted a low grade. In most respect these figures are similar to those reported last year, with the exception of that for those with a low level of literacy

which is rather lower than the 22.9% excluded on these grounds in 2016. Again it is an encouraging sign if teachers are less inclined to regard this as a barrier, but it may also serve to re-emphasise the need for accessible resources. The fact that current low attainment is still seen as a barrier to entry by 15% of schools is perhaps also a reflection of the limited impact of Progress 8 as an accountability measure intended to emphasise progress and not just raw attainment scores. While we cannot draw firm conclusions about patterns in grammar schools since only 13 such schools responded to the survey, it is worth noting (in terms of the demands of the new GCSEs) that even within two of those grammar schools some students are being steered away from history on the grounds of low prior attainment.

Table 8 2016 & 2017: The grounds on which certain students were steered away from history GCSE

Grounds on which students were steered away from history	Percentage of schools that reported steering students away from history on these grounds	
	2016	2017
Current attainment too low for it to be regarded as worthwhile	16.9%	15.1%
EAL students thought likely to struggle with written English	6.3%	10.4%
Low level of literacy	22.9%	9.7%
Not included in the options for those on 'vocational' pathways	11.3%	8.9%
Predicted low grade at GCSE	5.6%	5.0%

When asked about the alternatives that such students are encouraged to undertake, geography is the most frequent suggestion, reported by 29 schools. While this may be a logical suggestion in that it also counts as an EBacc subject, the clear impression given by these responses is that geography is assumed to represent an easier GCSE option. The other most common alternatives mentioned are 'vocational subjects', mentioned by 20 schools, often with reference to the role of college providers; and then an extended focus on the core subjects of maths and literacy (ten schools); or creative arts options, including drama and dance (ten schools). No respondents in answer to this question refer to any lower-level history option, although it is possible that the three schools that mentioned ASDAN courses might offer the history short course available within this programme.

4.4 The nature of the courses offered at Key Stage 4

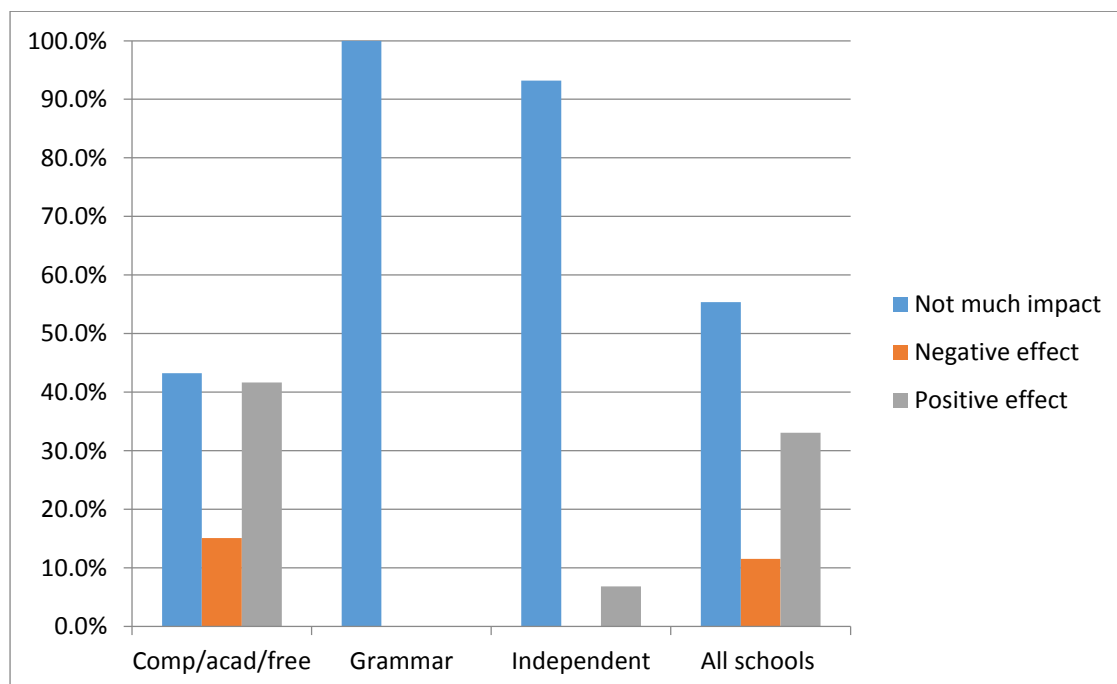
The survey also included a more specific question about the range of courses offered at Key Stage 4, allowing us to review the extent to which schools may be entering candidates for different qualifications (such as the IGCSE) or seeking to provide an appropriate history course for lower attainers. While 20 schools did report that they were offering IGCSE, 19 of these were in the independent sector, representing 45% of the independent schools that responded to the survey. This fact would suggest that the exclusion of IGCSE from the accountability measures now used by the government has prompted most state-funded schools (of all kinds) to abandon the qualification, although it remains an attractive option for independent providers. Only three schools (one of them

a specialist independent school) offer an alternative accredited course such as the ASDAN qualification, reflecting the fact that most Level 1 provision within history has now been abolished. Just two schools offer Humanities GCSE, while only four (all comprehensives or academies) offer a GCSE course in Ancient History.

4.5 The impact of the Progress 8 accountability measure

In order to test our assumptions that the reduction in the proportion of schools discouraging certain students from taking history GCSE might be due to the influence of the Progress 8 performance measure, we specifically asked respondents about the kind of impact that the measure seemed to be having on the way in which history was promoted within the options system in their school. While it was reported to be making no difference at all in grammar schools, Figure 8 shows that 57% of respondents from comprehensives, academies and free schools suggest that it is having some kind of impact. In most cases (41% of such schools) its effect is judged to be positive in terms of encouraging the school to direct students towards history, but 15% of respondents regard the effect as negative.

Figure 8 2017: Respondents' views of the impact of the Progress 8 measure on the way in which history is promoted in their school's GCSE options



When respondents were asked to explain their answers, it was evident that even those who claimed that the effect of the measure is positive in terms of the way in which history GCSE is promoted in their school, also want to comment on what they perceive to be the negative outcomes arising from the way in which students are directed towards the subject. The following comments are typical:

On the surface the effect is small but behind the scenes more students are being given the chance/encouraged to take GCSE history because we are a successful department. However, this a double-edged sword – the literacy of some students

choosing history recently will pose a great challenge to our department over the next few years.

[Teacher 121, comprehensive/academy/free]

Whilst it is good for enrolment, too many LA [low prior attainment] or EAL pupils who struggle with the new history GCSE and did not want to study the GCSE are forced to participate - harming enjoyment and attainment.

In essence the measure is seen as exacerbating the challenges that history teachers face in supporting those with low prior attainment or literacy difficulties in accessing the new GCSEs. Reference is made to more 'low ability' students (seven respondents), to those who are 'unsuited' or who would 'struggle to access' the subject (six respondents) as well as to those with 'poor literacy' (five respondents) and EAL needs (two). While some, it should be stressed, welcome the inclusion of lower attainers (and resent the way in which geography is promoted as the easier option within the EBacc), they also point out the additional demands that teachers face in teaching a wide range of learners effectively. Others fear for the eventual outcomes.

Means we are getting more mixed ability of kids than ever before and some staff are reluctant to fully engage and change methods to suit.

[Teacher 262, comprehensive/academy/free]

Although more students are choosing history it means we have more low ability students with very poor literacy – in effect some are embarking upon a three year course of failure.

[Teacher 188, comprehensive/academy/free]

The other main source of concern relates to the way in which some students are being compelled to take a subject that they did not want to pursue (five respondents) – sometimes by their parents and sometimes to serve the school's interests – which three respondents suggest would result in poor motivation and potentially disruptive behaviour. A few teachers also regret that other subjects, such as law, sociology or classics are no longer offered as a result.

More generally, the range of responses illustrate the variety of ways in which different schools are responding to the pressures that have been applied indirectly through the creation of new accountability measures. While some confidently assert that their priority continues to be the provision of 'personalised advice' focused on individual students' best interests, others report acute pressures to conform for the sake of league tables and a lack of much-needed alternative provision.

It seems to force pupils to take a subject they might not be suited to because they are needed for the league tables and for Ofsted which appears to be the sole measure of 'good' schools today. I have to teach some pupils who can barely write and shouldn't be taking GCSEs but the alternative provision for them (in terms of college courses) has been shelved due to continued Conservative government cuts.

[Teacher 270, comprehensive/academy/free]

In some cases pressure is clearly being applied to history (and geography) departments to accept more students and enable them to succeed, while others suggest that their senior leadership teams are focusing attention only on English and maths, leaving the humanities subjects unaffected.

4.6 Patterns of uptake at GCSE

In the first few years after this annual survey was established, when a two-year Key Stage 3 was comparatively unusual, we identified an important correlation between the length of schools' Key Stage 3 curriculum and the proportion of students opting for GCSE history. Our concern at that time was that students who had less opportunity to study the subject at Key Stage 3 (either because of a shortened Key Stage 3 or because of the limited time allocated to the subject) tended to be less likely to choose history at GCSE. This pattern was still visible in 2014, but significant changes have taken place since then; most obviously the national increase in the proportion of the cohort taking history (stimulated by the EBacc measure) and the rapid expansion in the number of schools allocating three years to GCSE (which has been accelerated by the introduction of the new specifications). As a result there is no longer any evidence that a condensed Key Stage 3 curriculum is associated with reduced uptake at GCSE. In fact the reverse now holds true: there is now a statistically significant difference ($p=0.003$) between schools with a two-year Key Stage 3 and those with a three-year Key Stage 3 (in favour of the former) in terms of the likelihood that more than 45% of the Year 10 cohort will be taking GCSE history. A similar (but negative) difference can also be found in relation to schools with less than 30% of the cohort taking history in Year 10. The picture that seems to be emerging now is one in which schools that are anxious to improve their performance in relation to the EBacc measure (and to some extent in relation to Progress 8) tend both to allocate more time to GCSE and to encourage (or sometimes compel) more students to take history and/or geography.

5. A-level history

5.1 The proportion of students within Year 12 and 13 taking A-level history

Given the recent reforms that have turned A-level into a two-year linear course, and brought changes to both the content and assessment processes, we were interested to track their impact in school from history teachers' perspective. A total of 190 schools and colleges responded to questions about A-level history.

After 2000, the numbers opting for history at A-level had seen an increase, as students had the flexibility to start a number of AS qualifications with a view to being able to 'drop' one at the end of Year 12. This had broadened the number of subjects students were likely to take. The new specifications were first examined at AS-level in 2016, with the first A-level examinations in 2017, and it is clear that schools are in a process of transition as they become more familiar with the newer examination.

Comparing the figures for students in Year 12 studying history in 2015 (the last year in which students began following the previous specifications) and 2017 there is a discernible downward trend, reflected in Figures 9 and 10. For example in 2015 around 60% of state-funded non-selective schools reported that they had fewer than 20% of students following history courses in Year 12, yet in 2017 just over 70% of schools report fewer than 20% of students doing history. This trend is repeated in the grammar schools, in the private school sector and in the sixth form colleges.

Figure 9 2015: The percentage of students studying A-level history in Year 12

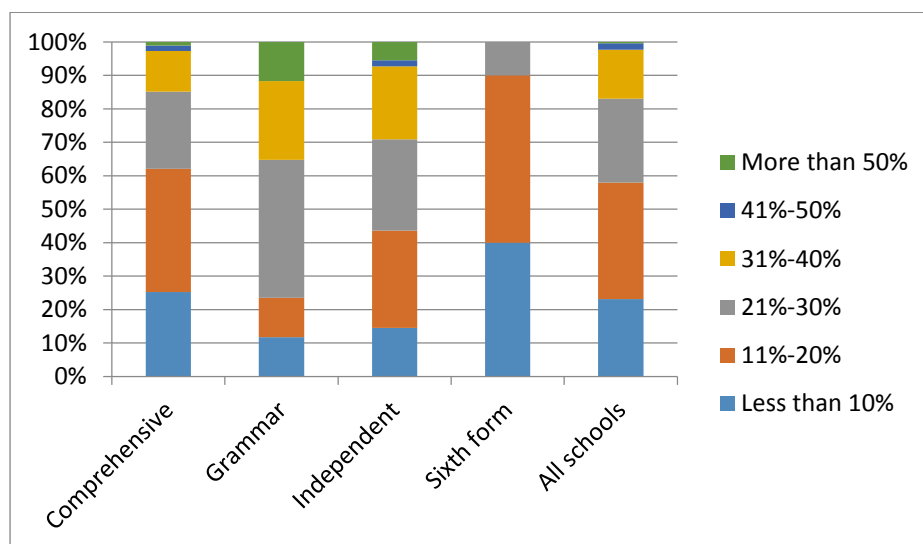
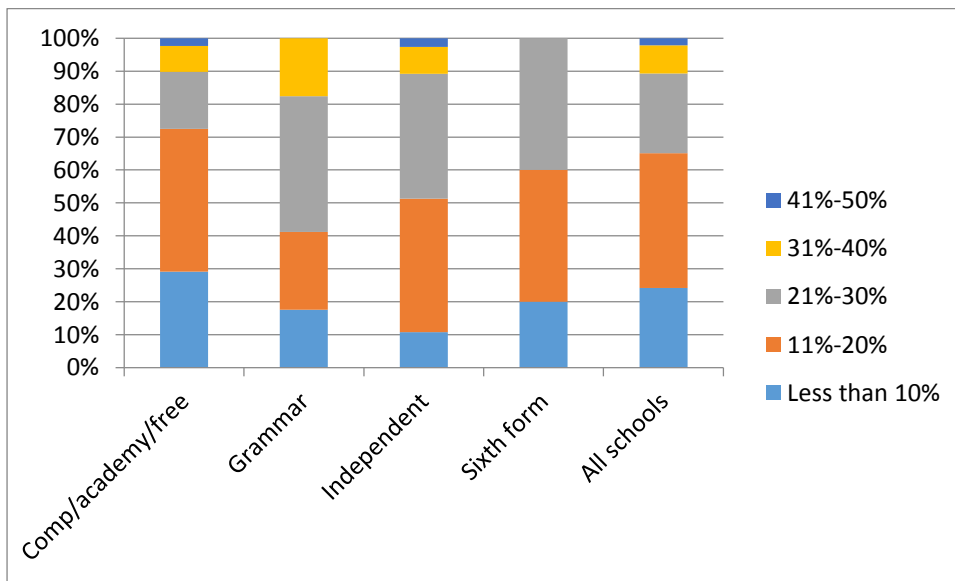
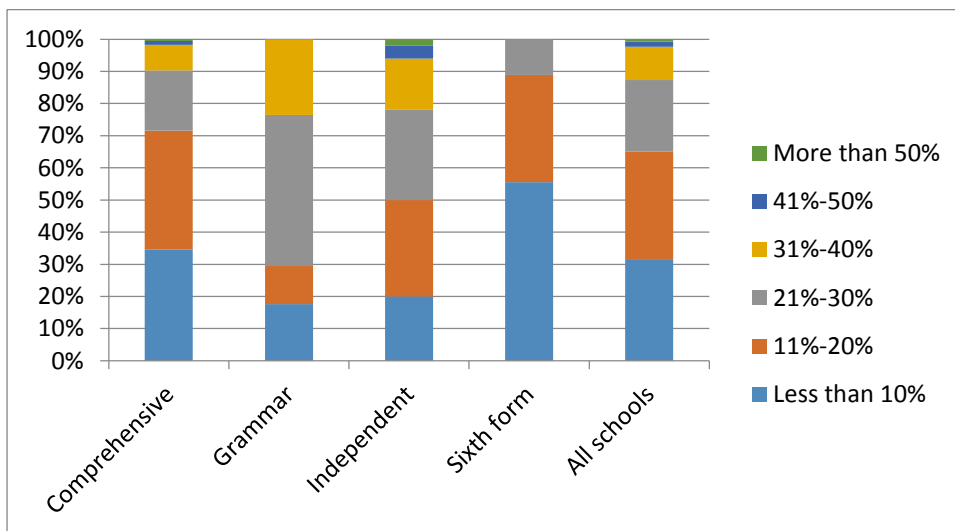


Figure 10 2017: The percentage of students studying A-level history in Year 12



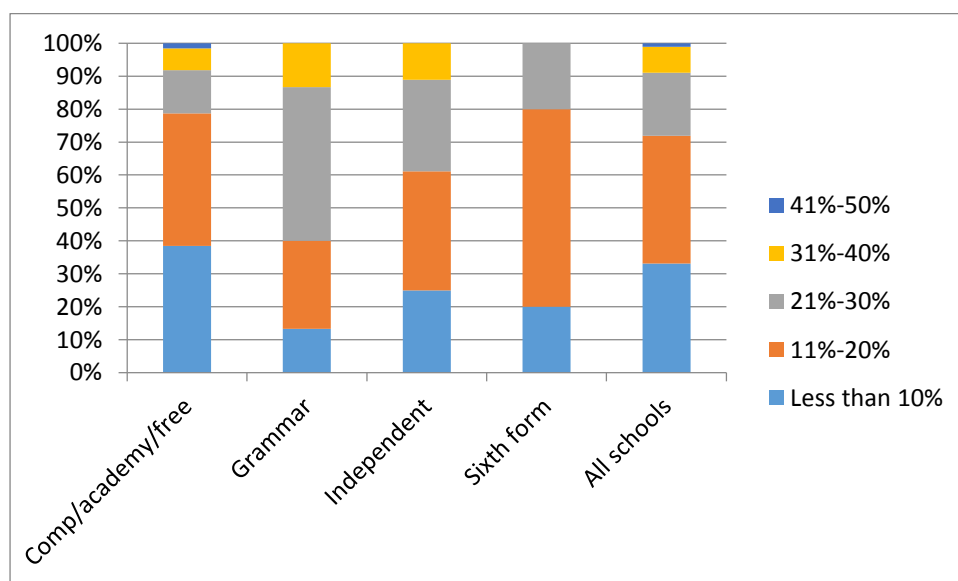
Examination of the proportion of students reported to be studying history in Year 13 in 2015 (Figure 11) and again in 2017 (Figure 12) reveals a similar pattern, with more schools now indicating a lower proportion of students taking the subject. This suggests that the move towards a linear course is serving to restrict the numbers who opt for history at the start of the sixth-form, which also diminishes the pool of students who could continue to A-level in Year 13.

Figure 11 2015: The percentage of students studying A-level history in Year 13



In 2015 the survey showed that teachers were concerned about the potential impact on numbers opting for the subject if AS and A2 were de-coupled; 58% of those who responded thought there would be a negative impact, with only 6% thinking it would be a positive move. The figures suggest that these concerns were justified.

Figure 12 2017: The percentage of students studying A-level history in Year 13

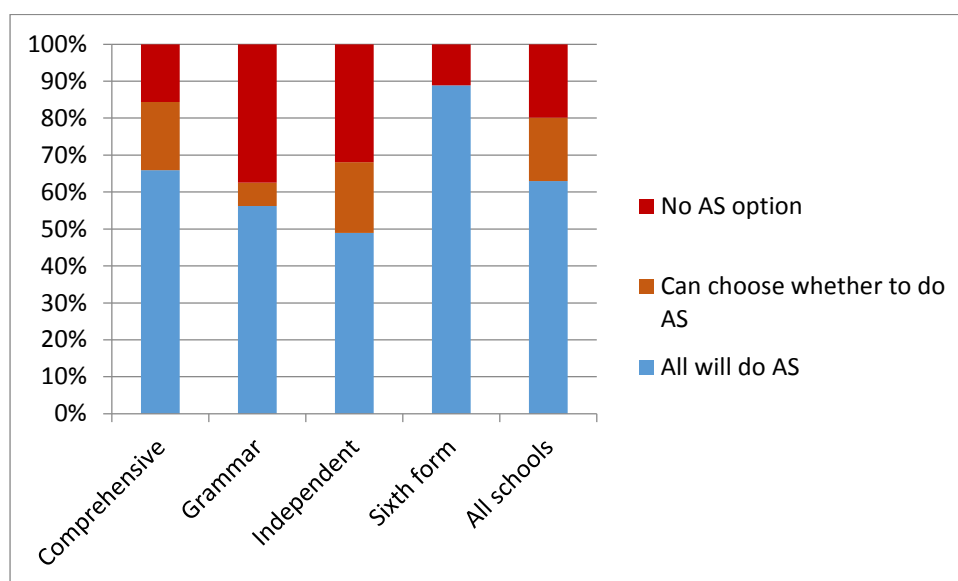


5.2 Approaches to AS provision

Behind the drop in numbers taking history at A-level are the decisions that schools and colleges make about AS provision. Under the modular A-level system, many students were typically encouraged to start four AS courses, with a view to dropping one at the end of Year 12; this meant a student would have an AS qualification, and could then concentrate on their other three subjects at A-level. In practice this seems to have helped boost overall numbers of students willing to study history.

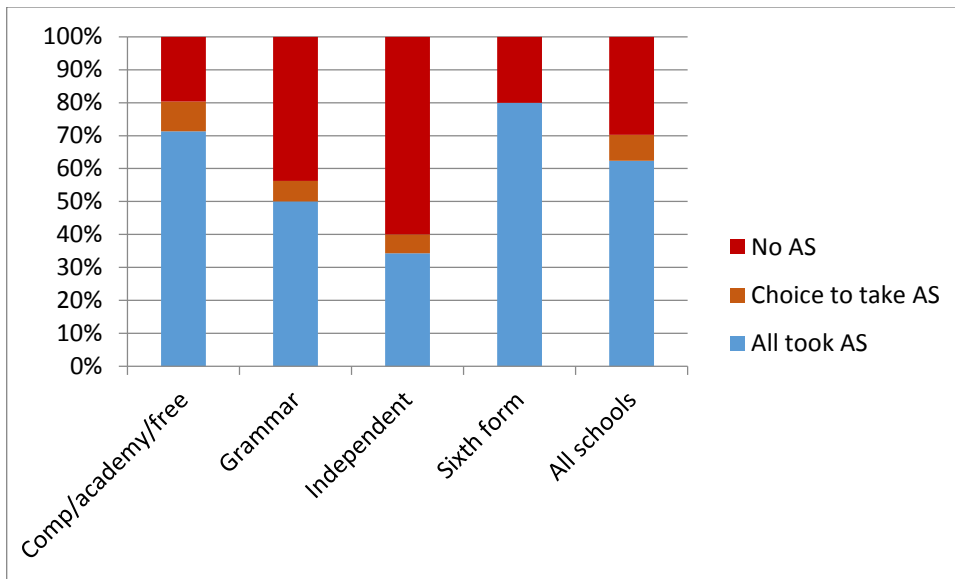
As can be seen in Figure 13, when the new linear A-level was being introduced, the majority of schools and colleges wanted to go on offering AS-level history.

Figure 13 2015: School decisions about entry for AS level history



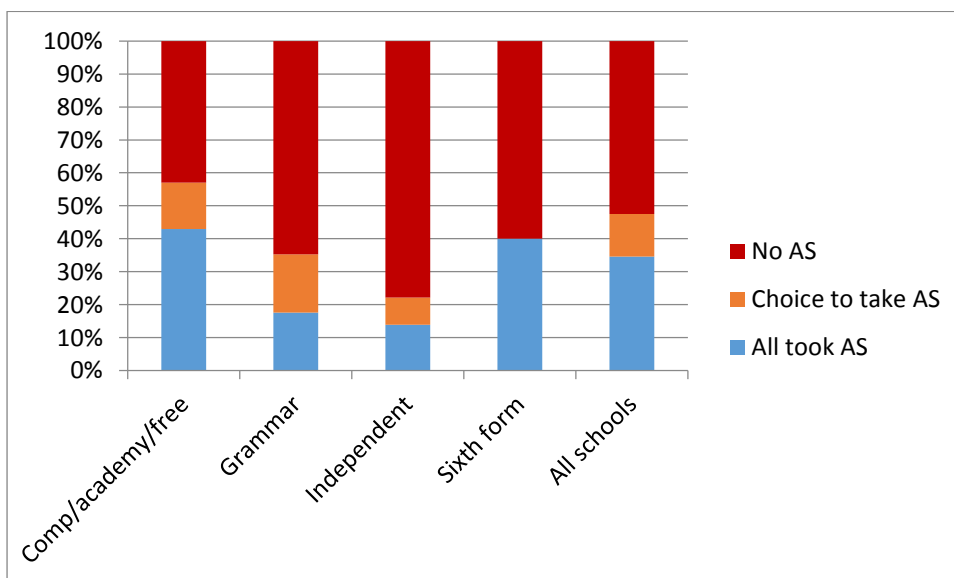
The data about that same cohort of students, collected in the 2017 survey and presented in Figure 14, shows the policy that schools actually operated.

Figure 14: 2017: School decisions about entry for AS history for those completing A-level in 2017



As Figure 14 reveals, the vast majority of those who completed A-levels in 2017 had been entered for AS exams in Year 12, as respondents in 2015 had suggested would happen. However, Figure 15, which presents schools' decisions for the most recent cohort of Year 12 students, reveals a significant reduction in the number of schools entering students for the AS examination. Most respondents who make a comment report that their school's policy is for future students to study three A-levels from the outset. Where an explanation for this policy is offered, it is generally linked to the costs of entering students for exams that essentially count for nothing within the linear model.

Figure 15 2017: School decisions about entry for AS history for those in Year 12



5.3 Time allocation for A-level history

The anticipated increase in the demands of the new A-level linear model meant that we were also interested in how much time schools devote to the subject. As we had not previously investigated this issue through the survey, there is no comparable data for the figures presented here.

The data presented in Tables 9 and 10 shows little difference between the two year groups; schools providing four hours of teaching a week for Year 12 students tend to offer the same amount to Year 13.

Table 9 2017: Time allocation in hours for those in Year 12 doing A-level

Hours allocated	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Comp/academy/free	2.4%	8.1%	34.1%	41.5%	4.9%	0.0%	1.6%	4.1%	3.3%
Grammar	0.0%	0.0%	64.7%	17.6%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	5.9%
Independent	2.8%	0.0%	22.2%	52.8%	11.1%	5.6%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Sixth form	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
All schools	2.2%	5.5%	34.6%	41.8%	6.0%	1.1%	2.2%	3.3%	3.3%

Table 10 2017: Time allocation in hours for those in Year 13 doing A-level

Hours	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Comp/academy/free	2.5%	9.0%	29.5%	45.1%	5.7%	0.0%	0.8%	4.9%	2.5%
Grammar	0.0%	5.9%	58.8%	17.6%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	5.9%
Independent	2.8%	0.0%	19.4%	41.7%	25.0%	2.8%	2.8%	2.8%	2.8%
Sixth form	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
All schools	2.2%	6.6%	30.4%	42.0%	9.4%	0.6%	1.1%	4.4%	3.3%

A small number of schools appear to have increased the number of hours allocated to teaching in Year 12, but more schools, especially among the grammar schools that responded to the survey, have actually reduced the amount of contact time, as can be seen in Table 11. Overall there is no significant shift in hours allocated to the subject, but any decrease is perhaps surprising given the increased demands of the new linear courses. In these circumstance such decisions seem likely to be due (at least in part) to financial constraints – an assumption which is explored (and confirmed) in section 6.2. It is also perhaps worth acknowledging that the move away from entering students for AS-level has given schools more teaching time overall, as they no longer need to spend time preparing Year 12 students for public exams (although they may choose to hold internal exams).

Table 11 2017: Change in time allocation in hours for A-level teaching

	Same	Increased	Decreased
Comp/academy/free	82.8%	6.6%	10.7%
Grammar	64.7%	0.0%	35.3%
Independent	85.7%	8.6%	5.7%
Sixth form	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%
All schools	81.1%	7.2%	11.7%

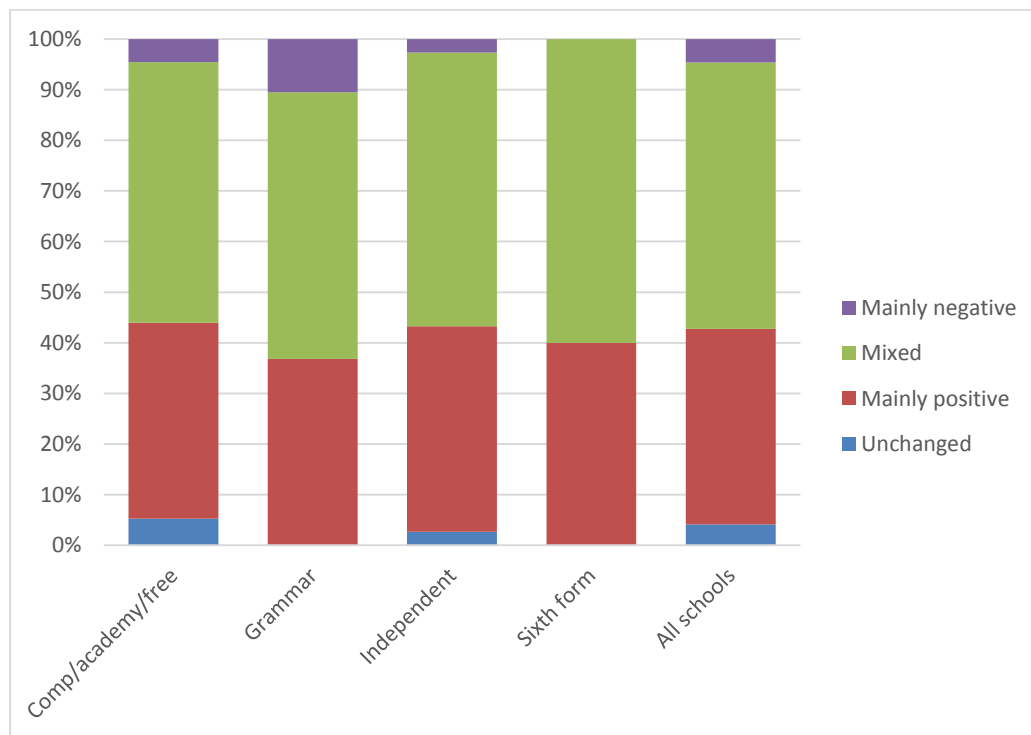
As Tables 9 and 10 indicate, most schools offer between four and five hours of teaching per week, an allocation that is consistent across the different types of schools. Having said that, the spread of teaching time, ranging from two to ten hours, highlights the fact that there are some major inequalities between different institutions and probably reflects different curriculum models and/or the effects of financial constraints within some schools and colleges.

5.4 The experience of teaching the linear A-level history

Respondents were invited to share their experience of teaching the new linear A-level; 182 responded to a closed question categorising their perception of the changes and of these 85 teachers provided more detailed responses to an open question.

As can be seen in Figure 16 the vast majority of respondents report a mixed experience, which is generally to be expected with such a change. Nevertheless many teachers report an essentially positive experience.

Figure 16 2017: Overall experience of teaching the linear A-level history



Analysis of the comments reveals a very positive reaction to the range of content available. Twenty-two teachers mentioned this specifically:

In terms of content and student experience the OCR syllabus is much more open and enjoyable.

[Teacher 170, comprehensive/academy/free]

The modules are more challenging and enable both deeper engagement with the history and also a broader expanse of historical knowledge.

[Teacher 266, sixth form college]

There are also five positive comments about the personal investigation students are able to carry out. Five teachers also suggest that the linear nature of the specification means that students are able to engage with historical issues in more depth, which allows them to develop better understanding. Four responses also highlight the scope for students to develop a better appreciation of different historical interpretations.

The student research element is still a positive and encourages strong historiography. [I also value] the improved nature of the examination questions.

[Teacher 177, comprehensive/academy/free]

I appreciate the nature of the coursework investigations, giving students a real sense of 'doing' history.

[Teacher 163, independent]

The courses are interesting and students have enjoyed it. Coursework is also a far better place for exploring historians' interpretations than in an exam.

[Teacher 230, comprehensive/academy/free]

Broader focus in content; better exam questions; time to secure knowledge and develop writing style.

[Teacher 31, grammar]

The new courses are excellent and we like the assessment model (we're doing AQA).

[Teacher 293, independent]

The main concern expressed in the responses relates to a lack of exemplar material from the exam boards and a lack of clarity about expectations. Thirty-two teachers highlight issues of this kind:

However quality of advice and support has been poor with lots of confusion/mixed messages amongst teachers and seemingly exam board staff.

[Teacher 284, comprehensive/academy/free]

It has been difficult adjusting to the new specifications, particularly in terms of not knowing how much depth to go into.

[Teacher 272, comprehensive/academy/free]

I have not enjoyed the drip release of information pertaining to how questions will be marked/guidance on structure. Particularly on the interpretation and source questions.

[Teacher 198, comprehensive/academy/free]

We know it will take a few years for the course to bed in and examiners to become clear about what they expect. However due to changes in government regulations there are restraints on what examiners can feed back to teachers which is frustrating.

[Teacher 161, sixth form college]

Alongside concerns about the support available from exam boards, 19 teachers criticise the new textbooks being developed specifically for the course. These were either late in being published or are regarded as lacking in detail. In just one case the new textbook is seen as excessively complicated and confusing for students.

The textbooks were rushed out and are patchy. Today's Paper 3 exam had a question requiring a detailed knowledge of a figure not covered in depth by any textbook for example.

[Teacher 161, sixth form college]

Textbooks were not ready. Textbooks are very thin and could not rely on them at all.

[Teacher 169, comprehensive/academy/free]

There are also a number of concerns about assessment generally. Five responses are specifically about the weighting of papers and the imbalance of the mark allocation in relation to the amount of teaching time/content coverage required:

The 200 year rule is a bit of a pain and unnecessary as is the imbalance in marks between papers e.g. one OCR paper requires quite a lot of teaching but only equates to 15% of the final mark.

[Teacher 249, independent]

Overall there are 23 other comments related to assessment, covering a number of points, from the lack of clarity over the standards expected in relation to the assessment objectives; to the moderation processes for coursework; and new approaches to examination questions:

The most difficult things to get to grips with have been the new assessment methods, especially the interpretations for unit 1 and the coursework (unit 4).

[Teacher 188, grammar]

Coursework was very difficult to standardize. No indications of grade boundaries for any aspect of the new courses.

[Teacher 64, comprehensive/academy/free]

The concerns about assessment include eight specific comments about the coursework element. Edexcel's non-examined assessment (NEA) is picked out twice as being particularly onerous. There is also a sense that the coursework was difficult to manage alongside the demands of the rest of the course; and, according to one teacher:

The coursework is difficult and beyond some candidates.

[Teacher 96, independent]

Another area of considerable concern is the challenge of covering the broader range of content within the allocated curriculum time. Twenty-three responses highlight this as a serious issue:

Too much content to get through in a year properly.

[Teacher 206, independent]

Financial cutbacks have reduced the time allocated to all A-level subjects, there are also pressures trying to complete all of the content coverage within the time available.

[Teacher 250, grammar]

Huge amount of content to get through on the depth study.

[Teacher 78, grammar]

Some colleagues who have taught other units, particularly those designed to be taught in Year 12, dislike them, feeling that there is too much content to be taught in too short a time.

[Teacher 62, independent]

The amount of content required to know for the end of Y13 is insane! Especially as you need to revise the whole of the Y12 course. We just did not have enough time to teach the syllabus.

[Teacher 19, independent]

A big jump in the amount of content needed for the exams, particularly at A2. We are also concerned that students revise so much, but don't get a chance to use it in the exams.

[Teacher 5, comprehensive/academy/free]

Considering the amount of change happening in schools and the nature of the changes it is perhaps surprising that there are only five comments about the demands on staff workload, with a further five comments about staff needing to develop their subject knowledge to teach new topics.

Collectively the responses seem to reflect a desire for the new specifications to be implemented successfully. There are very few responses that are purely negative; instead most of the comments seem to reflect frustrations with the implementation of the changes, as seen in points about the lack of exam board support and textbook resources. But overall the comments highlight a general positive reaction to the new courses:

I love the new A-level. Everything about it is better – assessment, content, enjoyment, chronology, coursework, everything.

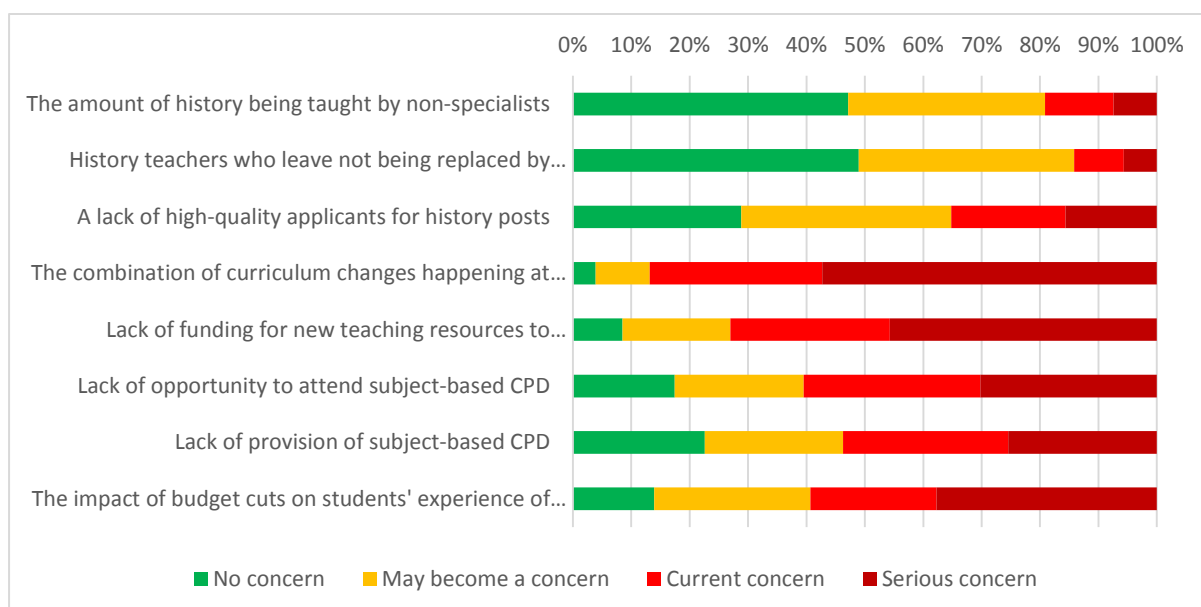
[Teacher 309, comprehensive/academy/free]

6. Teachers' concerns

6.1 The nature of teachers' concerns

In reporting on the extent to which teachers regard certain issues as a matter of current concern, shown in Figure 17, we have focused on the views of individual teachers, counting those from each respondent rather than reporting a single view from each school. Since 2016-17 was the year in which the new A-levels were first examined as well the year in which all schools (regardless of the length of their Key Stage 4 curriculum) were teaching the new GCSE specification for the first time to Year 10, it is hardly surprising that the combination of curriculum change rates as teachers' highest concern. Over half of all respondents (57.3%) regard the pressures that this created as a matter of serious concern and a further 29.5% of respondents view it as a current concern. These proportions are very slightly lower than those reported in 2016 (63.8% and 28.8% respectively), but the fall perhaps suggests that the pressures are beginning to ease, with only one more year of major change ahead.

Figure 17 2017: The percentage of teachers who regarded particular issues as a matter of concern



Linked with curriculum change are teachers' concerns about inadequate funds to buy necessary new resources, noted as a serious concern by almost half of respondents (45.7%) and a current concern to another 27.3%. This represents a slight fall compared to last year when the relevant figures were 53.3% and 25.6%. While the levels of concern were similarly high across different types of state-funded schools, the incidence of concern was unsurprisingly lower among those working in independent schools. But even in that context just under of a quarter of respondents regard the issue as a matter of current or serious concern.

Lack of appropriate subject-specific CPD remains a matter of significant concern, reported at very similar levels as last year. Around 60% of teachers regard their lack of opportunity to attend history-specific CPD as a current concern and for half of these respondents the concern is 'serious'. While the fact that they cannot attend may be caused by financial constraints or the reluctance of senior leaders to allow subject teachers to take time away from the classroom, there is also a high level of

concern about the *availability* of appropriate history-specific CPD; reported as a current concern by 28.3% of teachers and as a serious concern by 25.4%.

Although the proportions of teachers reporting concerns about the other issues shown in Figure 16 are much smaller, it is important to note that nearly a fifth of respondents (19.1%) are currently concerned about the amount of history being taught by non-specialists. There is relatively little concern at present about history teachers who leave not being replaced by subject specialists (a matter of concern to only 14.2% respondents), but more worries are being expressed about the availability of high-quality applicants for the history posts that are being advertised – a matter of concern for over a third of respondents (17.7% regarding it as a serious concern and 19.6% as a current concern). These are issues that we have been keen to monitor given the concerns about budget cuts caused by pressure on school resources and the upheaval that there has been within initial teacher education. In relation to all three of these issues it is therefore encouraging to note that the level of concern reported here is lower than it was last year (when 24.2% reported concerns about the amount of non-specialist history teaching; 24.5% reported concerns about non-specialists not being replaced; and 41.0% concerns about the quality of applicants for history posts).

As part of our investigation of these concerns, we also included some more specific questions focused on the effects of budget cuts and asking those who had advertised for new teachers to explain their concerns in a little more detail.

6.2 The reported effects of budget cuts

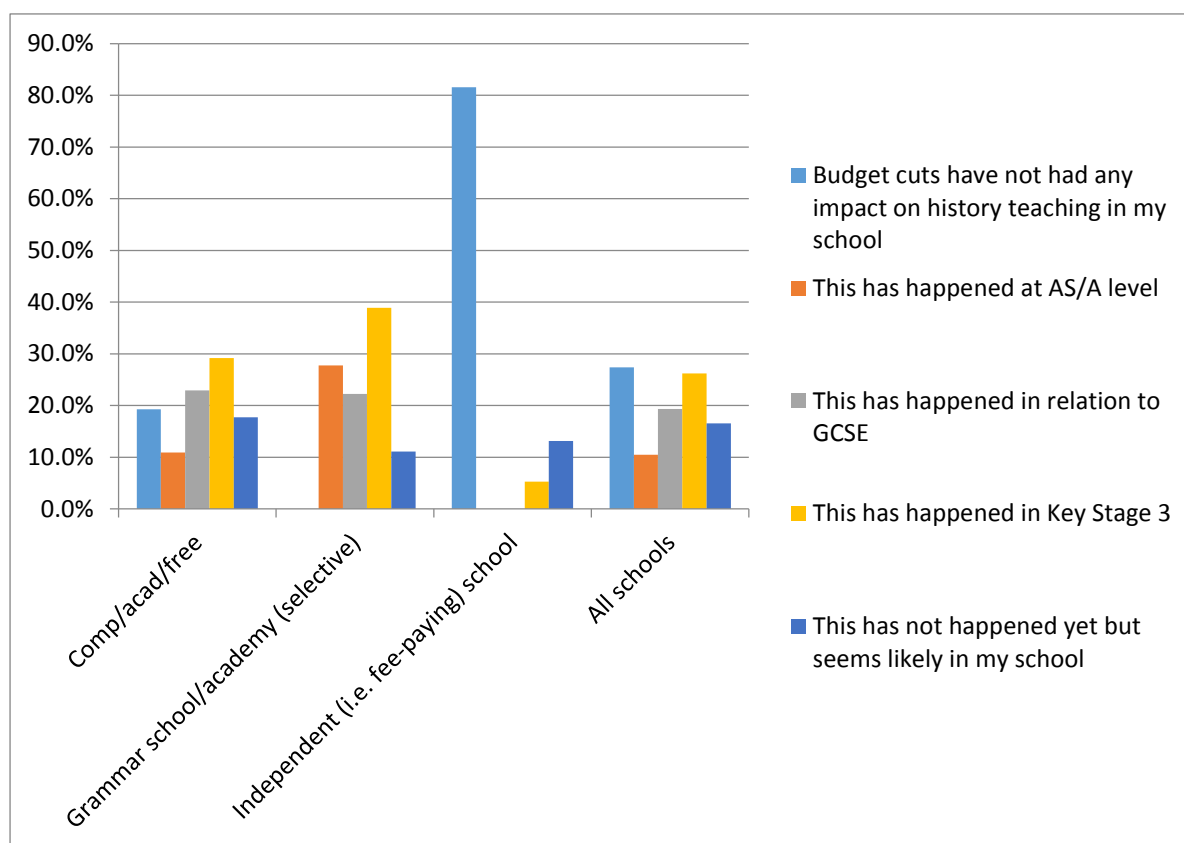
The survey asked about three possible implications of budget cuts: increases in class size; decisions not to offer history within the curriculum and a reduction in face-to-face teaching (i.e. the number of hours allocated to teaching the subject). Figure 18 presents the responses received in relation to class size (counting just one response from each school).

While independent schools have been largely immune from the effects of budget cuts with only two respondents reporting an increase in class sizes at Key Stage 3, all other types of school have seen some increase.⁵ This has happened most often at Key Stage 3 (as experienced by 26.2% of schools), and slightly less often at GCSE (reported by 19.4%) and relatively infrequently at A-level (10.5%). This pattern may reflect the fact that schools have less scope to increase class sizes at A-level, since group size may depend on the numbers opting for the subject. We know that numbers embarking on A-level history overall are falling (as reported above and as reflected in the 8.1% fall in A-level history entries in 2017 reported by the Joint Council for Qualifications).

Very few schools report that they have actually removed history as an option, but this is, unfortunately, reported to be the case at A-level in six schools (all comprehensives). Another 32 schools (including two grammar schools and two independent schools) report that they fear that this might happen in the future. This is a matter of grave concern in terms of the restrictions it imposes on young people's opportunities to pursue the subject.

⁵ It is worth noting in respect of these reported increases in class size that the DFE has made the assumption that class sizes will be increasing over the next ten years. In estimating the number of new teachers that need to be trained each year, the DFE has factored into its Teacher Supply Model an assumption that pupil: teacher ratios will increase from 14.5 to 16.0 over the decade from 2016/17. DFE (2017). *Teacher Supply Model 2017/18*. Available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/teacher-supply-model-2017-to-2018>

Figure 18 The reported effects of budget cuts on increases in class sizes at different Key Stages

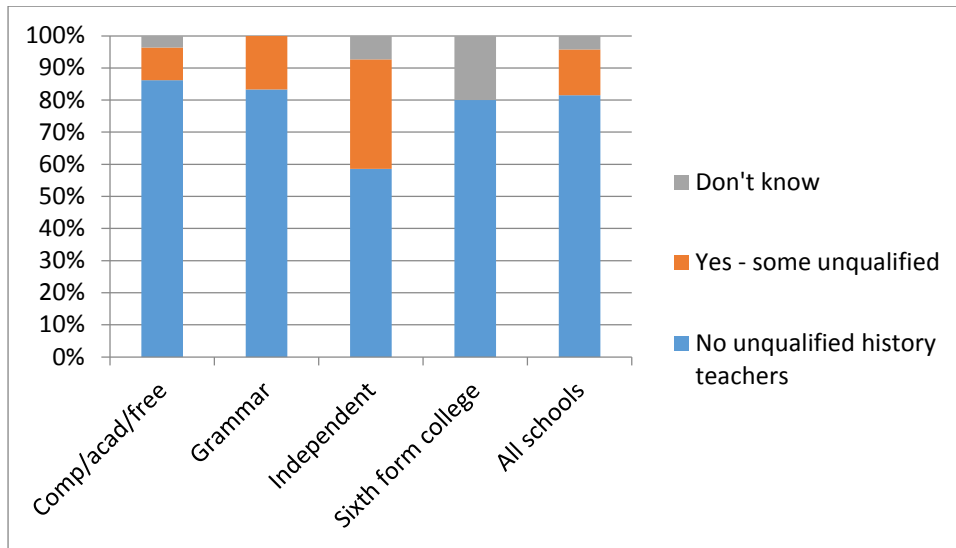


Decisions to reduce the amount of face-to-face teaching are reported by rather more schools: 29 in total, including six grammar schools but none in the independent sector. In ten cases this reduction is reported at A-level (mainly in grammar schools, as noted above) but reductions are also reported in four cases at GCSE and in nine cases at Key Stage 3. Again, this is a matter of considerable concern.

6.3 History teacher qualifications and recruitment

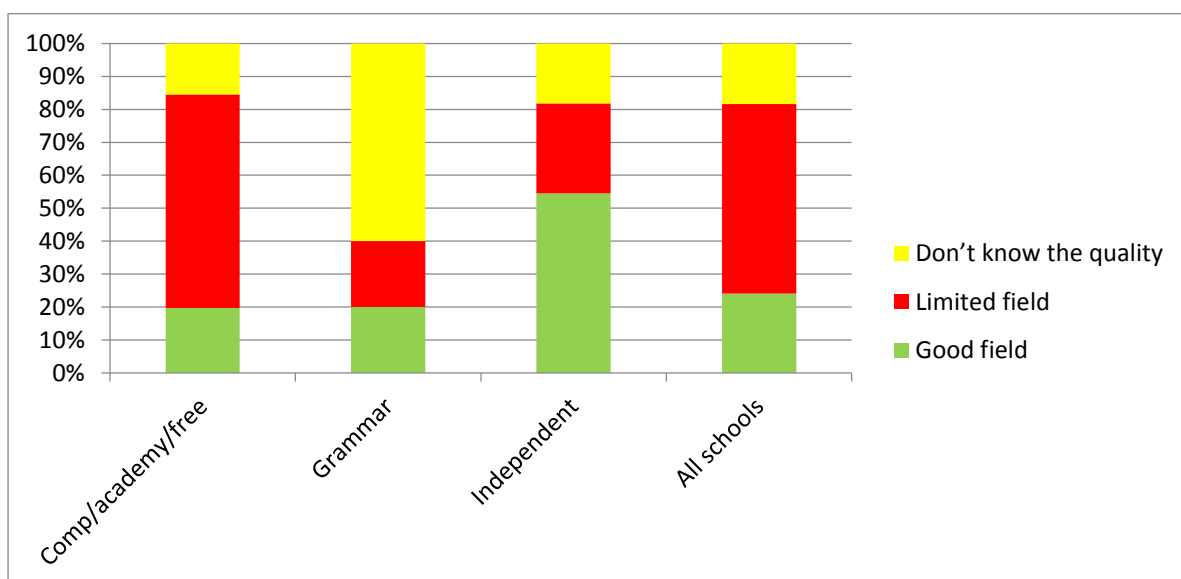
In looking at schools' experiences of recruiting new history teachers we included a question asking whether or not the respondents' schools employed any history teachers without formal qualifications. As Secretary of State, Michael Gove took the decision to allow free schools and academies to employ teachers without qualified teacher status (QTS) and as Figure 19 shows, 10.3% of non-selective and 16.7% of selective state-funded schools report that they now employ history teachers without QTS. (The proportion is higher in independent schools, which have never been required to employ qualified teachers.) It is possible that some of those employed without QTS may be undertaking employment-based training within Teach First or the School Direct salaried scheme but this was not reported.

Figure 19 2017: The proportion of respondents in each type of school reporting that they employ history teachers without qualified teacher status



We also asked all respondents that had recently advertised posts to comment on the quality of the field of applicants. Only 87 respondents were in this position and, as Figure 20 shows, many of them did not have sufficient information about the appointment process to comment on the quality or number of applicants. It was alarming to note, however, that only one quarter of these respondents (from 21 schools) could confidently report that there had been a good field of applicants for the post. Across all school types 50 respondents (57.5% of the total answering this question) report that the field was limited and across the comprehensives, academies and free schools, this figure is even higher at 64.8% (46 of the 71 schools of this kind). Some 25 schools (only one of them an independent school) report that they had only one to three applicants for the history post that they advertised.

Figure 20 2017: The quality of the field reported by schools that had recently advertised a history post



Both DFE teacher supply models and research conducted by TES Global on recruitment to posts in a particular period in the spring each year,⁶ continue to suggest that history remains one of the secondary school subjects in which there is *not* a teacher shortage, but these survey responses suggest that even in history it is becoming very difficult to recruit.

When asked to comment on the particular strengths and weaknesses of applicants or of those teachers that had been recently appointed, a wide range of specific capabilities was noted. The list of both strengths and weaknesses highlight similar qualities as important: while subject knowledge and behaviour management are both frequently mentioned, so too is subject-specific pedagogy, with a strong focus on planning and assessment. Many other specific features of practice are noted by one or two teachers. Several of those involved in School Direct programmes are very pleased to have been able to prepare their own trainee for the role, but those working within 'university-led' PGCEs also report being able to appoint student-teachers who had completed their main placement with them. While some responses convey strong views of particular training models, opinions about their relative strengths and weaknesses were quite divided.

⁶ TES Global (2016) *TES Recruitment Index: A question of quality (Easter 2016 data)*. Retrieved from https://www.tes.com/sites/default/files/tes_recruitment_index_2016.pdf