

ST. DOMINIC'S

VERITAS  
FOUNDED 1870



GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
FOR GIRLS

# Sixth Form Options Afternoon

4th February 2025



# Overview

- Mr P McMaster (Vice-Principal Curriculum & School Improvement)
  - overview of the options process
- Mr O Murray (Head of CEIAG)
  - skills barometer, knowledge-based economy, People Hawk, Unifrog & careers provision in school
- Subjects not studied at GCSE
  - An overview of Politics, Sociology, Psychology, Professional Business Services and Financial Studies.
- Subject Fayre
  - An opportunity to speak with Heads of Department and students studying A levels in St Dominic's.



Mr P McMaster  
Vice-Principal Curriculum  
& School Improvement





# A key stage in your child's education

- Crucial stage in your child's educational career;
- Decisions made in the coming weeks will have an impact down the line;
- Vital that decisions are effective and informed;
- Review child's academic performance and listen to advice from teachers.



# Admissions Criteria

- Admission to Sixth Form is not automatic and students need to fulfil the general and subject specific entry criteria.
- Parents and students should familiarise themselves with these criteria.
- Subject entrance criteria can be found in the pack you received today.



# General Entrance Criteria

- A minimum of 12\* points spread across at least 7 subjects, including passes in GCSE English Language and Mathematics.
- At least a grade B at GCSE in the subjects chosen for A level. Subject specific criteria applies.
- For subjects not offered at GCSE performance in other subjects will be considered.
  - Points are calculated as follows:
    - A\*/A 3 points
    - B 2 points
    - C 1 point



# General Entrance Criteria

- Satisfactory records of attendance, punctuality and general behaviour.
  - Where there are concerns about these aspects of a students' record, they will be offered a provisional place in Year 13 and their progress will be closely monitored throughout the year.
- In exceptional circumstances, the Principal reserves the right to offer a place to a student who has not met the academic criteria but who has an otherwise impeccable school record.



# Making effective decisions

- Consider your interests, career goals, and university/ apprenticeships requirements.
- Choose subjects you enjoy and excel in, but also ones that align with your future plans.
- Research university course/apprenticeship requirements to ensure you're meeting prerequisites.
- Balance your choices with a mix of subjects to keep options open.





# Making effective decisions

- E.g. your aspiration to become a doctor does not mean you need to do all STEM subjects. Identify the core subjects needed (Chemistry and Biology) and explore niche subjects that may set you apart.
- Seek advice from parents, teachers, career advisors, and professionals in fields you're interested in.
- Ultimately, prioritize a combination that both energises you, challenges you and supports your long-term aspirations.



# Support for Students

**Weekly support in Careers lessons**

**Subject teacher guidance**

**Year 12 Options Assembly: Friday 31<sup>st</sup> January at 2:40pm**

**Year 12 Options Event : Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 1:30-3pm**



# How many subjects can I choose?

- You should choose four AS level subjects.
- We strongly recommend choosing four subjects because this keeps options opening.
- It also helps ensure that if one subject does not work out in Year 13 you do not have to repeat the year.



# How the process works

- Complete form to indicate your subject choices. Rank these 1-4 with 1 being the subject you want to study the most.
- Deadline for return of forms to form tutor is Tuesday 18th February 2025, at registration.

**St Dominic's Grammar School**  
**A Level Subject Choices February 2025**

Student Name:  Form Class:

Are you <b>intending to return</b> to St Dominic's Grammar school in September 2025?	Yes	No	Unsure
If you answered no, where do you intend to go next year?			
What do you plan to study/do there?			

**Instructions on how to complete this form**  
 You may choose four subjects in total. Please number them in order of preference i.e. 1 to 4 with 1 being the subject you wish to study most and so on.

**Key Information:**

- If there is insufficient uptake/interest in a subject it may not run. Please ensure that if you really want to study a subject that you make it your number 1 or 2 preference.
- At St Dominic's we use the 'best fit' approach to build the timetable as we feel this is the fairest approach. Once all option forms are returned the data is entered into SIMS and option blocks are generated to maximise preferences for the majority. In some cases, it may not be possible for students to study all their preferred subjects.

Subjects offered in St. Dominic's Grammar School	Preference (1-4)
Art and Design	
Biology	
Chemistry	
Digital Technology	
Drama	
English Literature	
Financial Studies (L3 Certificate and L3 Diploma)	
French	
Geography	
Health and Social Care	
History	
ICT (OCR Cambridge Technical L3)	
Irish	
Mathematics	
Further Mathematics	

St Dominic's Grammar School  
February 2025

St Dominic's Grammar School  
February 2025

Media Studies	
Music	
Physics	
Politics	
Professional Business Services	
Psychology	
Religious Studies	
Sociology	
Spanish	
Systems Software Development	
Sport and Physical Activity (OCR Cambridge Technical L3)	
Technology and Design	

**Possible Career Path at this stage...**

Please list any careers that you may be interested in

**Parental confirmation:**  
 I confirm that I agree to the subject choices listed on this form. I understand that in a small number of cases there may be clashes and therefore subject choices cannot be guaranteed. I understand that certain degree pathways/ apprenticeships require mandatory subjects and have discussed career pathways with my child. I understand that the timetable will be built based on student subject choices and changes may not be possible at a later date. Subject specific entry criteria apply.

Parental Signature:  Date:

This form is to be completed and returned to your form teacher during registration by **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025.**

**For Official Use Only:**

Date Submitted:	
Vice-Principal (Curriculum and School Improvement) signature:	



# After forms are submitted

- Students will have some opportunity to confirm or alter subject choices after GCSE results are published in August 2025.
  - However, in the event a subject is over-subscribed preference will be given to students who originally chose a subject in February 2025.
- It is important that students and parents understand that the construction of the timetable for the 2025/26 academic year will begin as soon as subjects are chosen.
- The timetable will be based exclusively on the subject choices made by students. Once the timetable is constructed changes will be facilitated where possible, but this cannot be guaranteed.





# Best-fit model

- We do not fix our option blocks and instead build them freshly every year to suit the current cohort of students. Our aim is to maximise preferences and suit as many students as possible.
- At St Dominic's we use the 'best-fit' approach to build the timetable. Once all option forms are returned the data is entered into SIMS and option blocks are generated to maximise preferences for the majority.
- In some cases, it may not be possible for students to study all their preferred subjects due to timetabling 'clashes'.



# Best-fit model

- If there is insufficient uptake/interest in a subject it may not run.





## EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS –

Every single day a child is absent from school equates to a day of lost learning.

Attendance percentages can be misleading.

100% Attendance	0 Days Missed	Excellent
95% Attendance	9 Days of Absence 1 Week and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Satisfactory
90% Attendance	19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Poor
85% Attendance	28 Days of Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Very Poor
80% Attendance	38 Days of Absence 7 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Unacceptable
75% Attendance	46 Days of Absence 9 Weeks and 1 Day of Learning Missed	Unacceptable

For some parents, 90% may seem like an acceptable level of attendance, but the reality is that 90% attendance means that your child will miss half a school day each week or 19 days of school during the school year – that's nearly 4 school weeks.



Mr O Murray  
Head of CEIAG



# I am going to talk about

- Skills Barometer
- Apprenticeships
- Recent changes -university
- How to choose A level subjects
- Research
- Extra-curricular activities
- Experiences of work





# How Y12 are preparing for this transition

- Weekly Careers class
- Careers programme
- Access to Unifrog
- Access to PeopleHawk
- Interview with guidance councillor
- Careers Convention
- Subject teachers
- Options Presentations



- Significant investment in the PeopleHawk platform.
- To give all students and career changers the chance to build the career they want, no matter where they've come from.
- Essentially, we want to put ownership for career development back into the hands of the one person who owns it – the individual.

PeopleHawk

4 Steps To Career Success ▾ Career e-Portfolios What's Included? ▾ For Colleges For Business Login

# Match Personality & Skills to the right Career

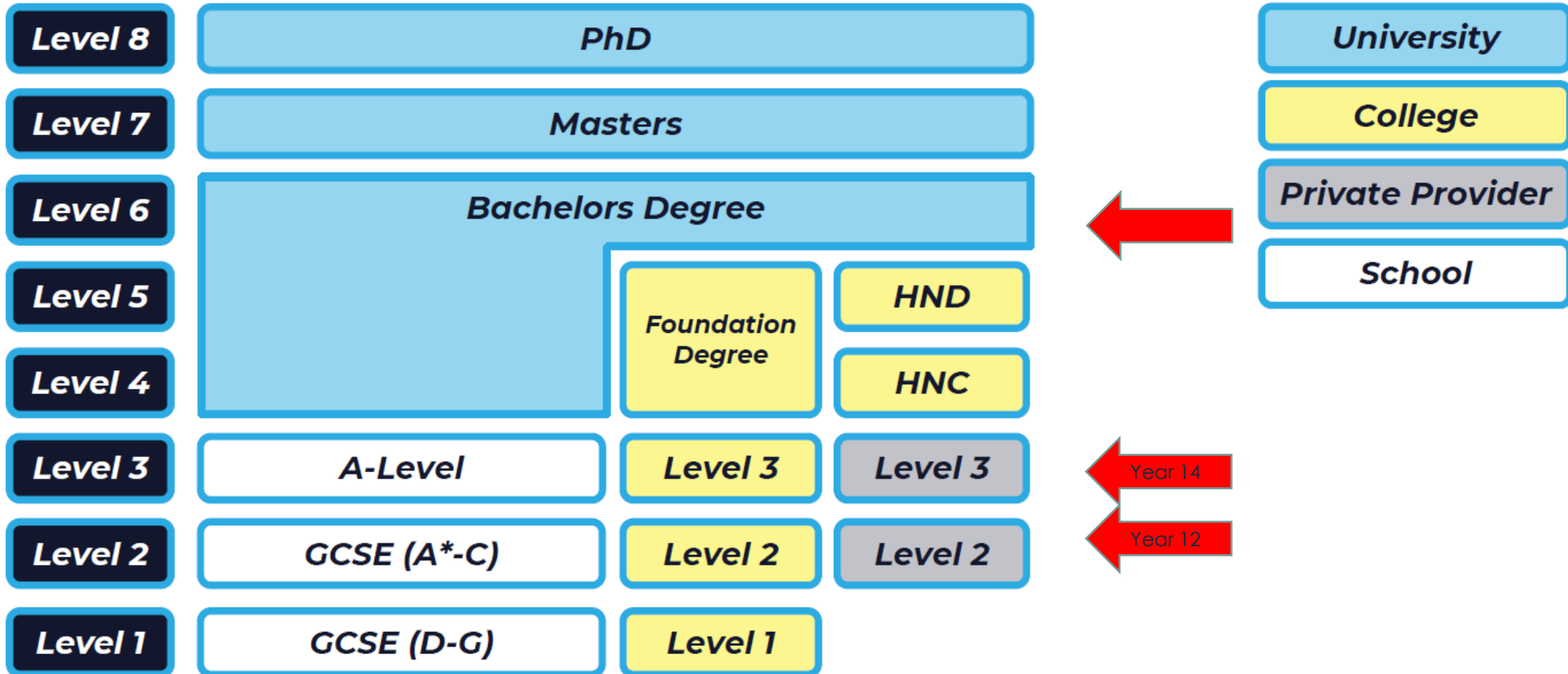
We're on a mission to empower everyone to realise their full career potential using predictive career profiles.

CANDIDATES ▾ COLLEGES > BUSINESS >

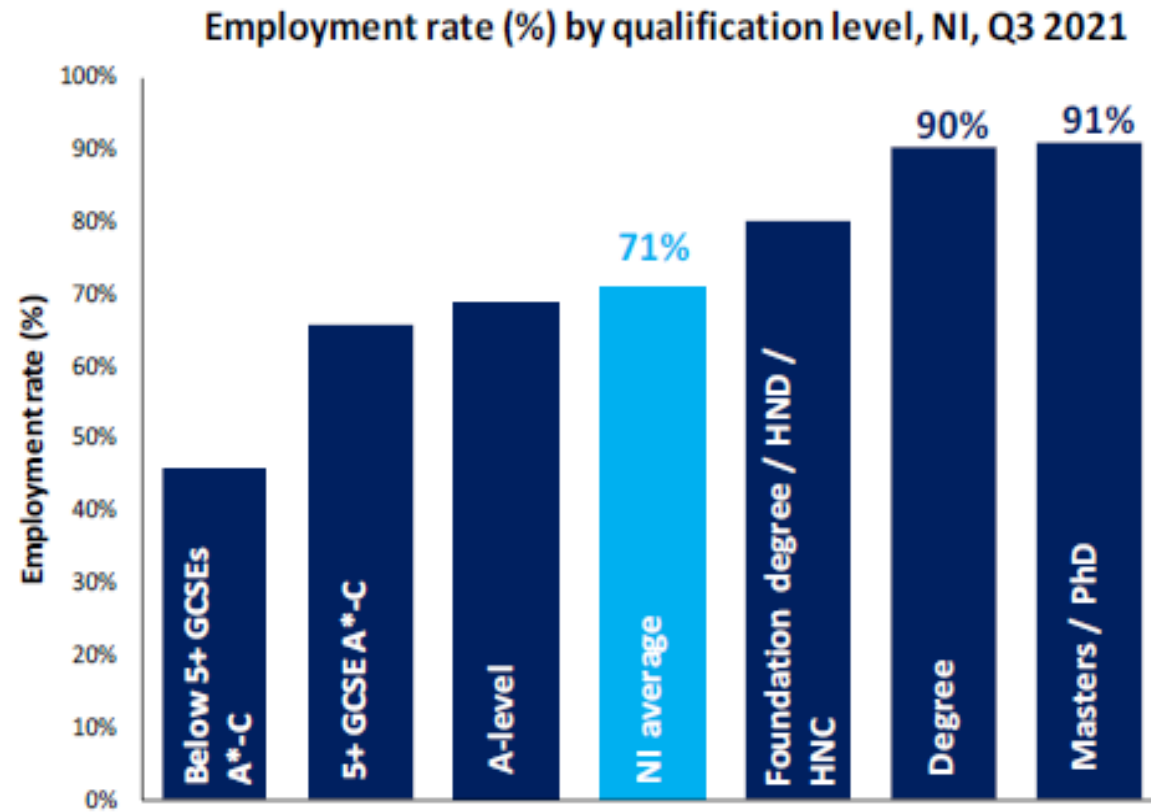


# Qualification levels

work+



# Labour market prospects



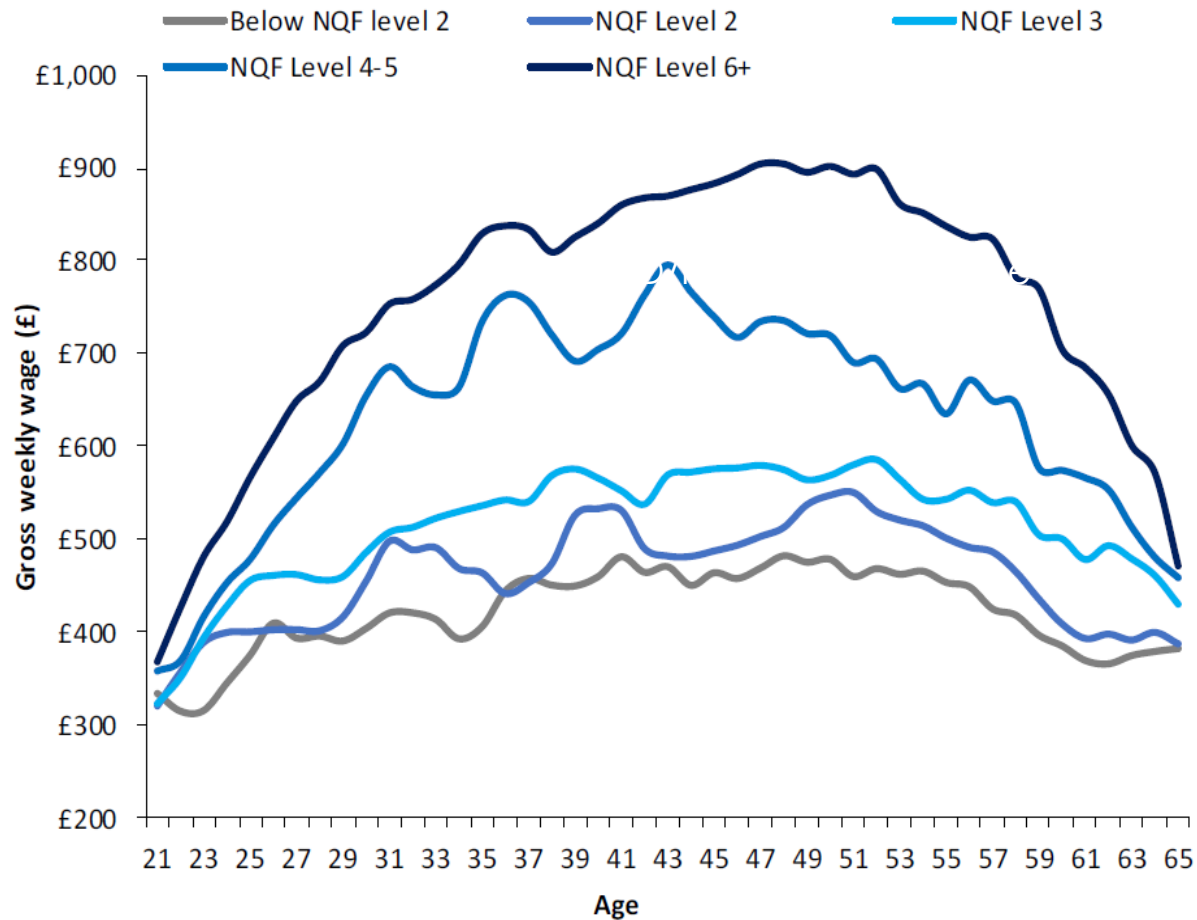
Source: Labour Force Survey, UUEPC analysis

Note: Figures are based on a 4-quarter rolling average



# Earnings progression by age and qualification

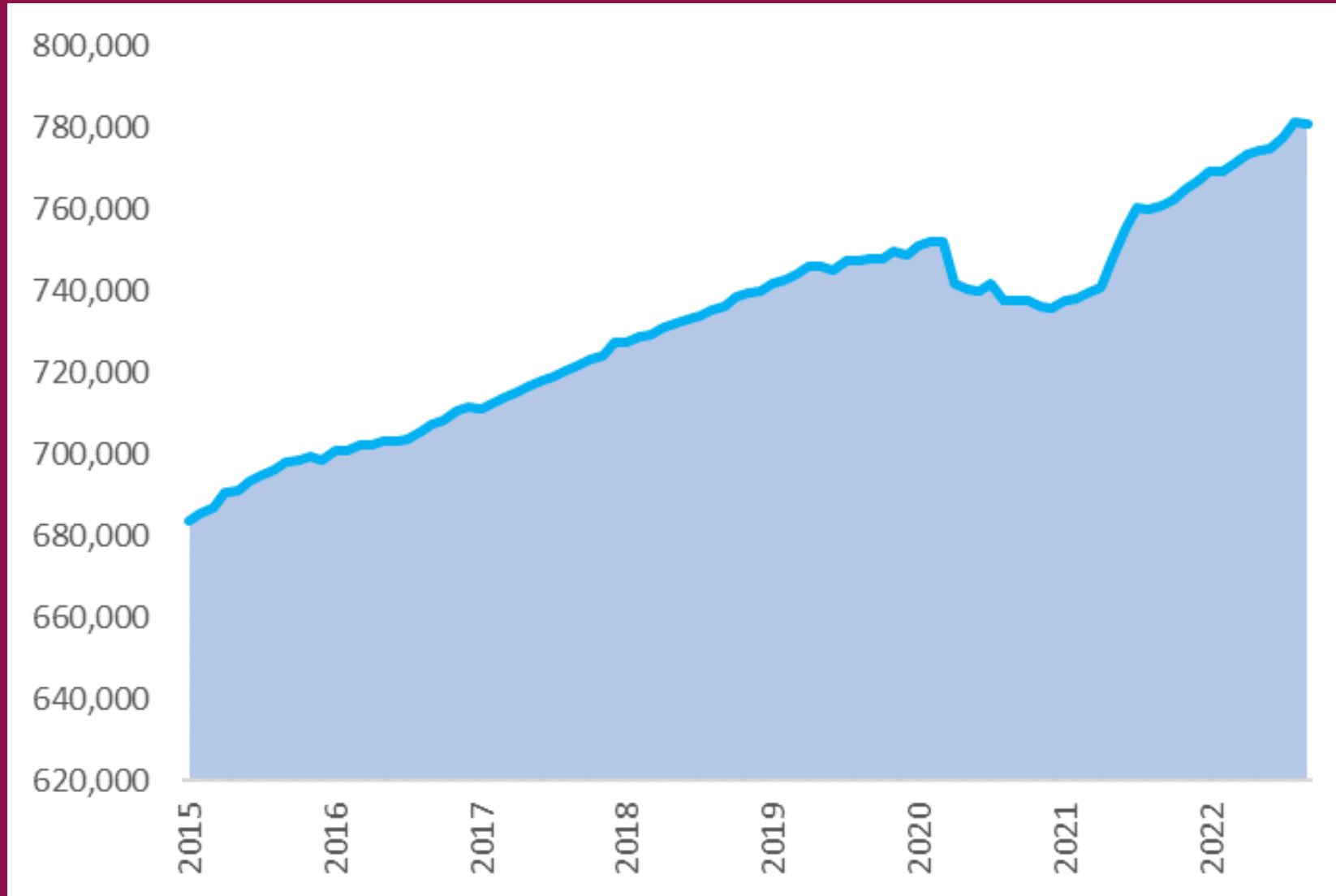
Gross weekly earnings progression by NQF qualifications, UK (4 quarter rolling average to Q3 2021)





# Employee numbers growing strongly

Payrolled employees, NI, 2015-22



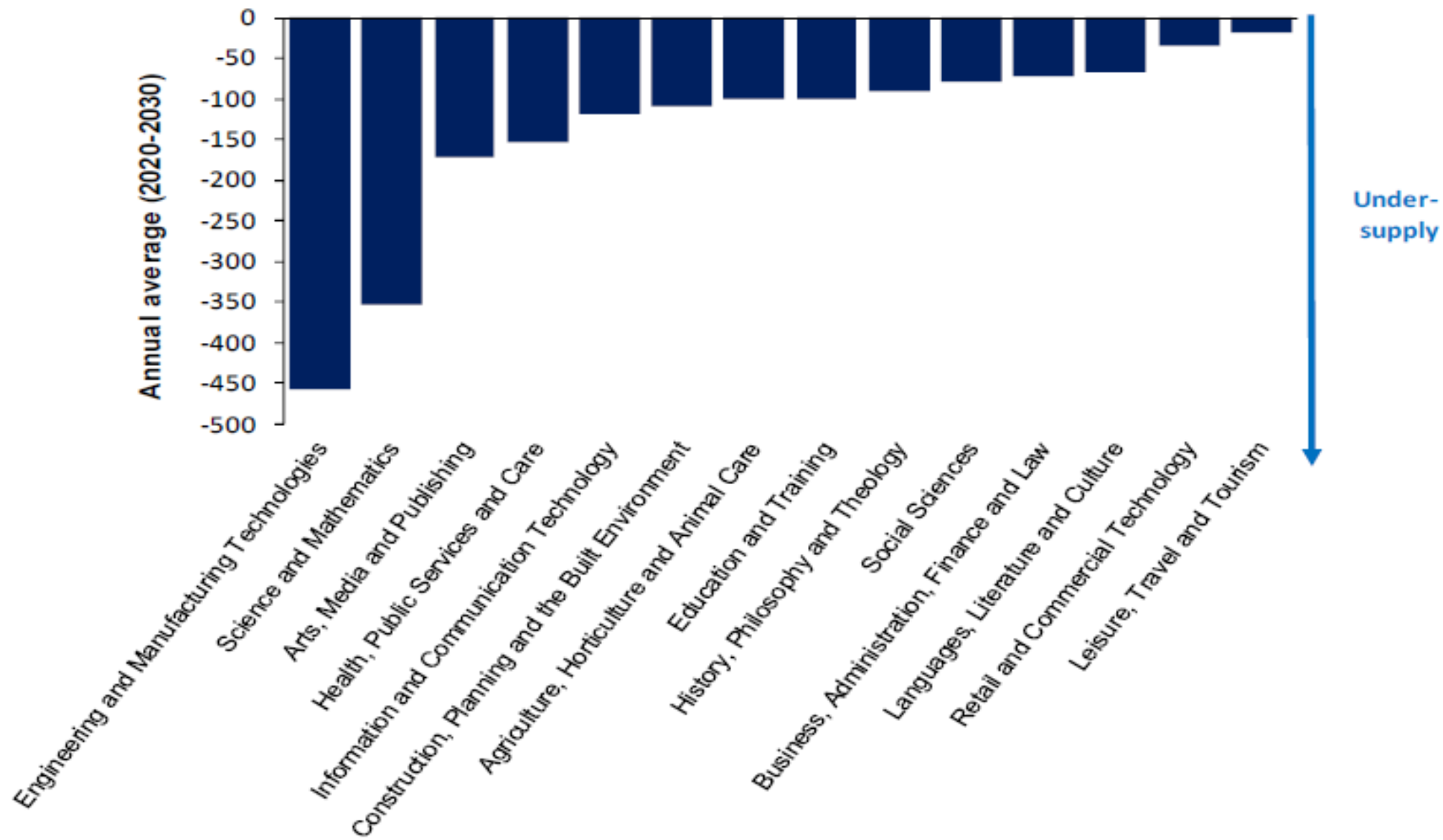
Top 15 most undersupplied NQF level 6+ subjects (JACS, 2-digit) (average annual effective supply gap), NI (2020-2030)



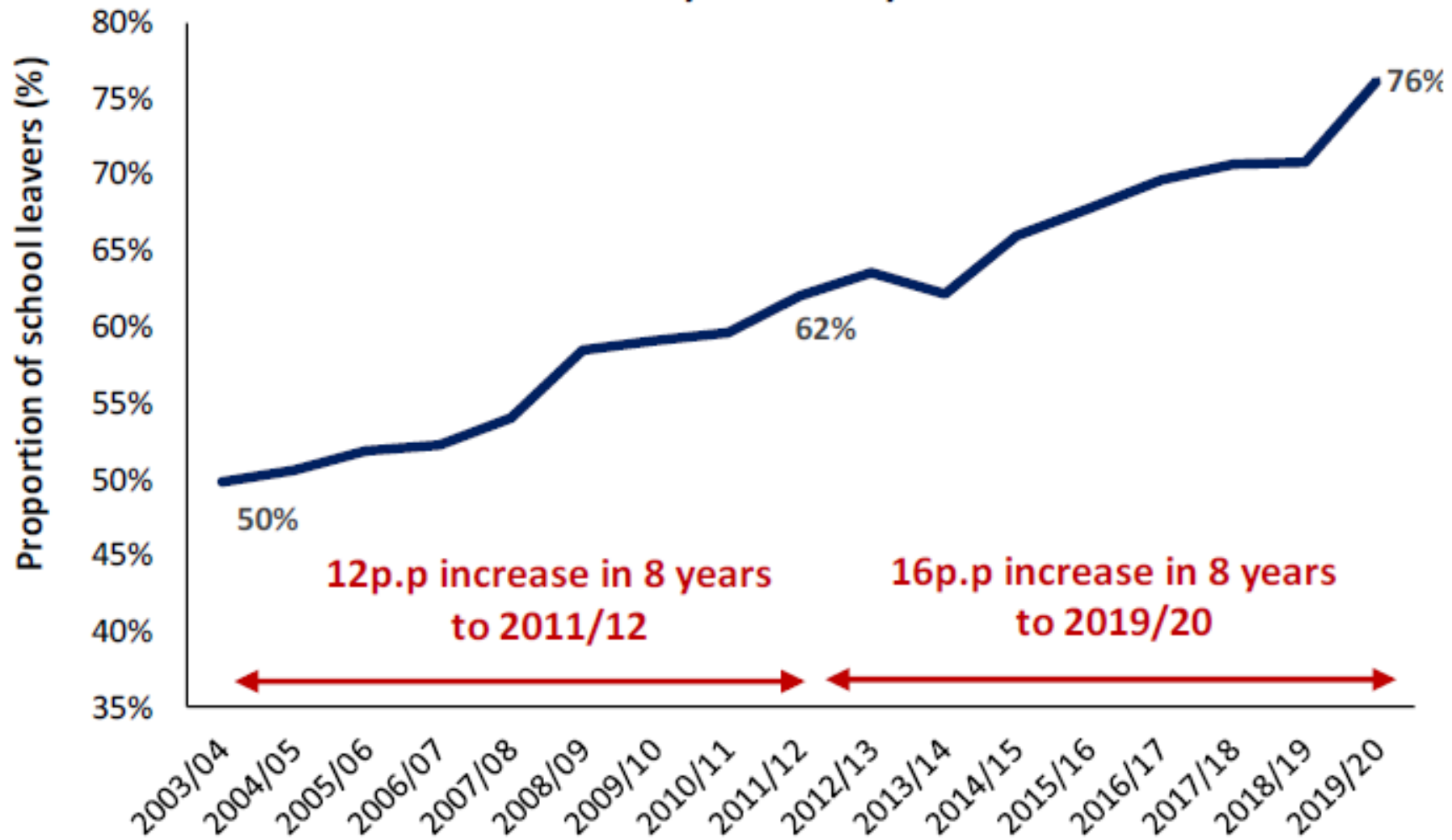
# Supply gap degree subjects



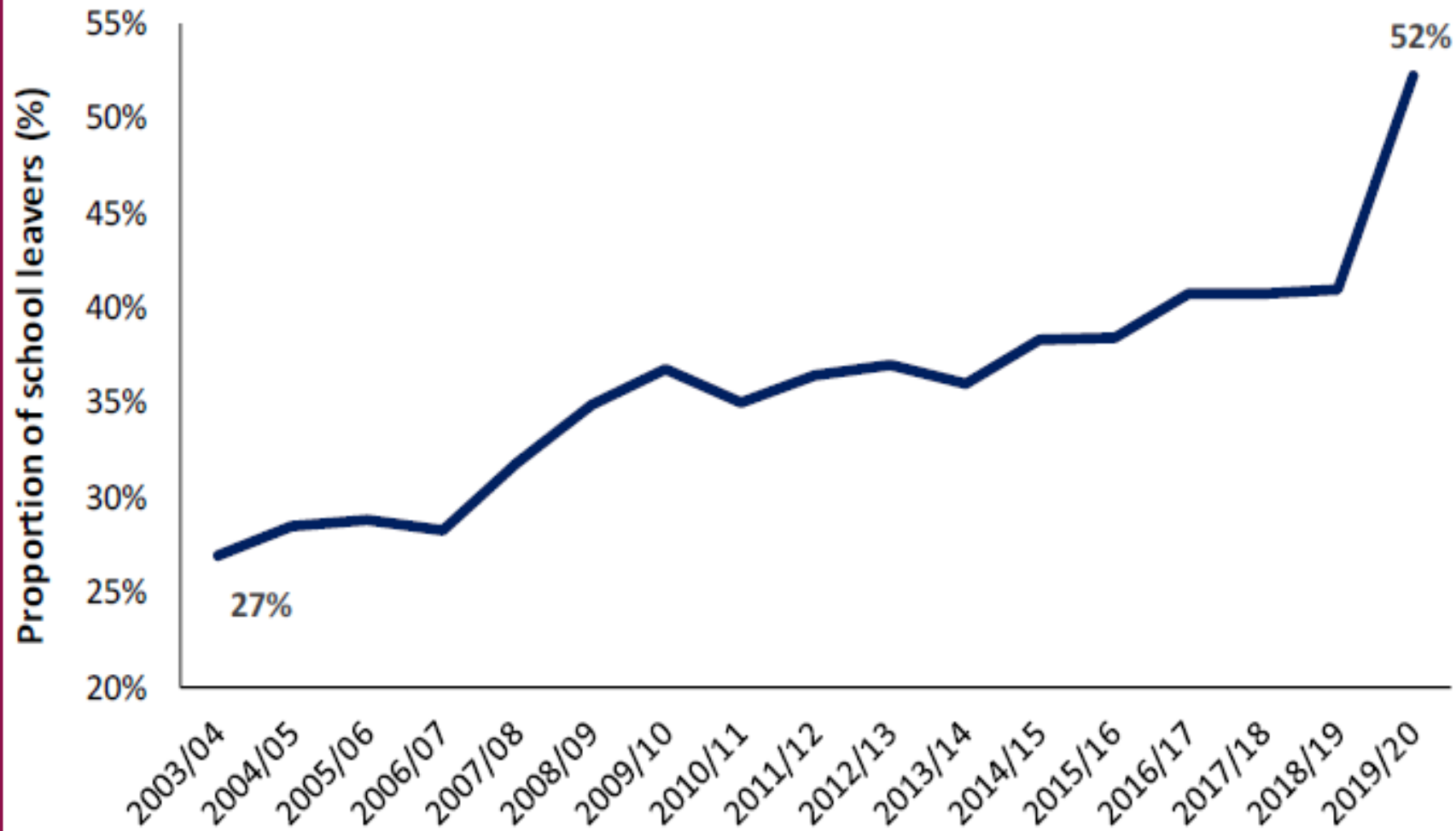
## Annual average effective supply gap by NQF level 4-5 subject (SSAs, 1-digit), NI (2020-2030)



## Achieving at least 5 GCSE's inc. English and Maths, NI, 2003/04 - 2019/20



### Achieving 3+ A-levels A\*-C, NI, 2003/04 - 2019/20



# Summary

- More jobs being created
- We need to produce more graduates
- Increase in the number of young people who gain three A levels
- University places are capped MaSN
- Cost of university has increased but maintenance loan has not
- Young people travelling to other regions to study
- How many return?



# High Level and Degree Apprenticeships

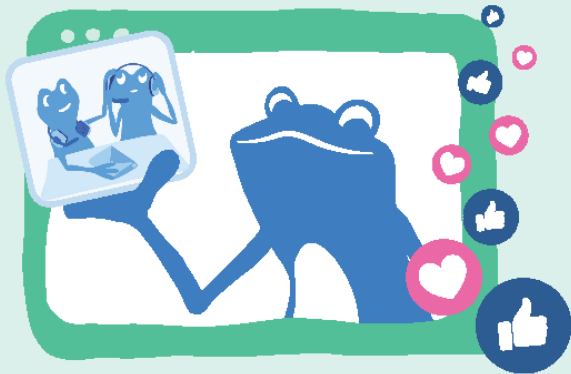
- a salary and guaranteed job while you have course fees paid by your employer
- the potential to achieve graduate and postgraduate qualifications
- new opportunities for career progression if you're already in work
- the chance to gain professional accreditation and membership



unifrog

# APPRENTICESHIP FAIR

Wednesday 12th February, 4–6:30pm



Get involved in National Apprenticeship Week!

Join our virtual fair to find out more and meet **40 employers** with apprenticeships for you!

With experts from:



scan here to sign up  
or visit:

<https://unifrog.ivent-pro.com/events/apprenticeshipfair>

## Parent sign up code

The sign up which is unique to your parents is **STDOparents**. All you need to do to sign up for an account is use this sign-up code at <https://www.unifrog.org/code>





## Audit & Assurance BrightStart Apprenticeship



How to Apply



The BrightStart Journey

No one can tell you what's the best route for you. We all have our own passions and capabilities, and will be inspired and learn in different ways. What we can tell you is **what our BrightStart apprentices enjoy:**

- A permanent job;
- Professional qualifications, fully funded;
- A competitive salary plus lots of fantastic benefits;
- Paid time off to study;
- The chance to work with and learn from industry leaders;
- The support of a buddy and mentor at work;
- Real projects with real clients;
- Valuable insights into the business world;
- Career opportunities that will take you as far as you want to go; and
- A great working environment, with an active social scene.



**Relevant work  
experience is one of  
the most important  
factors looked for in job  
applicants by employers**



# Experiences of Work

- Work experience
- Specialist Open Days
- Voluntary work
- Summer school
- Part-time jobs

## Top activities employers look for on a CV to demonstrate soft skills

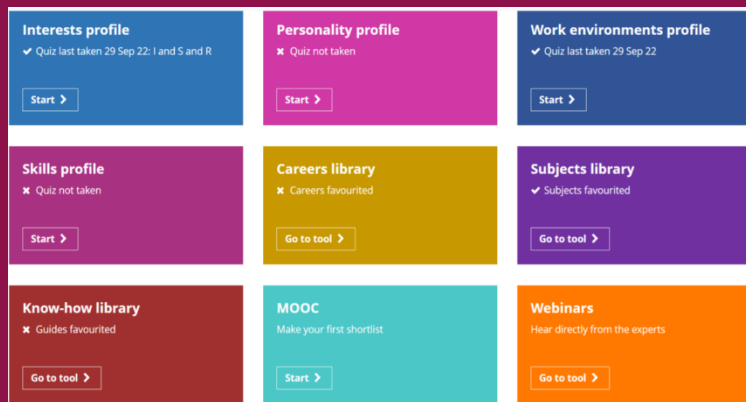
1. Work
2. Internship
3. Career or Major-related Student Organisations
4. Volunteerism
5. Research with a Mentor
6. International Travel of Any Kind
7. Sports : Varsity, Club, Intramural
8. Judging or Competitive Events



# Look for Opportunities in Y12/13

## ONLINE RESOURCES

- Unifrog
- Prospectus
- Virtual Work Experience
- Work Placement



## OPEN DAYS

- Accountancy ✓
- Law ✓
- Engineering ✓
- Health professions ✓
- Nursing ✓
- Psychology ✓
- Radiography
- Medicine ✓
- OT ✓
- Hospital Labs ✓



# Changes in Higher Education

- Ulster University has moved the Jordanstown campus to the Cathedral Quarter September 2022.
- Faculty of Life and Health Sciences is based in Magee and Coleraine
- New Post-graduate Medical School and Therapies has moved to Magee campus; specialising in Health Sciences
- CAO Universities and Institutions showing more interest, more favourable points system for A level, however they do not accept Vocational A levels.



# Sign Up for Open Days

Sign up for 2025 Open Day Updates.

Business School  
AreUU  
ster.ac.uk



FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

# Information for Parents and Guardians

The University guide for parents and guardians of prospective students provides a comprehensive resource for navigating the higher education journey.







**SATURDAY 7 JUNE 2025**

**UNDERGRADUATE OPEN DAY**

## PARENTS AND TEACHERS

### JOIN US ON OUR BEAUTIFUL CAMPUS

Our Undergraduate Open Day is the best way to get a taste of life at Queen's. On **Saturday 7 June from 9.30am - 3pm** you'll learn more about our courses that you can study with us, plus you'll have the opportunity to hear first-hand from our current students and teaching staff about learning and living in Belfast.



## RESEARCHING COURSES

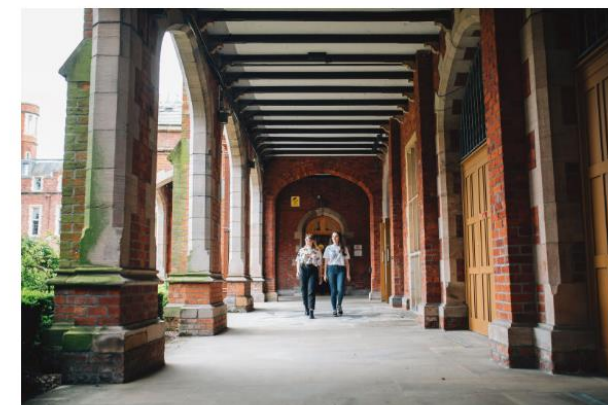
Choosing the right undergraduate degree can be overwhelming for a young person.

[Here's how you can help them](#) narrow down their options and find the perfect course.

## EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT UNIVERSITY

Looking for a reliable resource for all matters related to your young person's university journey?

From demystifying the application process to guiding you through student finance and assisting your young person in securing suitable accommodation, [our comprehensive guide](#) offers invaluable support for those navigating their young person's academic path at Queen's University Belfast.



**REGISTER NOW** ↓



# ACCEPTABLE QUALIFICATION COMBINATIONS

A-level 1

A-level 2

A-level 3

A-level 1

A-level 2

BTEC/OCR  
equivalent  
to one  
A-level (L3)

A-level 1

BTEC/OCR equivalent to  
two A-levels (L3)



## Note:

- BTEC/OCR qualifications are acceptable for entry to all courses except Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacy
- Applicants must satisfy normal GCSE and/or A-level subject requirement(s). BTEC/OCR may be acceptable in satisfying subject requirement(s) for some courses. Contact Admissions and Access Service for guidance ([admissions@qub.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@qub.ac.uk))
- AQA Level 3 Extended Certificate and WJEC Level 3 Applied Extended Certificate treated as equivalent to BTEC/OCR
- Offers expressed in terms of overall grade(s) since 2022 entry





# SEPTEMBER 2024 INTAKE

- NI & ROI including GB Medicine and Dentistry quota-controlled students (MaSN) target of 3,800. (50 Additional Widening Participation places + 25 Additional Medicine places funded by ROI)
- Historical MaSN intakes: 2018 = 3,194; 2019 = 3,346; 2020 = 3,919; 2021 = 3,736; 2022 = 3,241 and 2023 = 3,471
- Total intake to undergraduate degrees – over 5,000 including Nursing & Midwifery, GB and International students
- For many of our high demand courses, we again experienced significant pressure on places at confirmation – precise grades and alternative offers only confirmed in Medicine and Dentistry
- Some flexibility was exercised in **all** other subject areas and the flexibility was as per established practice (alternative offer, averaging above, averaging out, one grade drop and two grade drop) taking account of performance in relevant subject(s)
- 2024 was a good year to be a QUB applicant and offer holder



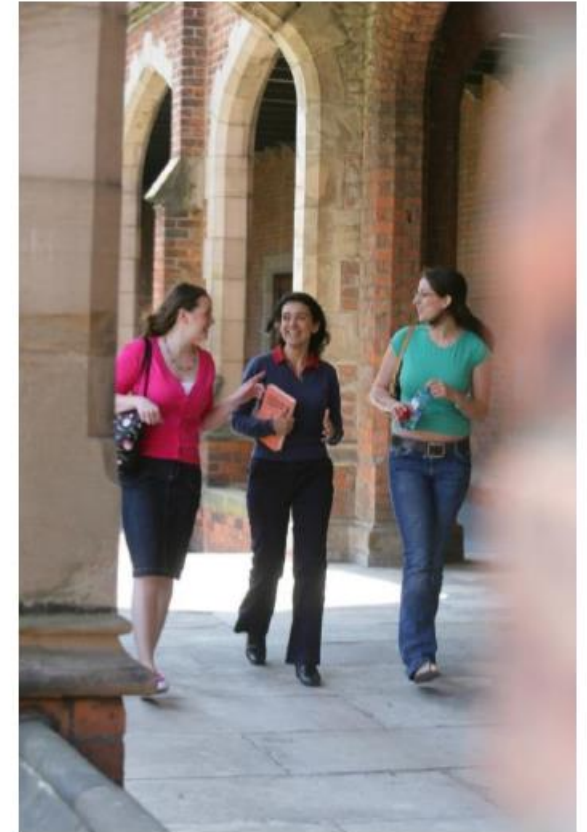
# MEDICINE & DENTISTRY –NI,ROI & GB APPLICANTS

## Dentistry – 45 Home places

- 204 interviewed (181 IN 2023; 177 in 2022; 166 in 2021 and 150 in 2020) 34.5% of applicants
- 82 made offers (72 IN 2023; 54 in 2022, 54 in 2021 and 85 in 2020) – 40.2% of those interviewed
- 4 applicants accepted from reserve list in August/September – lowest ranked applicant accepted ranked 107 (Joint 104 in 2023)

## Medicine – 236 Home places (+25 subsidised places funded by ROI)

- 796 interviewed (775 in 2023; 787 in 2022; 770 in 2021 and 792 in 2020) – 59.6% of applicants
- 432 made offers (334 in 2023; 305 in 2022; 288 in 2021 and 435 in 2020) – 54.3% of those interviewed
- 64 applicants accepted from reserve list in August/September – lowest ranked applicant accepted ranked 739 (487 in 2023)
- Timing of interviews and offers





# SECURING AN OFFER FOR QUEEN'S

GCSE threshold for interview/offers (some examples) – more flexibility in 2024 due to larger intake

	2023	2024
Medicine *	38 points	38 points OR 37 points + SJT Band 1 or 2
Dentistry *	37 points	38 points
Actuarial **	34 points	32 points
Accounting (MAcc)	GCSE - 2 A/7 + 4 B/6 Including Mathematics grade B/6	GCSE – 6 B/6 Including Mathematics grade B/6
Law	GCSE - 2 A/7 + 4 B/6	GCSE – Average 6 B/6 (including 1 A/7)
PPE	GCSE - 6 B/6 Including Mathematics grade B/6	GCSE - 6 B/6 Including Mathematics grade B/6
MEng	GCSE - 6 B/6	GCSE - 6 B/6
Midwifery *	GCSE - 5 B/6 Including Mathematics and Science	GCSE - 5 B/6 Including Mathematics and Science
Pharmacy	GCSE - 6 A/7	GCSE - 5 A/7 + 1 B/6
Psychology	GCSE - 6 B/6 Including Mathematics grade B/6	GCSE - 4 B/6 + 2 C/4 Including Mathematics grade B/6
Social Work *	GCSE - 5 B/6	GCSE - 5 B/6

## Notes

- Points for Dentistry and Medicine count nine best GCSEs - A\*/9 = 4 points, A/7-8 = 3 points, B/6 = 2 points, C-C\*/4-5 = 1 point (or an equivalent acceptable to the University) and include UCAT score
- Points for Actuarial count nine best GCSEs - for 2024 Entry - A\*/9 = 4 points, A/7-8 = 3 points, B/6 = 2 points, C-C\*/4-5 = 1 point (or an equivalent acceptable to the University)



**QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST**

# FURTHER INFORMATION

## Undergraduate Admissions Policy

The policy is available at:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/MRCI/admissions/UndergraduateAdmissions/UndergraduateAdmissionsPolicy/>

## How we choose our students

These are available on Course Finder under the Entry Requirements tab and section on Selection Criteria:

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/courses/>



# Extra-curricular Activities

- Teaching
- Nursing
- Midwifery
- Social Work
- Medicine



All interview and expect that you have numerous examples of extended periods of time where you have worked in a caring environment

Soft skills are often initially built through extracurricular activities and part-time employment, however as students move through their education it is important they are provided with opportunities to gain work experience relevant to their career path.



# Key things to bear in mind when choosing A-level subjects

Here are the three principles which should guide your choice:

- **Choose subjects you will enjoy;**
- **Choose subjects which will fit in with your career plans;**
- **Take time to research to find out all you need to know**



# Where to find out more about A level subjects

- A level Options Booklet
- Your current teachers
- Sixth-form teachers
- AS and A2 subject syllabuses
- Web sites
- Unifrog
- PeopleHawk
- What topics will I study?
  - Content and skills
- How will I be assessed?
  - Coursework
  - Final exams
- Traditional v non traditional
  - How will this be viewed by universities
  - Russell Group Informed Choices
    - <https://www.informedchoices.ac.uk/>
  - CAO entry

The Unifrog logo consists of the word "unifrog" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered on a solid green rectangular background.The PeopleHawk logo features a stylized blue eye icon above the text "PeopleHawk" in a blue, sans-serif font, all on a white background.

# A Level requirements for popular degree courses

- **Psychology:** No essential subjects (a mix of Arts and Science subjects is good). You will need GCSE Maths.
- **Computing:** No essential subjects for most courses. Maths A level is essential for a few Universities and useful for all.
- **Engineering:** Maths and Physics are generally essential. Chemistry is essential for most Chemical Engineering degrees. Some courses would ask for Maths and a Science or TD





- **Chemistry** A Level is essential for: Medicine, Veterinary Science, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Biology (and Bio related subjects).
- To study **Medicine**: Chemistry is essential, plus two other A Levels, one of which should be a science. Biology is often asked for. **A fourth AS is no longer required, A\*AA or AAA(A)**. Outstanding GCSE results needed. >5A\*4A. Aptitude test, MMI and relevant work experience.
- For a **Business Studies** degree: No essential A Level subjects, though you will need a good Maths result at GCSE (B) if you wish to study Business/Management courses at university. QUB is trying to encourage students take A Level Maths.
- **Law** degrees: No essential subjects, though they like you to have subjects which show logical ability and the ability to write (eg: a mixture of Arts and Science subjects). A good GCSE profile of 5 or 6 A grades



- **Teaching** requires GCSE English , Maths and a Science. AAA/AAB at A Level for local university courses
- **Nursing at QUB** would recommend a Science A Level but only requires GCSE Science. Nursing is increasingly competitive and some courses require numeracy and literacy tests. Specifically naming a course i.e. adult, mental health. Interview and relevant work experience
- Most other degree courses either have no essential A Level subjects, or just require an A level in the subject concerned plus any two others. Do check though!
- And do bear in mind that the top academic degree courses will generally expect three 'academic' A Levels.



Mr D Scott  
Head of School

Miss L McNicholl  
Head of Year 12





## EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS –

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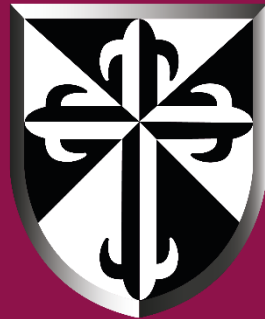
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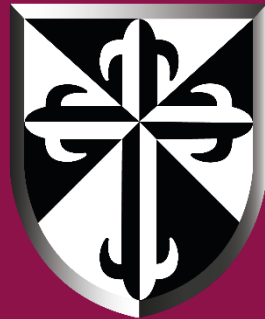


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