



Department
for Education

Post-16 institutions omnibus

Wave 2 survey findings

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IFF Research

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Executive summary

1. Introduction and aims

Boosting the UK's productivity is a key objective of the current government, and reforming further education has been identified in their latest 'Productivity Plan' as one of the ways of doing so.¹ This, combined with the Department for Education's (DfE's) priority to 'support schools to prepare well-rounded young people for success in adult life'² has led to a large-scale transformation of post-16 education in recent years. Particular attention has been paid to ensuring students are challenged with 'rigorous' and 'responsive' qualifications which provide robust routes to employment and higher education.³

The purpose of this research was to gain a better understanding of what post-16 institutions in England are offering to learners to meet these goals, and what difficulties they face in implementing these changes.

This was the second survey in the Post-16 Institutions Omnibus series which is delivered biannually, allowing the Department to track changes over time.⁴

Methodology

This report presents the findings of 506 interviews conducted with post-16 institutions⁵ in England between November and December 2015.

The survey was primarily conducted via telephone, though there was an opportunity for respondents to take part via an online survey if they preferred. All but one survey was completed via telephone. The majority of interviews took place with Headteachers (23%), Assistant Heads/Principals (22%) or Heads of post-16 education (34%).

2. Key findings

A levels

The new A levels are being introduced in three phases. The first wave was introduced in September 2015, and the teaching of the second and third waves is due to commence in

¹ [Fixing the foundations: creating a more prosperous nation](#)

² [Department for Education priorities](#)

³ [Getting the Job Done: the government's reform plan for vocational qualifications](#)

⁴ [Post-16 institutions wave 1 findings and results](#)

⁵ Institutions in scope of the study were state-funded institutions providing post-16 education. This included colleges (including specialist colleges), sixth form colleges, schools with sixth forms (including maintained, academies, free school and special schools), studio schools and university technical colleges. The study excluded commercial and charitable providers, higher education providers, independent specialist providers and non-maintained special schools.

September 2016 and September 2017 respectively.⁶ These qualifications are linear with all external assessment at the end of the course, and AS qualifications have been decoupled (which means they no longer count towards an A level).

The majority of institutions that taught A levels felt that the preparation and start of teaching for the first wave had gone well (86%), with over a quarter stating that it had gone very well (27%; just 2% reported it had not gone well). Similarly, 75% were confident about teaching the second wave of new AS and A levels from September 2016. Overall 6% were not confident about teaching the second wave of A Levels.

Technical and professional

Technical and professional qualifications are those which develop occupation or industry specific skills that enable entry to employment, e.g. a diploma in electrical engineering, accounting or clinical healthcare. There are currently two performance table categories of technical and professional qualifications for 16-19 year olds: tech levels and technical certificates. A third category, applied general qualifications, recognises approved qualifications in applied subjects that are designed to enable entry to higher education.

Just over a third of institutions offered any of the new technical or professional qualifications and these were attended by 62% of the student population. The majority of these institutions involved employers in the delivery of their technical and professional courses (74%); rising to 86% among general colleges. More than half of the remainder were planning to do so in the future (53%).

Funding was the most commonly reported barrier to maximising the quality of technical and professional qualifications (75%), followed by difficulties getting employers engaged (62%). There were also a number of significant differences by institution type here. For instance, general colleges were more likely than schools with sixth forms to report difficulty finding skilled staff (64% compared to 44%) whilst schools with sixth forms were more likely to have problems with a lack of facilities (52% compared to 14%).

A lack of capacity from employers (71%) was the most common barrier to involving employers (more) in the delivery of these qualifications and a lack of appetite from employers (48%) was also quite common. Institutions also recognised internal barriers, including not knowing which employers to engage with (58%) and a lack of capacity to engage with employers (42%).

⁶ The following subject areas were included in the first wave of new A levels: art and design, biology, business, chemistry, computer science, economics, English language, English literature, English language and literature, history, physics, psychology, sociology.

Second wave AS and A levels include: Ancient languages, dance, drama and theatre, geography, modern foreign languages (French, German and Spanish), music, physical education and religious studies. See [Get the facts: AS and A level reform](#) for more information.

GCSE Maths and English

A new condition of funding has been introduced requiring all full-time students enrolling on a new study programme with a grade D or below in GCSE English Language and/or Maths to continue their study of these subjects. From September 2016, the condition of funding was revised to require full time students with prior attainment of grade D to enrol on GCSE courses, rather than other maths and English qualifications such as Functional Skills or ESOL.⁷ ⁸ Institutions will lose the basic national funding per student for each student that is not enrolled and this will be deducted in the 2016-2017 academic year.⁹

Four-fifths of institutions offered or planned to offer maths and English GCSE qualifications to their post-16 students (82%), and these covered the vast majority of the student population (95%). These results have not changed significantly from wave 1.

Among the institutions that offered or planned to offer GCSE qualifications the vast majority (89%) were confident in their preparedness for complying with the new 16-19 maths and English condition of funding, with more than half very confident (56%). A small proportion were not confident (6%).

Almost all agreed that their teachers were confident in teaching to GCSE standard (97% for English Language and 95% for Maths). However, a number of post-16 institutions did not feel that they had sufficient teachers for GCSE retakes (17% for English Language teachers and 27% for Maths teachers).

Level 1 qualifications

Level 1 qualifications are introductory qualifications that are designed to encourage the development of personal and work-related skills, and progress students to further learning.

Just under a quarter of institutions had post-16 students that were studying level 1 courses (23%). The majority of these institutions reported that they had students studying level 1 courses because they were not ready to progress to level 2 (94%), they had a learning difficulty or disability (93%) or because they need time to develop employability skills (88%).

Around one in eight institutions (13%) had students studying level 1 qualifications in a second year of post-16 study. The most frequently reported reasons for this were that these students had a learning difficulty or disability (98%), needed more time to develop skills and knowledge in key areas (91%) or were not ready to progress to level 2 (89%).

⁷ Part time students (undertaking a study programme under 450 hours) can instead study an approved stepping stone qualification.

⁸ There has been an expectation since 2013 that study programmes will provide these students with the opportunity to achieve an A*-C, though this is the first time it has become a condition of funding.

⁹ [Maths and English condition of funding guidance](#)

16-19 accountability reforms

New accountability reforms come into effect in 2016 and will be reported in the 2016 16-18 performance tables published in early 2017. The information that is reported on has been expanded with the introduction of five new headline measures,¹⁰ and the new technical and professional qualifications will be the only types of vocational qualifications that are included.

Increasing initial advice and guidance was the change most likely to have been made in preparation for the accountability reforms (35%), followed by increasing general support arrangements (27%) and improving links with universities/employers (21%). However, there has been a statistically significant decrease in the proportion of institutions that had made changes in preparation for the reforms in the previous 12 months between waves (from 64% in wave 1 to 57% in wave 2). This suggests many had already made the changes they planned to in preparation for the reforms.

The vast majority of institutions were prepared for the changes to 16-18 performance tables (87%), with 20% very prepared. Around one in eight institutions (13%) did not feel prepared for the reforms.

Apprenticeships and traineeships

Apprenticeships combine practical training in the workplace with study, last for 1-4 years and are intended to equip students with the skills needed for work. They have been identified as a key means to prepare young people for successful careers, with the government recently announcing plans to increase the number of apprenticeships available to 3 million by 2020.¹¹

Traineeships are designed to help prepare young people for an apprenticeship or employment. They last between six weeks and six months and include: a work experience placement with an employer; work preparation training; and English and Maths provision where required.¹²

One in six institutions offered apprenticeships (16%), with these institutions covering just over half (52%) of the student population. Around two-thirds of institutions (68%) promoted but did not offer apprenticeships. The most common methods institutions used to promote apprenticeships was sharing literature with students (98%) and taking them to careers or apprenticeship fairs (86%).

¹⁰ These new measures are progress, attainment, retention, destinations and progress in English and Maths (for students without a GCSE pass at A*-C in these subjects). See [16 to 19 accountability headline measures: technical guide](#).

¹¹ [Apprenticeships \(in England\): vision for 2020](#)

¹² [Traineeships: framework for delivery 2015 to 2016](#)

Around one in ten institutions offered traineeships as part of their post-16 curriculum (11%, consistent with wave 1) and these institutions cover a third (34%) of the student population. Exactly half said they signpost traineeships to their students (a statistically significant decrease from 67% at wave 1).¹³

Careers programmes

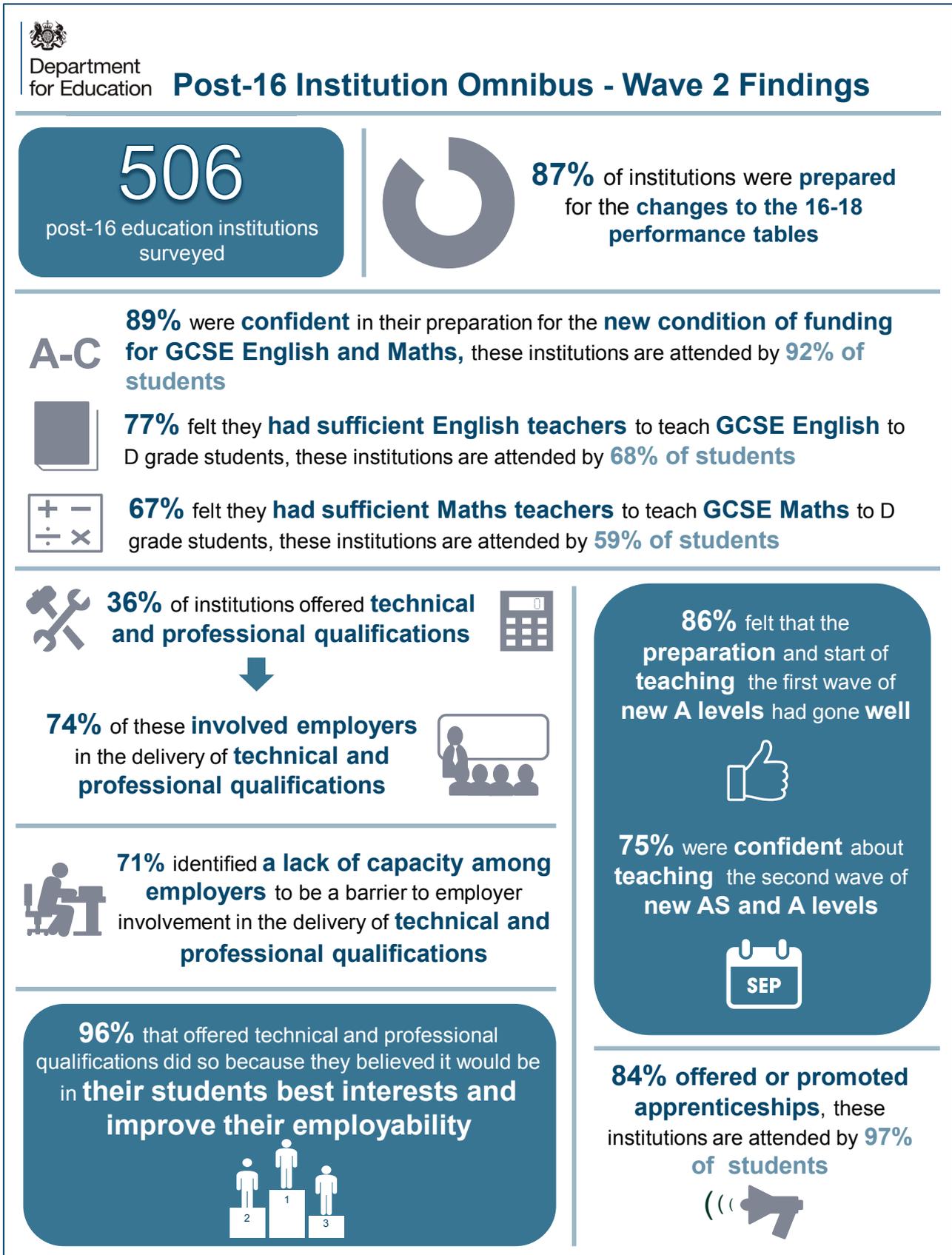
Post-16 institutions were offering a broad range of activities and services as part of their careers programme. Exposure to different employees via workplace visits / work experience, and events / careers fairs were the most commonly reported (95% and 94% respectively). Over three-quarters (77%) offered mentoring.

Around nine in ten institutions had arranged student visits to external employers and/or had visits from employers at least annually (92% and 89%, respectively). The former was likely to take place more frequently: 29% of institutions said visits to external employers took place on a monthly basis whilst 19% of institutions said that employer visits to the institution occurred on a monthly basis.¹⁴

¹³ It is possible that the significant decrease in the proportion of institutions that signpost traineeships occurred due to the timing of the second wave of the omnibus. Institutions are less likely to signpost traineeships to students part way through the academic year (November/December) than they would be at the end of the academic year (June/July), when preparing for the next academic year.

¹⁴ Institutions were asked to think across all of their study programmes, including visits and activities run outside of the careers programme when answering.

Figure 1.1: wave 2 findings infographic



1. Introduction

Boosting the UK's productivity is a key objective of the current government, and reforming further education has been identified in their latest 'Productivity Plan' as one of the ways of doing so.¹⁵ This, combined with the Department for Education's (DfE's) priority to 'support schools to prepare well-rounded young people for success in adult life'¹⁶ has led to a large-scale transformation of post-16 education in recent years.

There has been a considerable focus on ensuring post-16 students are challenged with 'rigorous' and 'responsive' qualifications, which provide robust routes into employment and higher education,¹⁷ and are more responsive to the needs of local employers. Professor Alison Wolf's pioneering review of vocational education in 2011 laid the foundations for many of these changes.¹⁸

The purpose of this research was to gain a better understanding of what post-16 institutions in England offered learners to meet these goals, and what difficulties they face in implementing these changes.

This was the second survey in the Post-16 Institutions Omnibus series which is delivered biannually, allowing the Department to track changes over time.¹⁹ The second wave was conducted between November and December 2015, five months after the first wave (June and July 2015).

1.1 Methodology

This report presents the findings of 506 interviews conducted with post-16 institutions²⁰ in England between November and December 2015. The survey was primarily conducted via telephone, though there was an opportunity for respondents to take part via an online survey if they preferred. All but one survey was completed via telephone. The vast majority of interviews took place with Headteachers, Assistant Heads/Principals, or Heads of post-16 education (see Table 1.1).

¹⁵ [Fixing the foundations: creating a more prosperous nation](#)

¹⁶ [Department for Education priorities](#)

¹⁷ [Getting the Job Done: the government's reform plan for vocational qualifications](#)

¹⁸ [Review of vocational education: the Wolf report](#)

¹⁹ [Post-16 institutions wave 1 findings and results](#)

²⁰ Institutions in scope of the study were state-funded institutions providing post-16 education. This included colleges (including specialist colleges), sixth form colleges, schools with sixth forms (including maintained, academies, free school and special schools), studio schools and university technical colleges. The study excluded commercial and charitable providers, higher education providers, independent specialist providers and non-maintained special schools.

Table 1.1: Respondent job title

Respondent job title	% of completed interviews
Director / Head of post-16 education	34%
Head / Principal	23%
Assistant Head / Principal	22%
Assistant Director / Head of post-16 education	9%
Curriculum Co-ordinator / student services	6%
Other teacher	6%

Prior to the main fieldwork, the questionnaire went through two development phases to ensure it was relevant, engaging and consistently understood by the range of different institutions offering post-16 education:

- In the first phase, six cognitive interviews were conducted by telephone. After running through the survey, respondents were asked follow-up questions to examine their understanding of the questions and the reasons for their responses.
- Following this, the questionnaire was piloted with 20 institutions. These telephone interviews were monitored to check respondents understood the questions, the flow of the interview and that the interview length was at the intended 20 minute duration.

Sampling and weighting

The sample for both waves of the survey was drawn from Edubase, DfE's register of educational establishments in England. At wave 2, a sample of 905 post-16 institutions was drawn, and 506 interviews were achieved from the 888 institutions that were eligible (a response rate of 57%, see Annex A for further information).

The sample was stratified to cover all of the different types of post-16 institutions, including small sub-groups such as studio schools and specialist colleges.

Two different weights were applied to the final data (see Annex B for further details):

- A primary weight was applied to ensure that the results were representative of the entire population of post-16 institutions and to correct for the over-sampling of small-subgroups mentioned above.
- A secondary weight was also applied to the data to make it representative of the proportion of students attending each institution type (for instance, general colleges account for a small proportion of institutions but 44% of the student body – see Table 1.2).

Data with this secondary weight is reported on throughout the report where it changes the interpretation of the results (for example, when a noteworthy low proportion of institutions may have had a practice in place but where these institutions still cover a large proportion of the student population) .

Throughout the report, relevant differences between subgroups are discussed where the base size is at least 50. Subgroup differences are only reported where the difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Report structure

The following chapters explore the key findings of the survey, taking each policy area in turn. The first half covers post-16 qualifications, starting with A levels (Chapter 2) and technical and professional qualifications (Chapter 3) before moving on to GCSE English and Maths (Chapter 4), and level 1 qualifications (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 discusses institutions' preparations for the 16-19 accountability reforms. The second half of the report explores the activities undertaken by post-16 institutions to provide students with work experience, covering apprenticeships and traineeships (Chapter 7) and what they are offering as part of their careers programme (Chapter 8).

Where possible, comparisons have been made with the first wave of the survey.

Table 1.2: Sample drawn and interviews achieved at waves 1 and 2

Institution type	Population	% of population	% of student body	Sample drawn W1	Interviews achieved W1	Sample drawn W2	Interviews achieved W2
General Further Education (FE) colleges²¹	218	7%	44%	98	49	108	62
Specialist colleges	21	1%	2%	14	8	13	3
Sixth Form colleges	93	3%	12%	47	24	47	36
Schools with sixth forms	2,045	68%	35%	639	319	623	323
Special schools	552	18%	1%	94	59	84	61
Studio Schools	30	1%	<0.5%	15	5	15	12
University Technical Colleges	30	1%	<0.5%	15	8	15	9
Total				922	472	905	506

Although not part of the sampling approach, at wave 2 a total of 216 schools with academy status were interviewed, and among schools with sixth forms, 72% were academies.

²¹ General FE colleges are distinct from sixth form colleges and tend to offer a wider range of courses such as vocational qualifications.

2. A level qualifications

This chapter explores institutions' confidence in teaching the new AS and A level qualifications and the factors that have been helpful in preparing for their introduction.

The new A levels are being introduced in three phases. The first wave was introduced in September 2015, and the teaching of the second and third waves is due to commence in September 2016 and September 2017 respectively.²²

The new qualifications have been developed to prepare students for higher education or employment²³ and in response to research by Ofqual which found that the modular system often had a negative impact on teaching and assessment.²⁴ Universities have had a significant involvement in the design of the new A Levels. One of the biggest changes is that AS qualifications have been decoupled, which means that they no longer count towards an A level. Both A Levels and AS qualifications will be linear with all external assessment taking place at the end of the course, and most subjects will be assessed by examination rather than coursework.

A levels were taught by just over three-quarters of institutions (76%, consistent with the wave 1 result of 77%) and three-quarters of students attended post-16 institutions offering A levels (76%).

The proportion of institutions that offered A levels varied by institution type. The vast majority of schools with sixth forms taught A levels (96%), compared to over half of general colleges (56%) and one in ten special schools (10%).

²² The following subject areas were included in the first wave of new A levels: art and design, biology, business, chemistry, computer science, economics, English language, English literature, English language and literature, history, physics, psychology, sociology.

Second wave AS and A levels include: Ancient languages, dance, drama and theatre, geography, modern foreign languages (French, German and Spanish), music, physical education and religious studies. See [Get the facts: AS and A level reform](#) for more information.

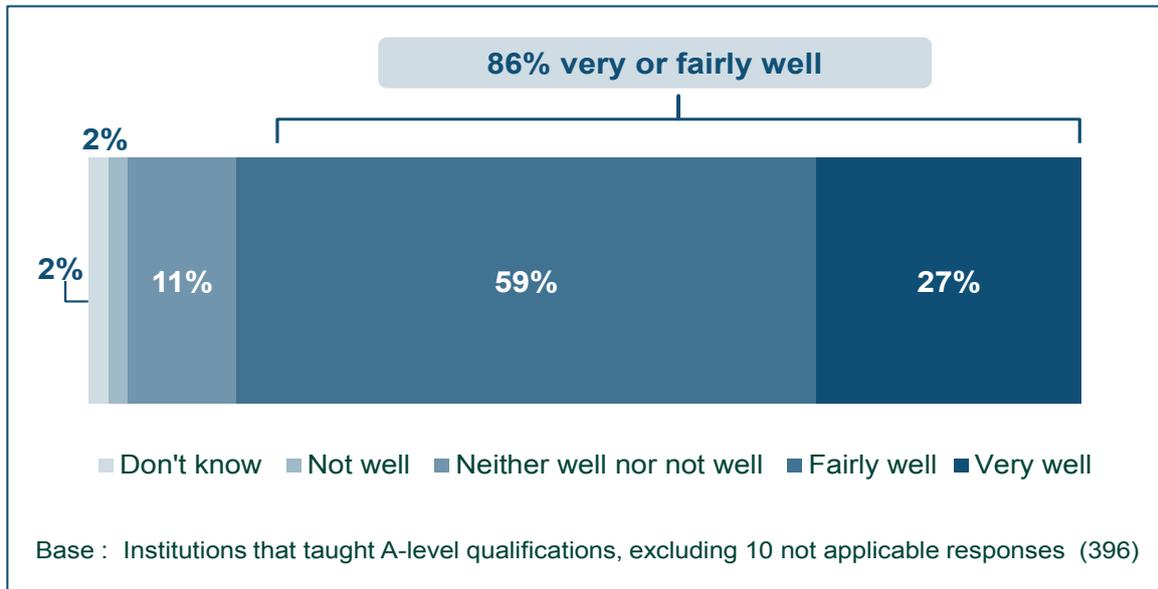
²³ [The importance of teaching: the schools white paper 2010](#)

²⁴ [Fit for Purpose? The view of the higher education sector, teachers and employers on the suitability of A levels](#)

2.1 Preparation for the first wave of new AS and A levels

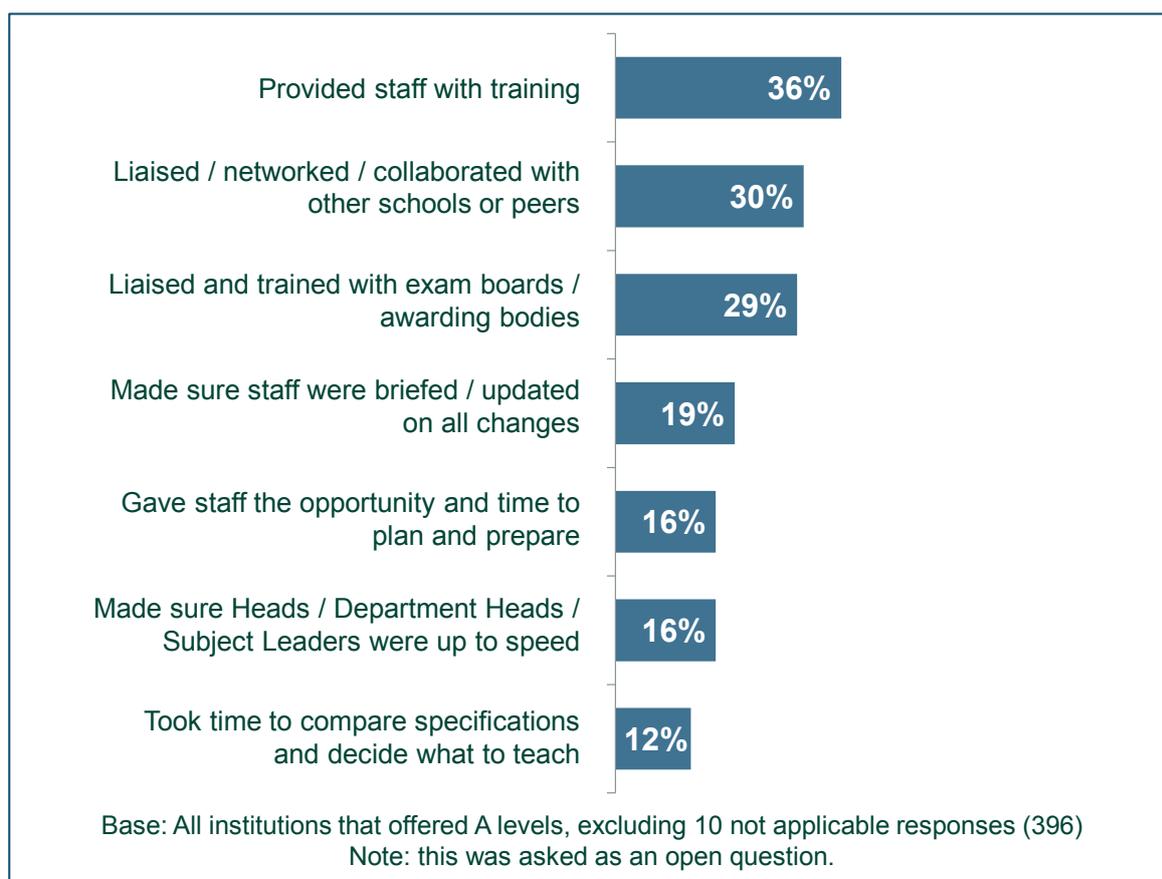
The vast majority of institutions that taught A levels felt that the preparation and start of teaching of the first wave had gone well (86%), with over a quarter stating that it had gone very well (27%). Just 2% reported that it had not gone well (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Rating of the preparation and start of teaching of the first new AS and A levels



The most common activity considered helpful in preparing for the new AS and A levels was providing staff with training (36%, see Figure 2.2). Around three in ten also reported that liaising, networking or collaborating with other schools/peers (30%) and liaising/training with other exam boards or awarding bodies (29%) was helpful.

Figure 2.2: Most common activities that were helpful in preparing for teaching the new AS and A levels (unprompted)



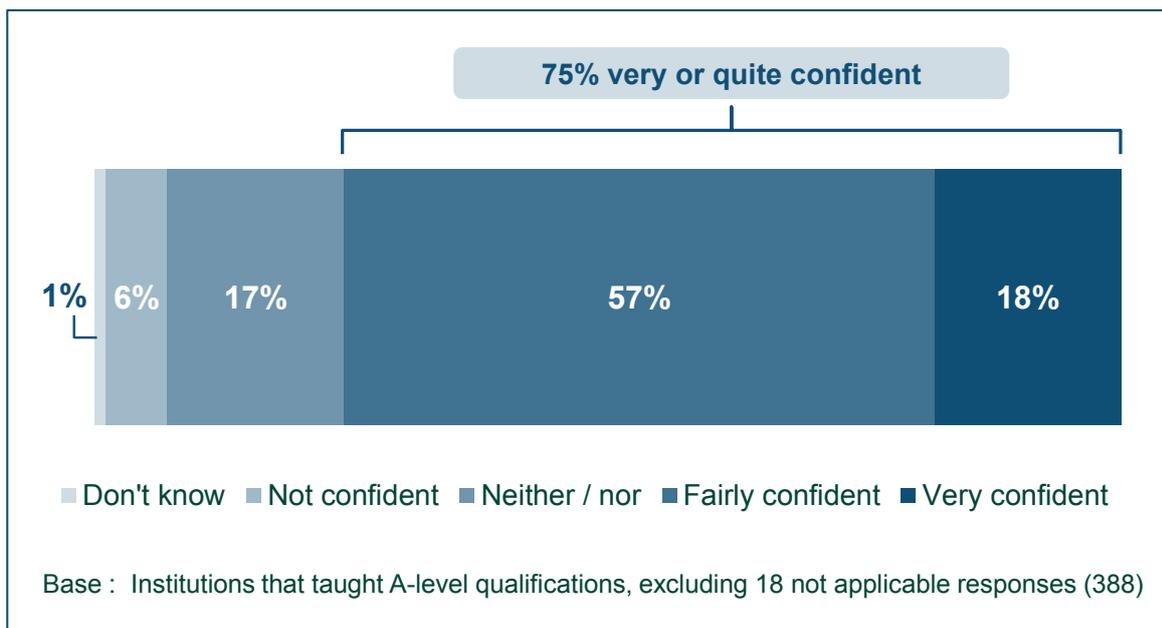
Schools with sixth forms with academy status were statistically significantly more likely to report that collaborating with other schools or peers was helpful (35%) than those without academy status (23%).

2.2 Confidence in teaching the second wave of AS and A levels

Three-quarters of institutions that taught A levels were confident about teaching the second wave of new AS and A levels from September 2016 (75%, see Figure 2.3). Overall, 6% were not confident and there was quite a large proportion that classed themselves as neither confident nor unconfident (17%).

By institution type, general colleges were more confident than average (84%).

Figure 2.3: Confidence in teaching the second wave of AS and A levels



3. Technical and professional qualifications

This chapter explores the prevalence of teaching technical and professional qualifications, institutions' motivations for offering these courses and the ways in which employers are involved in their delivery.

Technical and professional qualifications are those which develop occupation or industry specific skills that enable entry to employment, e.g. a diploma in electrical engineering, accounting or clinical healthcare. There are currently two types of technical and professional options for 16-19 year olds: tech levels and technical certificates. A third category, applied general qualifications, recognises approved qualifications in applied subjects that are designed to enable entry to higher education. These were introduced after the consultation on the reform of level 3 vocational qualifications.²⁵

Following the findings of the Wolf Report, which reported that 350,000 16-19 year olds were studying qualifications with 'limited labour market value',²⁶ these new qualifications have been designed to ensure they enable young people to progress to higher education and/or skilled employment. Furthermore, the Chancellor's blueprint for increasing productivity identified the 'failure to grow a serious system of respected employer-led professional and technical qualifications' as a cause of skills weaknesses.²⁷

Institutions are incentivised to offer the new technical and professional qualifications over other older vocational qualifications that will no longer count in performance tables from 2017 (see Chapter 6 for further details).²⁸

Just over a third of institutions offered technical or professional qualifications (36%), and these were attended by 62% of the student population. General colleges were significantly more likely to do so (90%) than schools with sixth forms (35%) and special schools (15%).

At wave 1, institutions were asked whether they taught applied general qualifications, tech levels or technical certificates, and whilst the question wording was slightly different,²⁹ there has been no statistically significant change in the proportion of institutions offering them (32% taught at least one of the new technical and professional qualifications in wave 1 compared to 36% at wave 2).

²⁵ [Government proposals to reform vocational qualifications for 16-to-19-year-olds](#)

²⁶ [Review of vocational education: the Wolf report](#)

²⁷ [Fixing the foundations: creating a more prosperous nation](#)

²⁸ [16 to 19 qualifications technical guide: 2017 and 2018 performance tables](#)

²⁹ In wave 1, institutions that said they offered vocational qualifications were asked: 'Has your institution changed its curriculum offer since September 2014 to provide the following qualifications?': applied general qualifications, tech levels and technical certificates. At wave 2 institutions were asked more directly 'Does your institution offer technical and professional qualifications (such as technical certificates or tech levels)?'

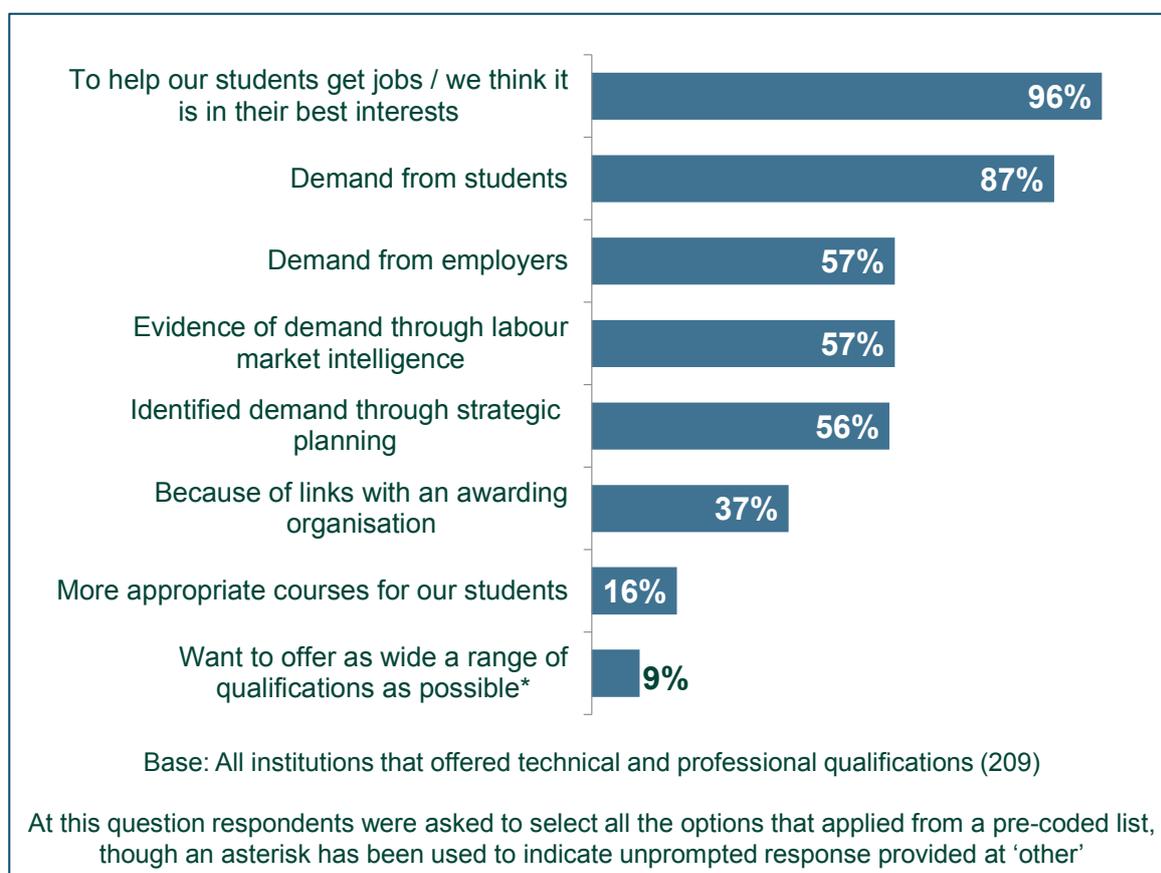
3.1 Motivations for offering technical and professional qualifications

The most common reasons why institutions were offering these qualifications are presented in Figure 3.1. Almost all institutions were motivated by the belief that technical and professional qualifications would improve the employability of students or thought that such qualifications are in the best interests of their students (96%), whilst demand from students was also a common factor (87%).

In addition, over half of the institutions that offered technical and professional qualifications did so because of demand from employers, and evidence of demand through labour market intelligence (both 57%). General colleges were statistically significantly more likely to report these reasons than schools with sixth forms (91% compared to 47% and 95% compared to 44%, respectively). Over half (56%) offered these qualifications at least in part by having identified demand through strategic planning.

Smaller proportions of institutions offered technical and professional qualifications because of links with awarding organisations (37%) or because they felt they were more appropriate courses for their students (16%).

Figure 3.1: Reasons institutions offered technical and professional qualifications (prompted)

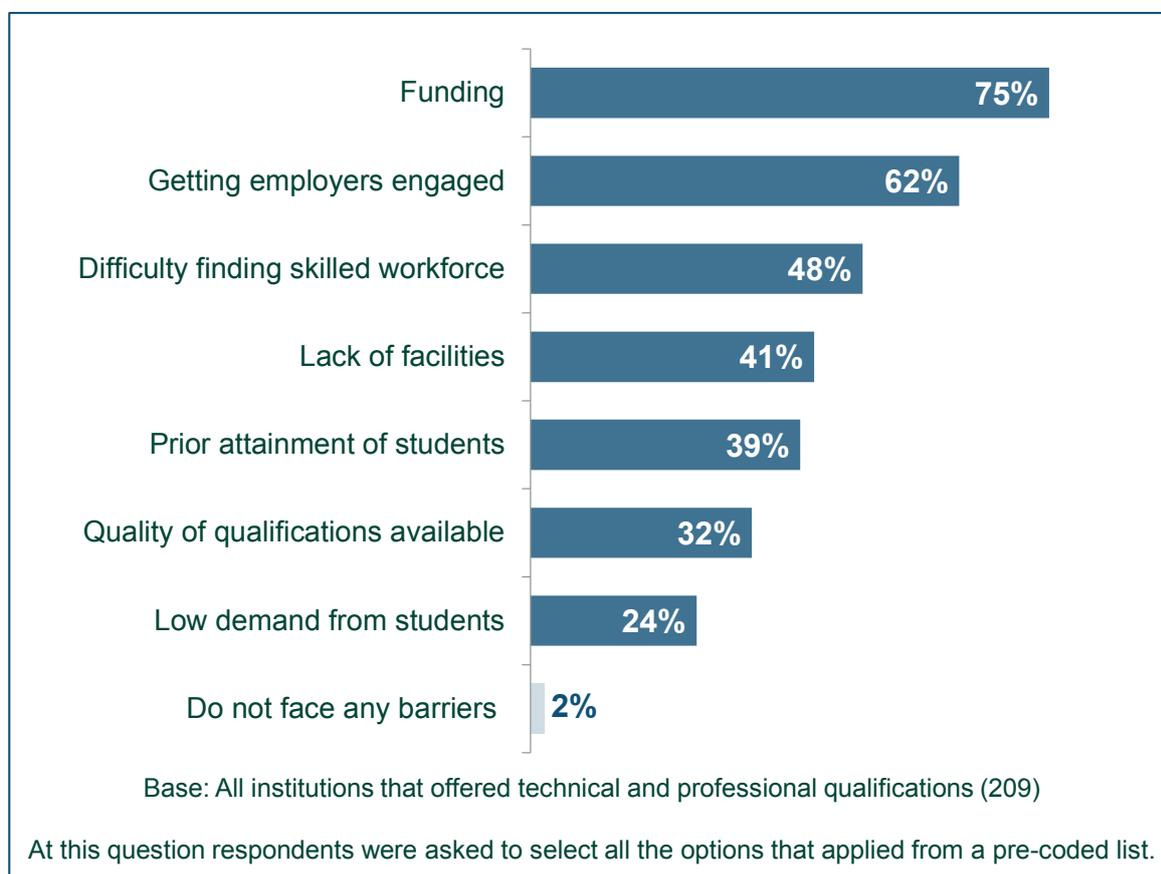


3.2 Barriers to maximising the quality of technical and professional qualifications

Institutions that offered technical and professional qualifications were asked what the main barriers were, if any, to maximising the quality of these qualifications. Nearly all (98%) felt there were barriers: the two main barriers were funding (75%) and getting employers engaged (62%, see Figure 3.2).

Barriers related to the institution itself were also commonly cited. Just under half of institutions reported difficulty finding suitably skilled staff (48%), whilst a lack of facilities and the (low) prior attainment of students were barriers for around two-fifths (41% and 39%, respectively).

Figure 3.2: Most common barriers to maximising the quality of technical and professional qualifications (prompted)



General colleges were statistically significantly more likely than schools with sixth forms to report difficulty finding skilled staff (64% compared to 44%) and the prior attainment of students (54% compared to 31%) as barriers. Conversely, schools with sixth forms were more likely to have problems with a lack of facilities (52% compared to 14% of general colleges) and the quality of qualifications available (36% compared to 16%).

3.3 Tailoring qualifications to the local economy

If technical and professional qualifications are to equip young people with the skills employers need, it is important that they are tailored to reflect the needs of the local economy.

The vast majority (95%) of institutions said they tailored their technical and professional qualifications to the needs of the local economy. Four-fifths used information from destinations data (80%) and two-thirds used input from the business community (65%, see Figure 3.3). Over half drew on information on job vacancies (59%), labour market intelligence (56%) or engaged with their Local Enterprise Partnership (52%).

There were a number of statistically significant differences in the activities undertaken by institution type. General colleges were more likely than schools with sixth forms to use each of the methods listed in Figure 3.3, with the exception of using destinations data.

Figure 3.3: Most common methods used to tailor technical and professional qualifications to reflect the needs of the local economy (prompted)



3.4 Involving employers

In order to prepare young people for employment, technical and professional qualifications need to provide young people with the right skills. Employers are involved in the new technical and professional qualifications from the outset as tech levels and technical certificates must be recognised by at least five employers or a professional body to ensure that they are fit for purpose. These qualifications are required to provide meaningful employer involvement (i.e. work experience, projects or assessments with input from industry practitioners or guest lectures), and this is one of the characteristics on which they will be assessed in the 2017 and 2018 performance tables.³⁰

Almost three-quarters of institutions that offered technical and professional qualifications as part of their post-16 curriculum involved employers in the delivery of such courses (74%). Again, general colleges were statistically significantly more likely than schools with sixth forms to report this (86% compared to 70%).

Similar proportions of institutions involved employers in most or all of their technical and professional qualification courses (27%), some (26%), or a minority of their courses (20%, see Figure 3.4). One quarter had no employer involvement (25%).

Figure 3.4 Employer involvement in technical and professional qualifications



³⁰ [16 to 19 qualifications technical guide: 2017 and 2018 performance tables](#)

3.4.1 Barriers to involving employers

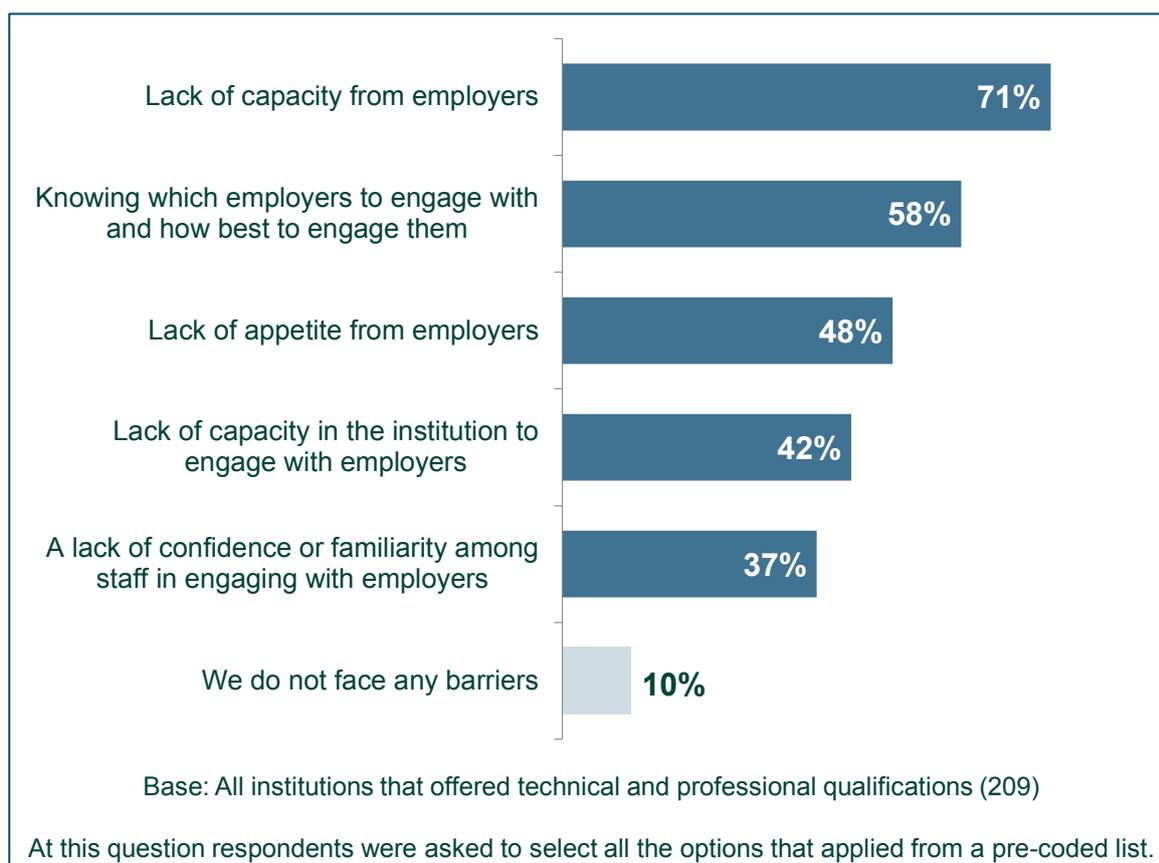
Among all of the institutions that offered technical and professional qualifications, a lack of capacity from employers (71%) was the most commonly reported barrier to involving them in the delivery of these qualifications. Just under half also felt that there was a lack of appetite from employers (48%).

Internal barriers were also frequently referenced. Over half were unsure about which employers to engage with and how best to engage them (58%), and around two in five institutions had a lack of capacity to engage with employers (42%) or reported a lack of confidence/familiarity in engaging with employers (37%).

General colleges were statistically significantly more likely to feel that employers had a lack of capacity to engage in the delivery of technical and professional qualifications (80%, compared to 64% of schools with sixth forms). In contrast, schools with sixth forms were more likely to report internal barriers:

- 67% mentioned knowing which employers to engage with was a barrier (compared to 30% of general colleges)
- 47% mentioned a lack of capacity in the institution to engage with employers (compared to 18% of general colleges)
- 43% acknowledged there was a lack of confidence or familiarity among staff in engaging with employers (compared to 21% of general colleges).

Figure 3.5: Most common barriers to involving employers in the delivery of technical and professional qualifications (prompted)



Generally, institutions that involved employers in the delivery of their technical and professional qualifications reported similar barriers to those with no employer involvement. The one difference was that those with no employer involvement were statistically significantly more likely to have a lack of capacity in the institution to engage with employers (55%, compared to 38% of institutions that were already working with employers).

The quarter of institutions that were not involving employers in the delivery of their technical and professional qualifications were asked why this was the case. More than two in five found that employers were not willing to be involved (42%) and over a quarter cited practicalities involving timetabling (29%, see Figure 3.6).³¹

Positively, more than half of these institutions were planning to involve employers in the future (53%), whilst 42% were not and the remaining 5% were uncertain.

³¹ Institutions were able to select the first of these reasons from a prompted list, though issues with timetabling were raised without prompting.

Figure 3.6: Main reasons why institutions were not involving employers in the delivery of their technical and professional qualifications



4. GCSE Maths and English

This chapter focuses on institutions' readiness for the new 16-19 maths and English condition of funding, looking at both the availability of teaching staff and access to venues for GCSE retakes.

Effective from September 2015, all full-time students enrolling on a new study programme with a grade D or below in GCSE English Language and/or Maths are required to continue their study of these subjects. From September 2016, the condition of funding was revised to require full time students with prior attainment of grade D to enrol on GCSE courses, rather than other maths and English qualifications such as Functional Skills or ESOL.³² ³³Institutions will lose the basic national funding per student for each student that is not enrolled, and this will be deducted in the 2016-2017 academic year.³⁴ This reform aims to address the fact that at the time of the Wolf Review, less than half of post-16 students were leaving 16-18 education with these important qualifications.³⁵

Four-fifths of institutions offered or planned to offer GCSE qualifications to their post-16 students (82%), and the majority of the student population attended these institutions (95%). There has been no statistically significant change in these figures since wave 1 (78% and 92%, respectively).

The vast majority of general colleges and schools with sixth forms³⁶ offered or planned to offer GCSEs to post-16 students (98% and 92% respectively, see Figure 4.1).³⁷ There has been a statistically significant increase in the proportion of schools with sixth forms offering or planning to offer GCSEs (from 82% in wave 1 to 92% in wave 2).

The proportion of special schools that offered/planned to offer GCSEs (33%) was statistically significantly lower than average. Some of this difference may be explained by an exemption for students with learning difficulties/disabilities that are assessed as not being able to study a GCSE or a stepping stone qualification. However, this assessment

³² Part time students (undertaking a study programme under 450 hours) can instead study an approved stepping stone qualification.

³³ There has been an expectation since 2013 that study programmes will provide these students with the opportunity to achieve an A*-C, though this is the first time it has become a condition of funding.

³⁴ [Maths and English condition of funding guidance](#)

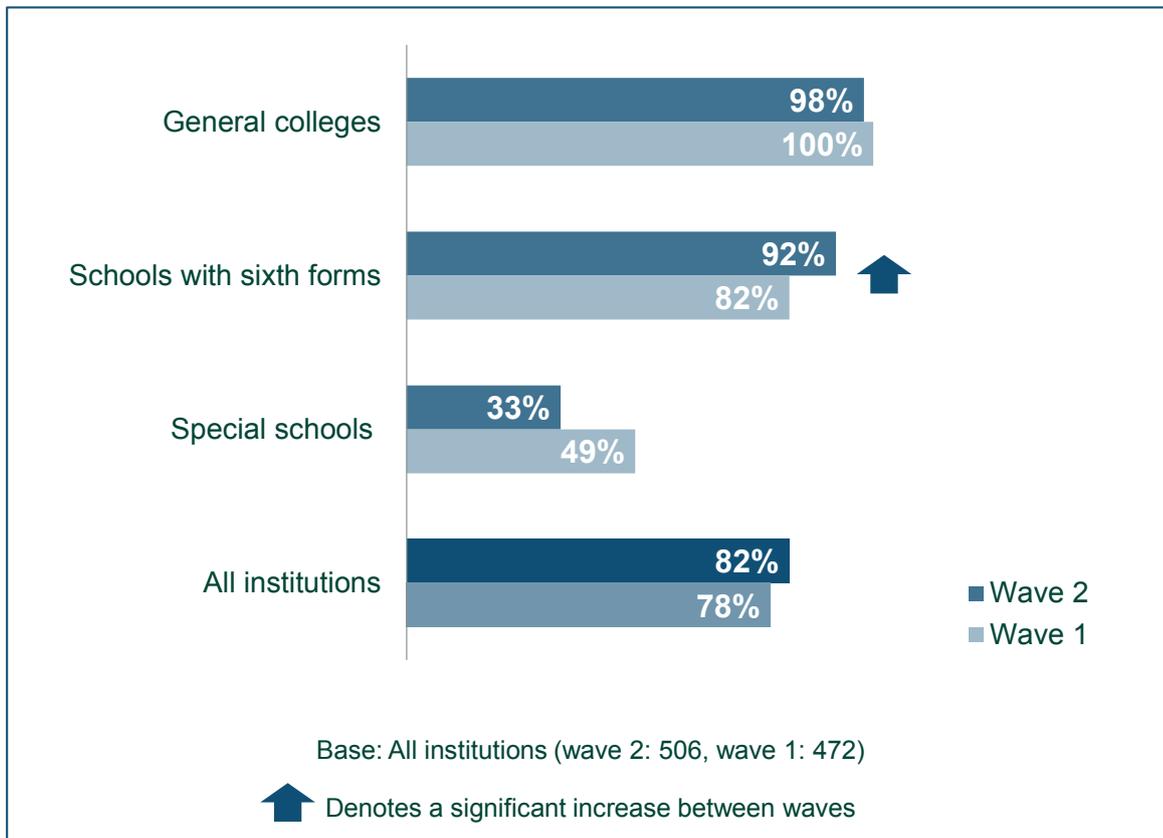
³⁵ [Review of vocational education: the Wolf report](#)

³⁶ Within schools with sixth forms, those without academy status were more likely to offer or plan to offer GCSEs than those that were academies (96% compared to 90%).

³⁷ Applying the student population weighting shows that 2% of post-16 students attending general colleges, and 8% of those at schools with sixth forms, were not attending an institution that offered or planned to offer GCSEs. It may be the case that these institutions have entry criteria in place that means they only admit students with grades A*-C in English and Maths.

should be carried out on an individual basis and DfE have made it clear that there are no blanket exemptions for whole institutions³⁸.

Figure 4.1: Proportion of institutions that offered/planned to offer GCSEs

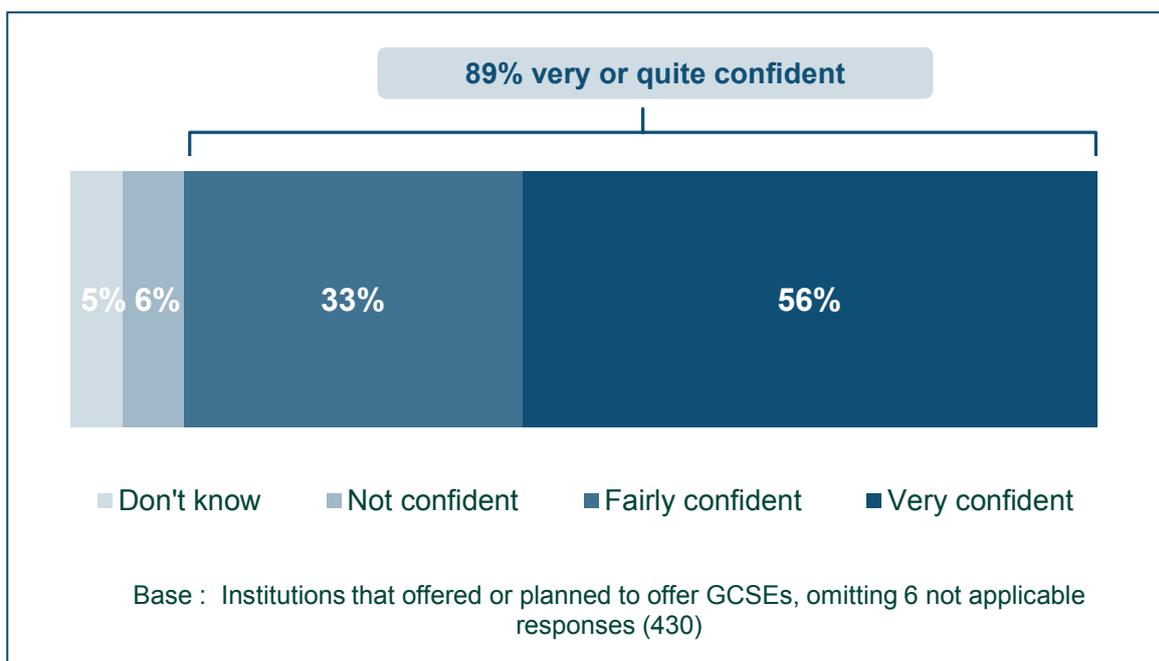


³⁸ [Maths and English condition of funding guidance](#)

4.1 Institutions' preparedness for compliance with the new 16-19 maths and English condition of funding

The vast majority of institutions that offered or planned to offer GCSE qualifications (89%) were confident in their preparedness to comply with the new 16-19 maths and English condition of funding, with more than half very confident (56%, Figure 4.2).³⁹ Overall, 6% were not confident in their preparedness.

Figure 4.2: Confidence in preparation to comply with the new condition of funding

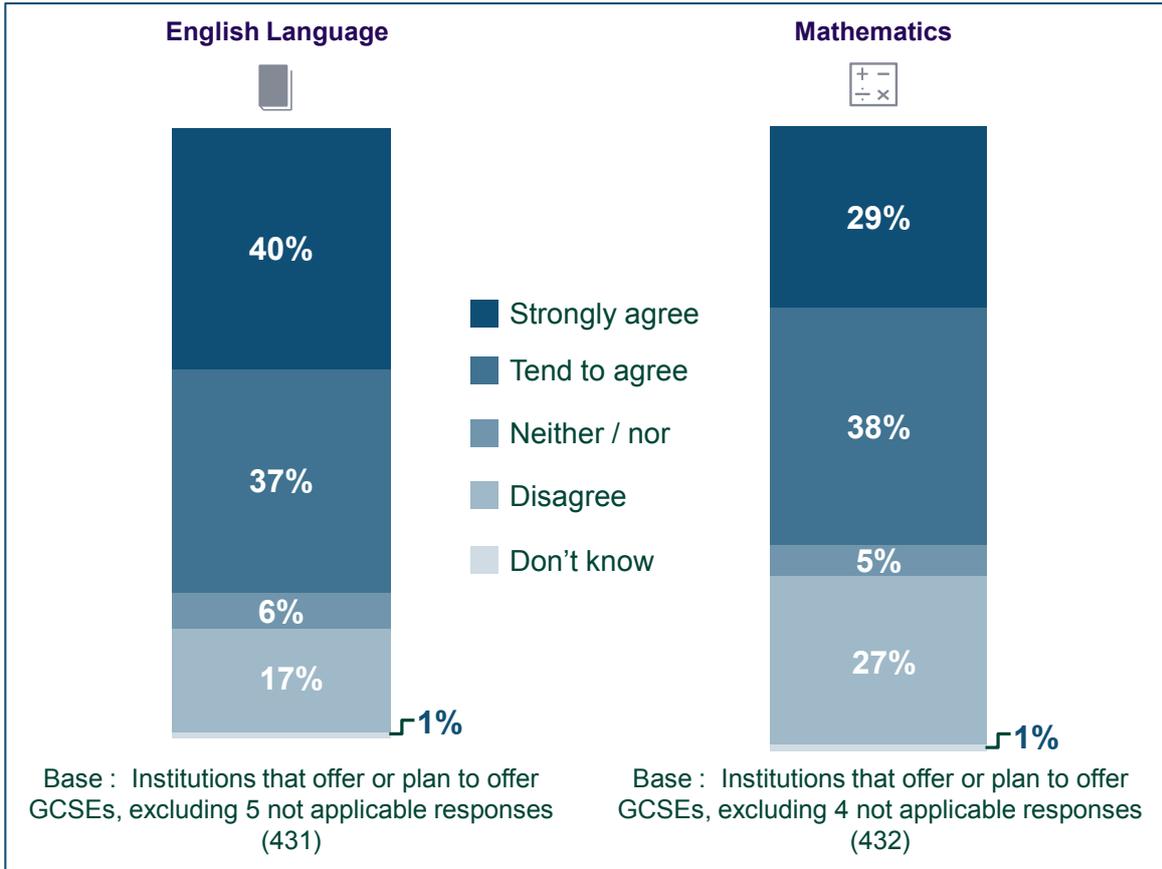


Institutions that offered or planned to offer GCSE qualifications were also asked about the preparedness of their teaching staff. Almost all agreed that their teachers were confident in teaching to GCSE standard (97% for English Language and 95% for Maths).

However, whilst confidence in teaching standards was high, Figure 4.3 demonstrates that a number of post-16 institutions did not feel that they have sufficient teachers for GCSE retakes. Among institutions that offered or planned to offer GCSEs, 17% did not feel they had sufficient English Language teachers for retakes, and 27% felt the same in relation to Maths. Over one third of the student population attended institutions that offered GCSEs and felt that there was not sufficient GCSE Maths teaching staff for retakes (37%).

³⁹ This reflects the findings at wave 1 where 92% of institutions reported that they were confident in their readiness for teaching all D grade English Language and Maths students.

Figure 4.3: Extent to which institutions have sufficient staff for GCSE retakes



Schools with sixth forms were statistically significantly more likely than general colleges to agree that their teachers were confident in teaching to GCSE standard and that they had sufficient teachers for GCSE retakes (in relation to both English Language and Maths).

The vast majority of institutions felt that they had plans in place to secure suitable venues for students to retake GCSE English Language and/or Maths (95%, just 1% disagreed). Again, schools with sixth forms were statistically significantly more likely to agree than general colleges (96% compared to 90%).

5. Level 1 qualifications

This chapter explores the prevalence of level 1 qualifications in both years of post-16 study and the reasons why students were taking these courses.

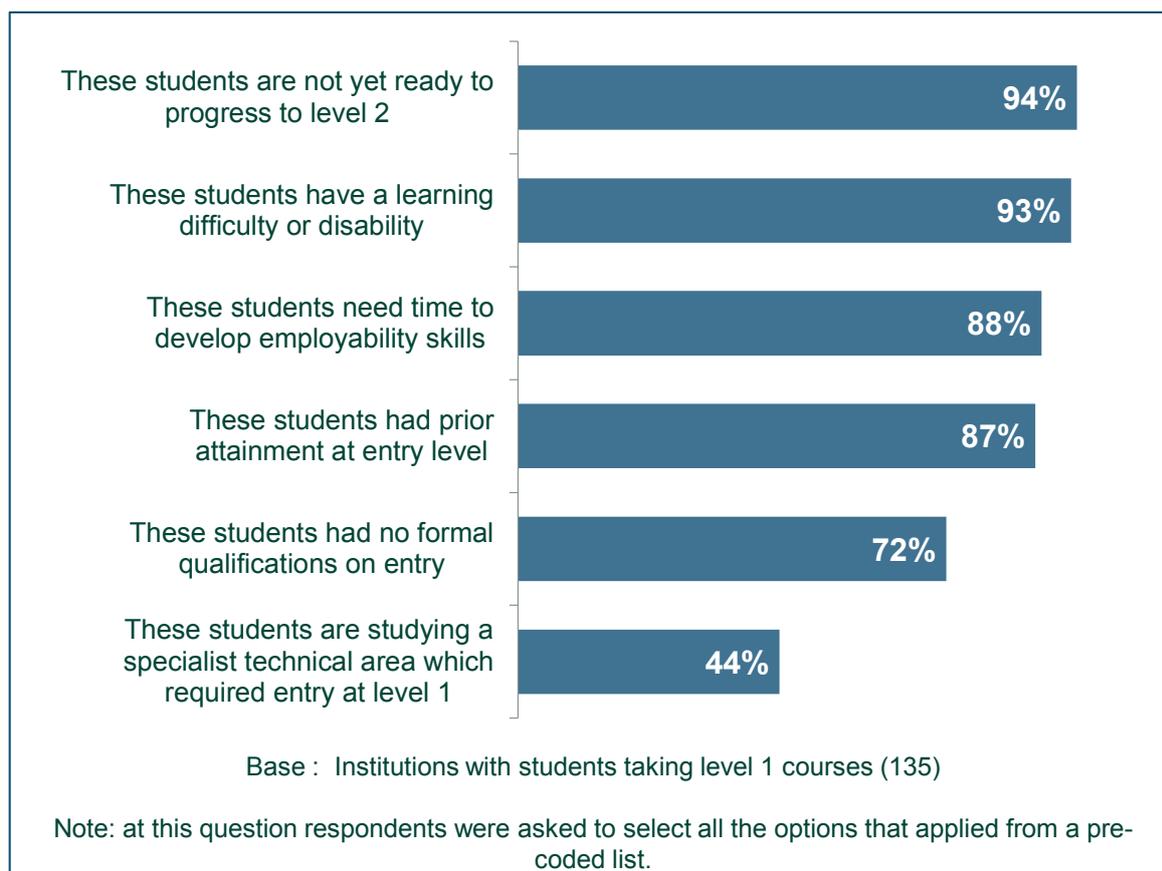
Examples of Level 1 qualifications include introductory diplomas and introductory certificates; Functional Skills qualifications are also available at this level. They are preliminary courses that are designed to encourage the development of personal and work-related skills, and progress students to further learning. Government data shows that just under two-thirds of students taking level 1 vocational courses as part of their study programme go on to study level 2, meaning that a significant proportion leave post-16 education with only basic knowledge.⁴⁰

Just under a quarter of institutions had post-16 students that were studying level 1 courses (23%), covering 57% of the student population. General colleges (98%) and special schools (43%) were more likely than schools with sixth forms (9%) to report having students on level 1 courses.

The most frequently reported reasons why students were taking level 1 courses were that they were not ready to progress to level 2 (94%) or had a learning difficulty or disability (93%, see Figure 5.1). Almost nine in ten institutions also reported that students needed time to develop employability skills (88%). The majority of institutions also reported that students studying level 1 courses had prior attainment at entry level (87%) or no formal qualifications on entry (72%).

⁴⁰ [Study Programmes for 16-19 year olds - Government response to consultation and plans for implementation](#)

Figure 5.1: Main reasons why students were studying level 1 courses (prompted)

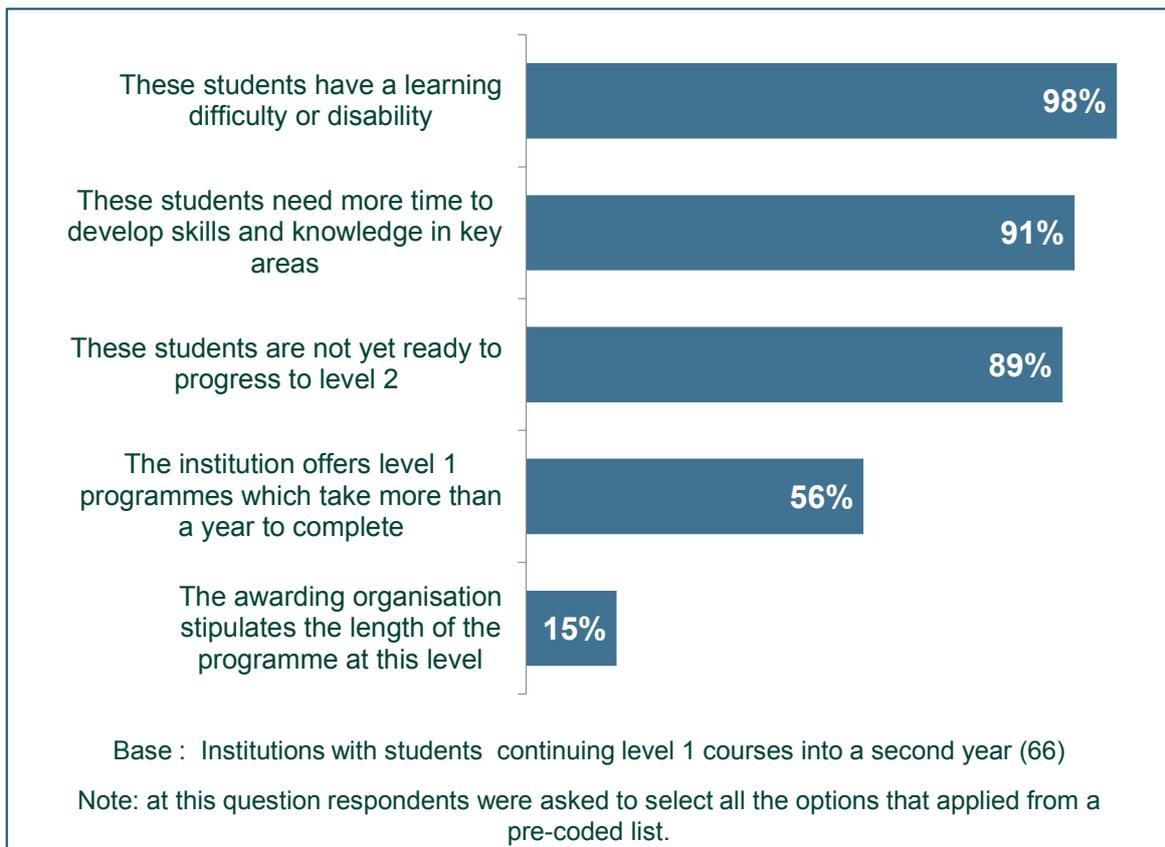


Students were studying level 1 qualifications in a second year of post-16 study at a small proportion of institutions (13%, see Figure 5.2). General colleges were statistically significantly more likely to have students studying level 1 qualifications in a second year of post-16 study (50%), compared to special schools and schools with sixth forms (38% and 2% respectively).

The reasons institutions gave as to why students were studying these qualifications in a second year of study were similar to the reasons students were studying level 1 courses more generally. For example, these students often had a learning difficulty or disability (98%), needed more time to develop skills and knowledge in key areas (91%) or were not ready to progress to level 2 (89%).

More than half of institutions with students taking a level 1 qualification in a second year of post-16 study offered level 1 programmes that took more than a year to complete (56%).

Figure 5.2: Main reasons students were studying level 1 qualifications in a second year of post-16 study (prompted)



6. Preparation for 16-19 accountability reforms

This chapter examines the changes implemented by institutions in preparation for the 16-19 accountability reforms in the previous 12 months and then explores institutions' preparedness for the changes to 16-18 performance tables.

The 16-19 accountability reforms introduce more rigorous minimum standards in order to improve the quality of education and training offered to learners aged between 16 and 19.⁴¹ They come into effect in 2016, and will be reported on in the 2016 16-18 performance tables published in early 2017.

The reforms expand on the information that is reported in 16-18 performance tables with the introduction of new headline measures for progress, attainment, retention, destinations and progress in English and Maths (for students without a GCSE pass at A*-C in these subjects). Furthermore, the new technical and professional qualifications (tech levels, technical certificates and applied general qualifications) will be the only types of vocational qualifications that are reported in these tables.⁴² It is hoped that such changes will make it easier to compare post-16 institutions, and quickly identify institutions performing poorly.

Institutions were asked whether they had made any of the following eight changes in the last year, and if so, if this had been in preparation for the 16-19 accountability reforms:

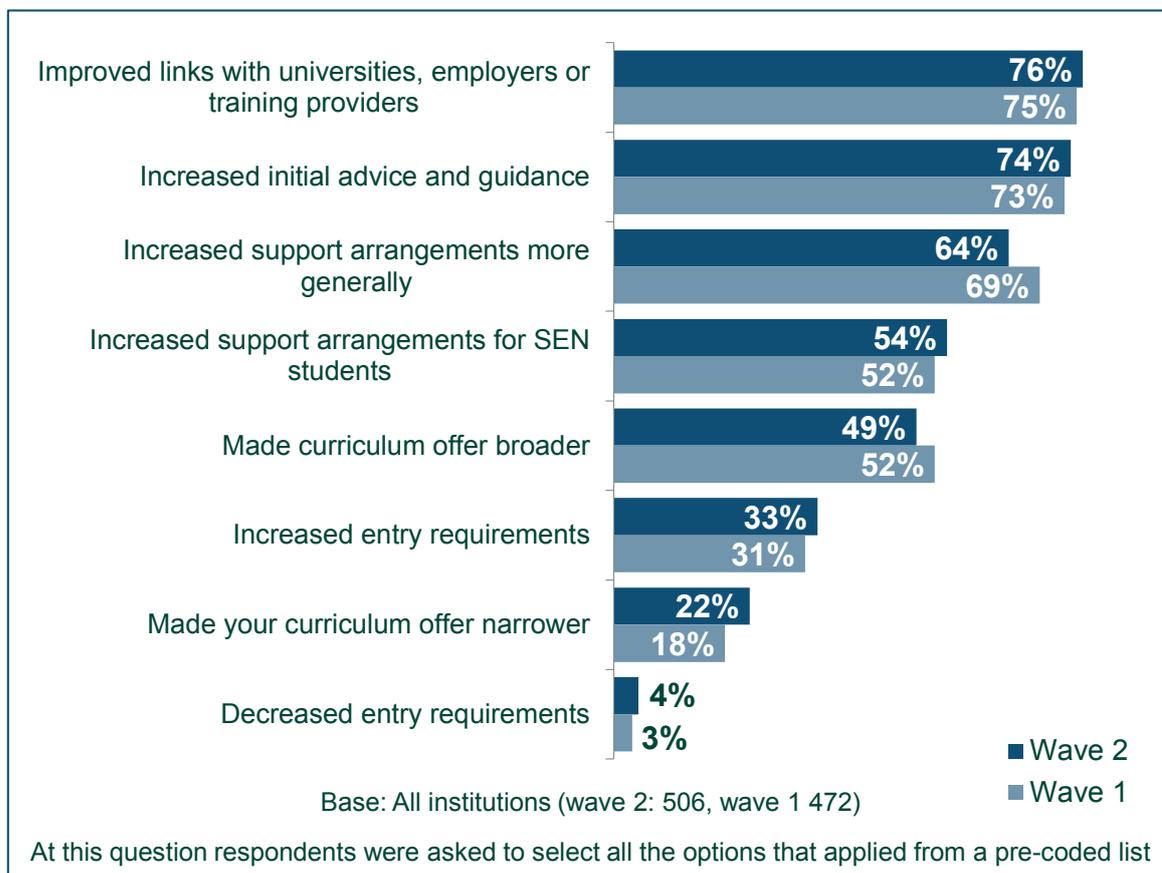
- Made their curriculum offer broader;
- Made their curriculum offer narrower;
- Increased their entry requirements;
- Decreased their entry requirements;
- Increased initial information, advice and guidance to students;
- Increased support arrangements for special educational needs (SEN) students;
- Increased support arrangements more generally; and
- Improved links with universities, employers or training providers.

⁴¹ [16 to 19 accountability headline measures: technical guide](#)

⁴² Tech levels and applied general qualifications will be reported on from 2016, and technical certificates will be reported from 2017. See the [2017 performance tables: technical and vocational qualifications guidance](#).

The vast majority of institutions (99%) had made at least one of the changes listed in the preceding 12 months. Figure 6.1 presents the changes made by institutions in order of frequency, comparing the results across both waves of the survey.

Figure 6.1: Changes made in the preceding 12 months



The majority of institutions introduced changes over the preceding year which focused on enhancing connections with universities, employers or training providers (76%) and increasing the initial guidance offered to learners (74%) (consistent with the findings at wave 1). More than half of institutions had also increased general support arrangements (64%) and support arrangements for SEN students (54%).

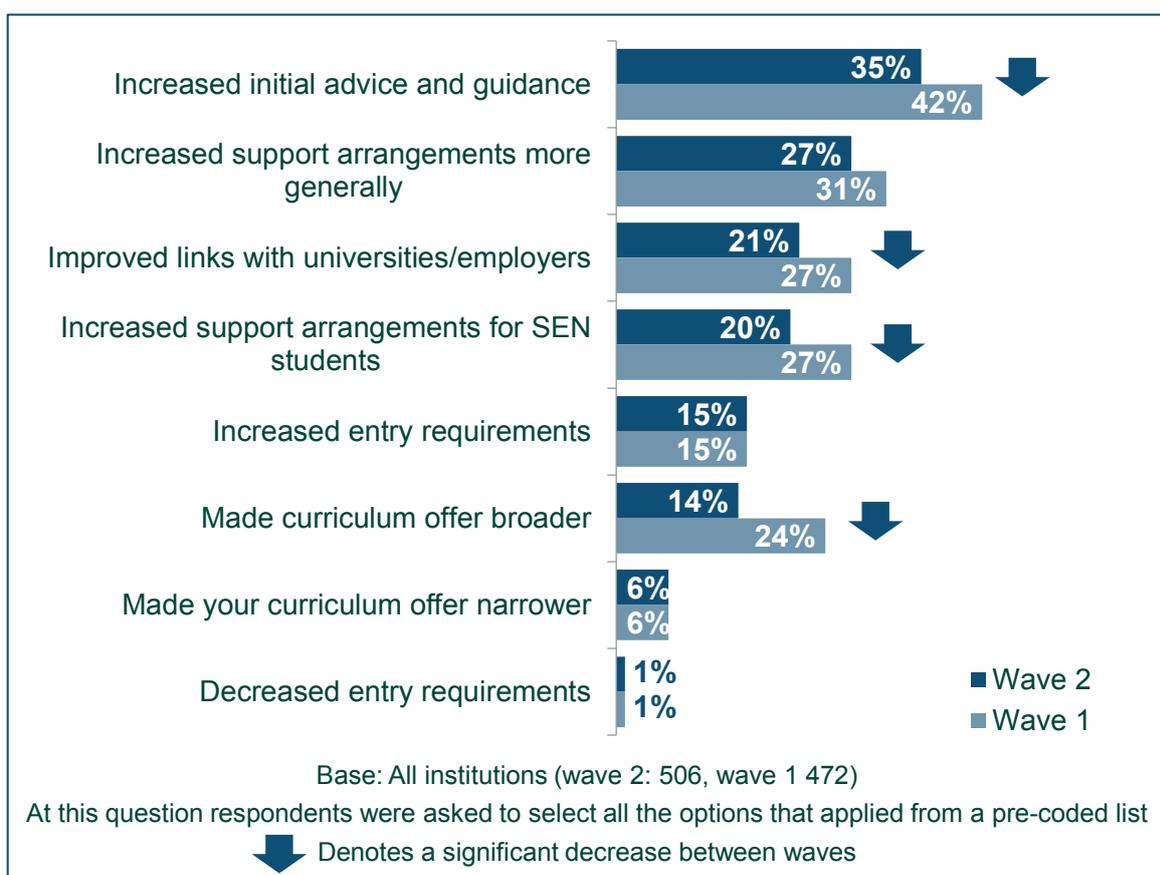
There was a statistically significant decrease in the proportion of institutions that made changes in the previous 12 months in preparation for the 16-19 accountability reforms between waves (from 64% in wave 1 to 57% in wave 2). This may be because institutions had made many of the modifications necessary to comply with the reforms prior to the previous academic year.⁴³

⁴³ Wave one was completed in the 2014/15 academic year, whilst wave 2 took part at the start of the 2015/16 academic year.

Increasing initial advice and guidance was the most frequently reported way institutions prepared for the reforms (35%, see Figure 6.2). More than two in five increased general support arrangements (27%) and improved links with universities, employers or training providers (21%).

Figure 6.2 also shows that there has been a statistically significant decrease in the proportion of institutions making four of the eight changes specifically in preparation for the accountability reforms between waves. Though increasing initial advice and guidance remains the most common change made in preparation for the 16-19 accountability reforms, the proportion of institutions doing so was 7 percentage points lower than at wave 1 (42% down to 35%).

Figure 6.2: Changes made in the last 12 months in preparation for the accountability reforms



There were a number of statistically significant differences in the preparations made by institution type:

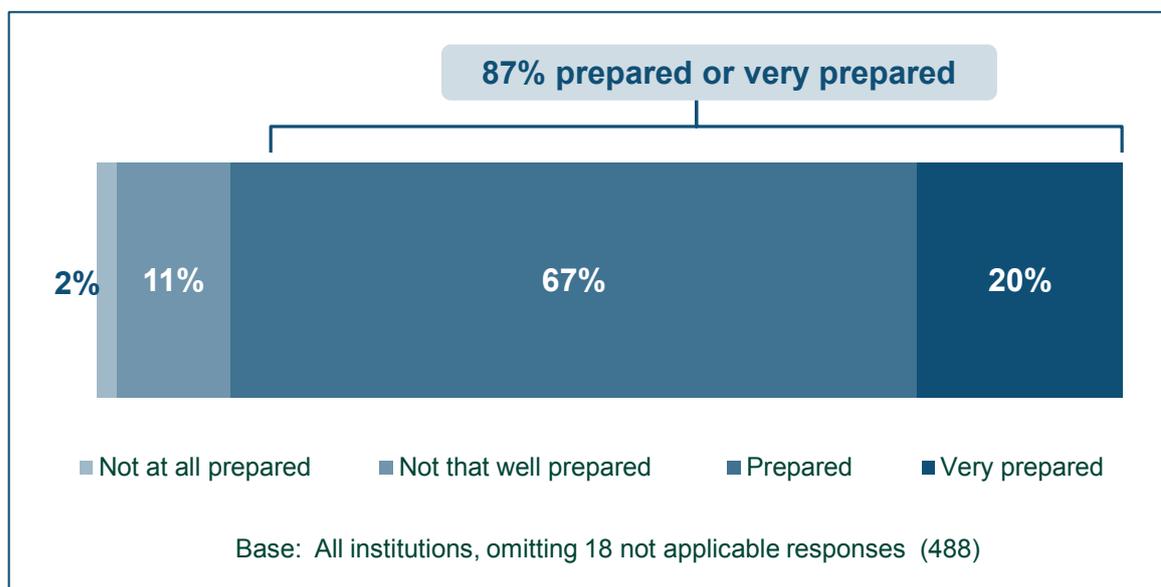
- Special schools were statistically significantly less likely than the other types of institutions to have made any change in preparation for the 16-19 accountability reforms (39%);
- However, they were more likely to have made their curriculum offer broader (25%) than schools with sixth forms (12%) and general colleges (10%);
- General colleges were more likely than schools with sixth forms and special schools to have improved links with universities, employers and training providers (34% compared with 20% and 18% respectively).

6.1 Performance table changes

The vast majority of institutions felt prepared for the changes to 16-18 performance tables (87%), with 20% very prepared (see Figure 6.3). Around one in ten institutions (13%) did not feel prepared for the reforms.⁴⁴

General colleges and schools with sixth forms (90% for both) were statistically significantly more likely to be prepared for the reforms to the 16-18 performance tables than special schools (68%).

Figure 6.3: Preparation for the 16-18 performance tables



⁴⁴ Note that this analysis excludes the 18 institutions that stated the upcoming changes to the performance tables did not apply to them. All but one of these were special schools (the remainder was a school with sixth form).

7. Apprenticeships and traineeships

This chapter focuses on the provision and promotion of apprenticeships and traineeships amongst post-16 institutions.

Apprenticeships combine practical training in the workplace with study, last for 1-4 years and are intended to equip students with the skills needed for work. They were reformed in 2013 following the Richard Review of 2012 to make the apprenticeship programme more rigorous and more responsive to employer's needs.⁴⁵ Apprenticeships have also been identified as a key means to prepare young people for successful careers, with the government recently announcing plans to increase the number of apprenticeships available to 3 million by 2020.⁴⁶

Traineeships were introduced in August 2013 and are designed to help young people develop the skills needed for an apprenticeship and/or employment. Traineeships last between six weeks and six months and include: a work experience placement with an employer; work preparation training; and English and Maths provision where required.⁴⁷

7.1 Apprenticeships

Over four-fifths (84%) of institutions either offered or promoted apprenticeships to post-16 students. These were attended by the vast majority of the student population (97%).

It was more common for institutions to promote but not offer apprenticeships (68%) than to offer them as part of their curriculum (16%, see Figure 7.1). Over half of the student population attended institutions that offered apprenticeships (52%) and 45% attended institutions that only promoted them.

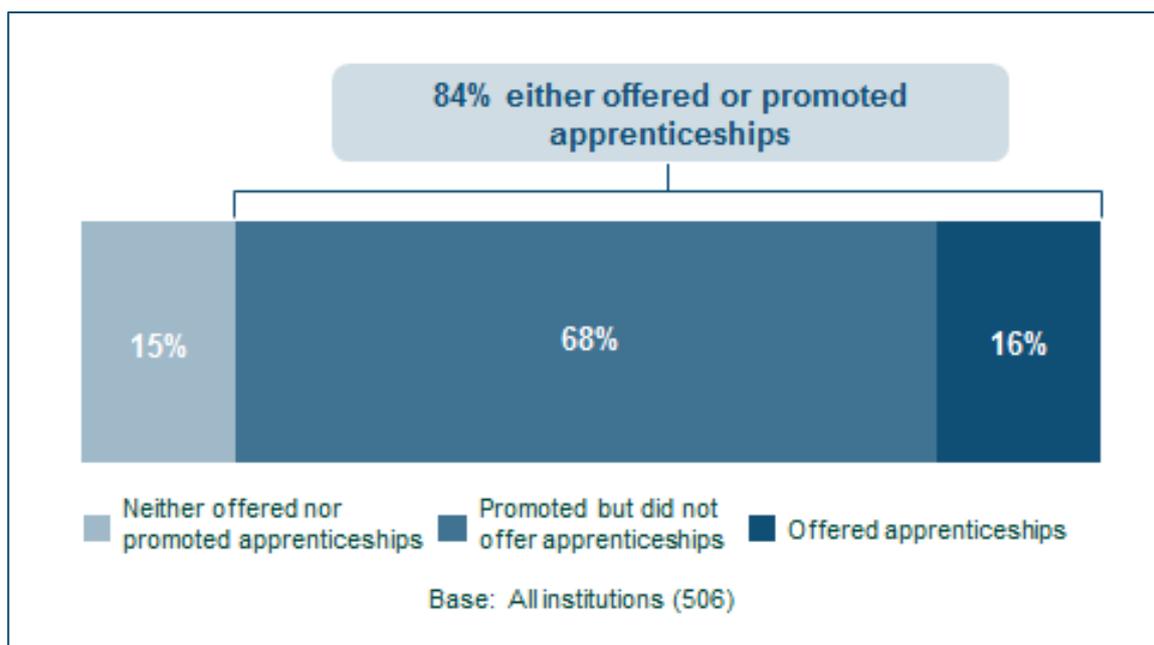
Almost all general colleges offered apprenticeships (97%), whilst around one in ten schools with sixth forms and special schools did (10% and 7% respectively). Schools with sixth forms were statistically significantly more likely to promote but not offer apprenticeships (86%) than special schools (26%) or general colleges (3%). Two thirds of special schools did not offer or promote apprenticeships (66%).

⁴⁵ [The Richard Review of Apprenticeships](#)

⁴⁶ [Apprenticeships \(in England\): vision for 2020](#)

⁴⁷ [Traineeships: framework for delivery 2015 to 2016](#)

Figure 7.1: The provision and promotion of apprenticeships



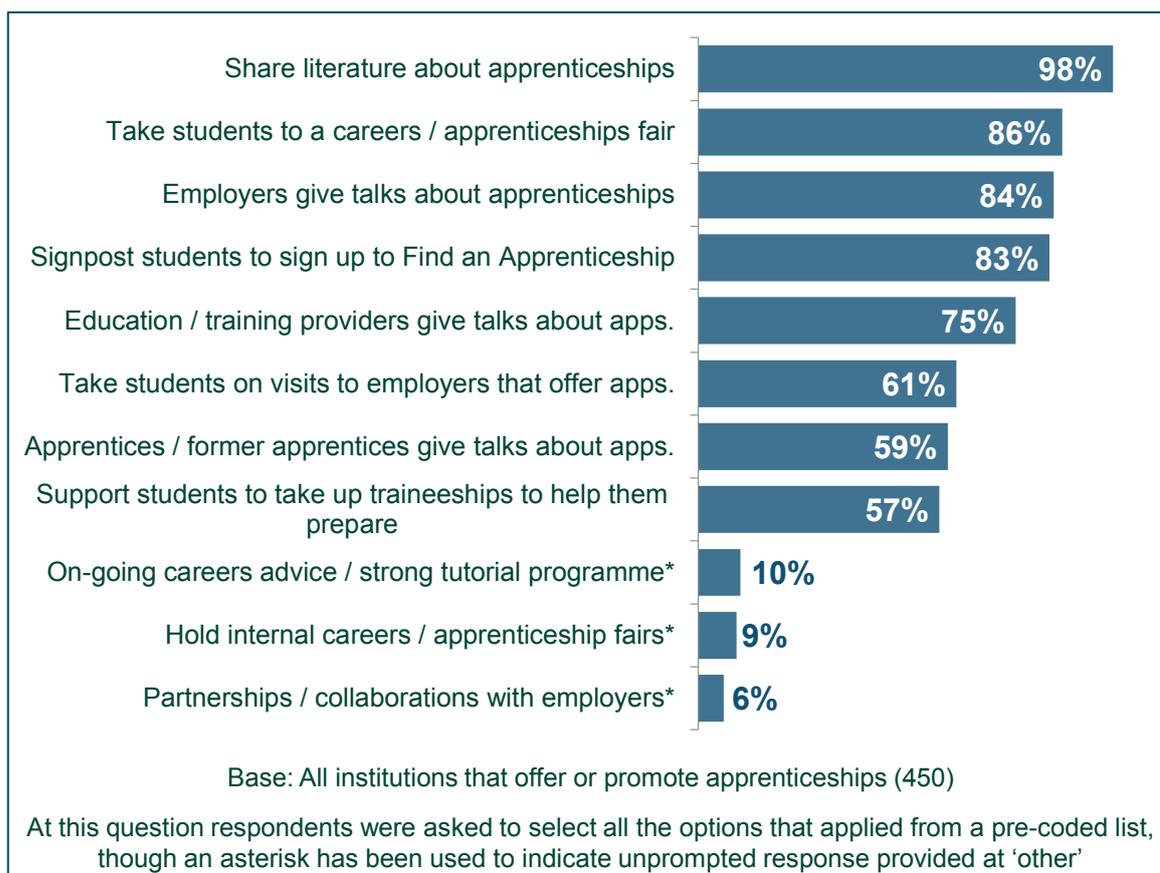
The most common method used by institutions to promote apprenticeships (among institutions that offered or promoted them) was sharing literature with students (98%). More than four-fifths took students to careers or apprenticeship fairs (86%), invited employers to give talks (84%) or signposted students to sign up to the Find an Apprenticeship service (83%, see Figure 7.2).⁴⁸

General colleges were statistically significantly more likely than other institutions that offered or promoted apprenticeships to carry out the majority of practices, particularly those that involved the active participation of employers or apprentices. They were more likely to:

- Get employers to give talks to students about apprenticeships (95% compared to 86% of schools with sixth forms that offered or promoted apprenticeships);
- Take students on visits to employers that offer apprenticeships (92% compared to 52% of schools with sixth forms);
- Have apprentices or former apprentices visit the institution to deliver talks on apprenticeships (92% compared to 57% of schools with sixth forms); and
- Support students to take up traineeships (71% compared to 53% of schools with sixth forms).

⁴⁸ Find an Apprenticeship is an online service for young people to search for, and apply to, apprenticeships and traineeships in England.

Figure 7.2: Methods used to promote apprenticeships



Institutions that offered apprenticeships were statistically significantly more likely than institutions that only promoted apprenticeships to do the following:

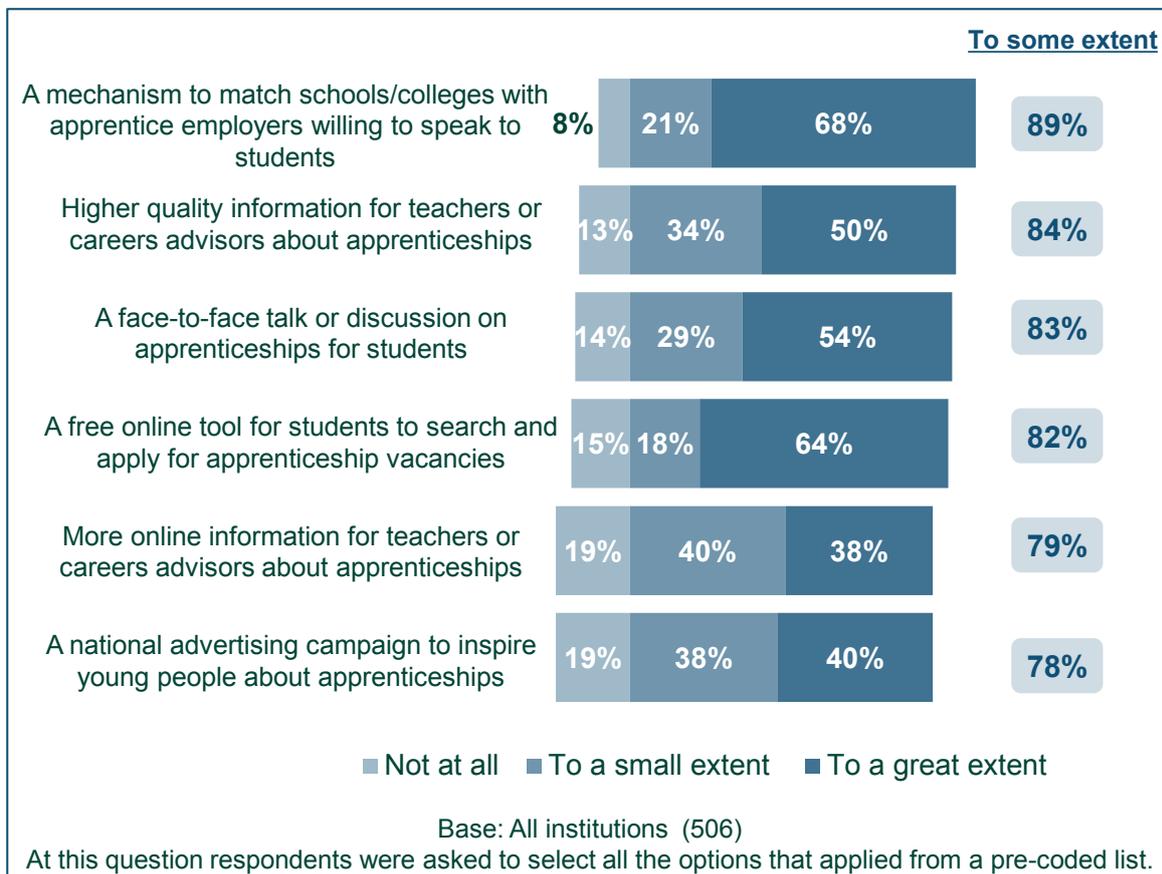
- Have employers come in to give talks to students (91% compared to 82%);
- Take students on visits to employers that offer apprenticeships (84% compared to 55%);
- Have apprentices or former apprentices visit the institution to deliver talks (77% compared to 55%);
- Support students to take up traineeships to help them prepare (72% compared to 53%).

Institutions were also asked to rate the effectiveness of a number of potential methods for promoting apprenticeships.⁴⁹ A mechanism to match institutions with employers willing to speak to students about apprenticeships was considered the most helpful to promote apprenticeships (89% felt it would help to some extent, see Figure 7.3).

⁴⁹ This was asked of all institutions, including the 15% that were not currently offering or promoting apprenticeships.

More than four in five institutions also felt that higher quality information about apprenticeships (84%), face-to-face talks for students (83%) and a free online tool for students to search and apply for vacancies (82%) would be helpful, with at least half of institutions reporting it would help to a great extent.

Figure 7.3: Perceived effectiveness of potential methods to promote apprenticeships (prompted)



7.2 Traineeships

One in nine institutions offered traineeships as part of their post-16 curriculum (11%), the same proportion as wave 1 . Over one-third of the student population attended these institutions (34%).

Exactly half of institutions said they signpost traineeships to their students and these were attended by 64% of the student population. However, there has been a significant decrease in the proportion of institutions signposting traineeships between waves (from 67% in wave 1 to 50% in wave 2)⁵⁰. Consequently, there has also been a decrease in the proportion of the post-16 student population attending institutions that signposted traineeships (from 78% in wave 1 to 64% in wave 2).

General colleges were statistically significantly more likely to offer traineeships (65%) than special schools and schools with sixth forms (10% and 5% respectively). They were also more likely to signpost traineeships (71% compared to 53% and 25% respectively).

⁵⁰ It is possible that the significant decrease in the proportion of institutions that signpost traineeships occurred due to the timing of the second wave of the omnibus. It can be expected that institutions are less likely to signpost traineeships to students half way through the academic year (November/December) than they would be at the end of the academic year (June/July), when preparing for the next.

8. Careers programmes

This chapter focuses on what post-16 institutions were offering as part of their careers programme. It begins by addressing the career oriented activities and services being offered by institutions, before examining the relationships they have with employers.

Since September 2013, all FE colleges and sixth form colleges have been required to provide access to independent careers guidance.⁵¹ Institutions are encouraged to think beyond traditional careers advice and to embrace the importance of inspiration and raising aspirations in preparing young people for work, for example by greater collaboration with employers and facilitating mentoring schemes to help students think about options beyond their immediate experiences.⁵²

8.1 Career oriented activities and services

Post-16 institutions were offering a broad range of activities and services as part of their careers programme. Exposure to different employers via workplace visits / work experience and events / careers fairs were the most commonly reported (95% and 94% respectively, see Figure 8.1⁵³).

Over three quarters (77%) offered mentoring as part of their careers programme. The importance of mentoring was recently highlighted in a speech by the Prime Minister which announced a new drive, led by The Careers & Enterprise Company, to recruit professionals to act as volunteer mentors for teenagers at risk of under-achieving or dropping out of education.⁵⁴

Signposting to different types of information was common. Around nine in ten institutions provided access to relevant websites (e.g. portals) (90%), guidance to helpline services (87%) and apprenticeship information (86%). Professional careers advisers were offered by 87% of institutions, and just under half (47%) provided access to an enterprise adviser or a careers and enterprise company.⁵⁵

⁵¹ [Careers guidance for colleges](#)

⁵² [New careers and enterprise company for schools press release](#)

⁵³ Activities/services reported by over two-fifths of institutions are shown here.

⁵⁴ [David Cameron's announcement of a national mentoring campaign](#)

⁵⁵ This includes the Careers and Enterprise Company established by the government as well as other enterprise companies and advisers.

Figure 8.1: Main career activities and services carried out by post-16 institutions (prompted)



There were a number of statistically significant differences in the activities offered by schools with sixth forms and general colleges. Schools with sixth forms were more likely than general colleges to have external education and training providers visit the institutions (94% compared to 82% of general colleges), whilst general colleges were significantly more likely to offer students traineeship information (77% compared to 54% of schools with sixth forms).

Special schools were significantly less likely than average to provide all but three of the activities and services listed in Figure 8.1.⁵⁶ For instance, mentoring was more likely to be undertaken by general colleges and schools with sixth forms (82% and 78% compared to 66% of special schools).

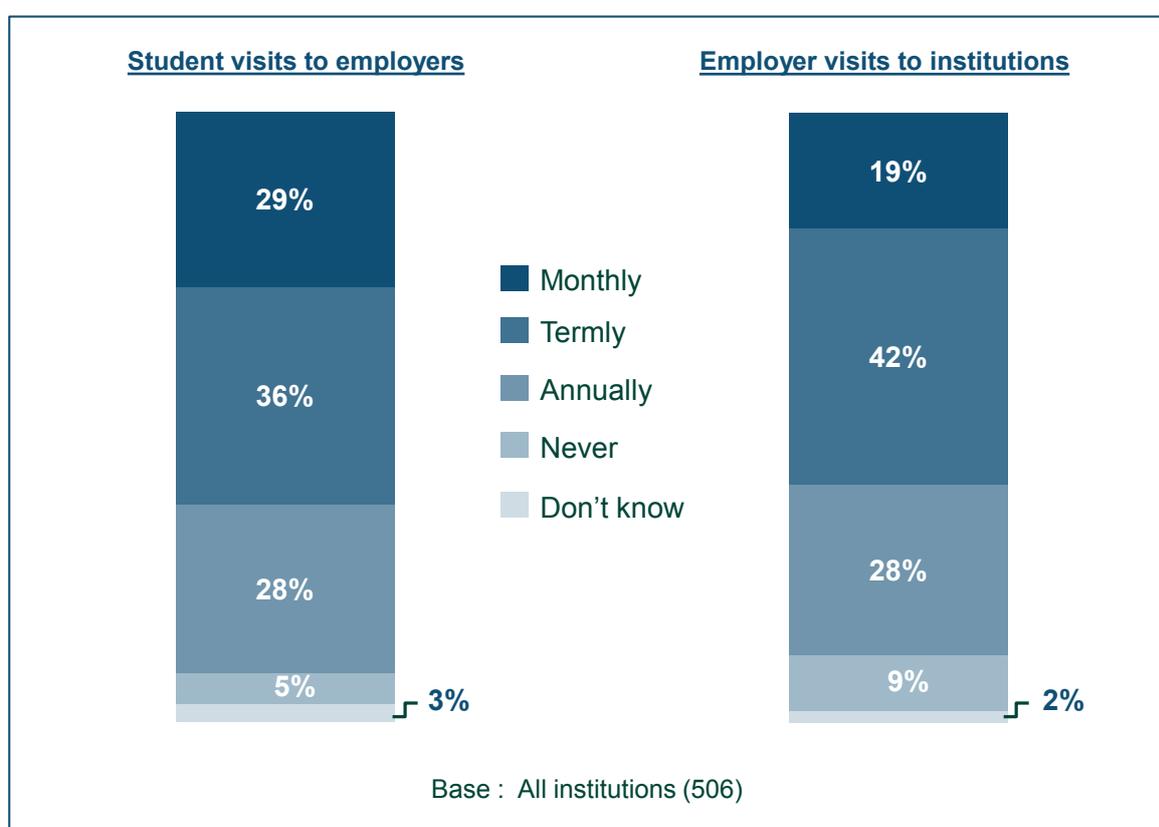
⁵⁶ The exceptions were workplace visits, visits to education / training providers and engagement with an enterprise adviser.

8.2 Relationships with employers

The vast majority of institutions had made arrangements for some students to visit external employers and places of work at least once in the last 12 months (92%), with 29% engaging with employers in this manner on a monthly basis (see Figure 8.2)⁵⁷. Overall 5% of institutions had not conducted any visits to employers or places of work in the preceding 12 months.

The proportion of institutions that had visits from employers to speak to students at least annually was slightly lower at 89%. Almost one fifth engaged with employers in this way on a monthly basis (19%, see Figure 8.2), whilst 9% had not been visited at all by employers in the previous 12 months.

Figure 8.2: Frequency of employer visits to post-16 institutions



General colleges were statistically significantly more likely to organise student visits to employers and have employer visits to the institution on a regular basis. The majority organised these activities on a monthly basis (82% and 65% respectively), whilst it was more common for schools with sixth forms to do so on a termly basis (41% and 48%

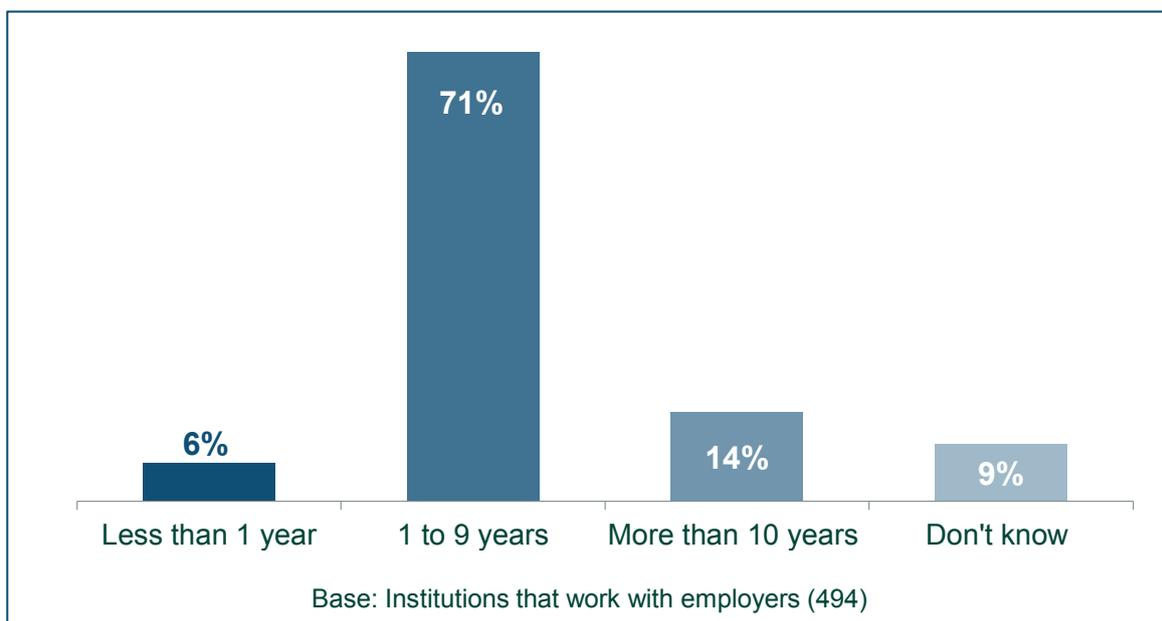
⁵⁷ Institutions were asked to think across all of their study programmes, including visits and activities run outside of the careers programme when answering.

respectively). Almost half of special schools arranged visits to external employers / places of work on a monthly basis (48%), however almost one third had no employer visits (31%).

Almost three-quarters of institutions that provided student visits to employers or employer visits to the institution had worked with at least one employer for 1-9 years (71%), and 14% had done so for a decade or more (see Figure 8.4). Only 6% of institutions had had a relationship with an employer for less than 1 year.

General colleges that worked with employers were statistically significantly more likely to have had a relationship with an employer for at least ten years (41% compared to 12% special schools and 9% of schools with sixth forms).

Figure 8.3: The length of the longest relationship held between post-16 institutions and employers



Annex A: Response Rate

Table A1 presents the response rate achieved from the eligible sample of post-16 institutions at wave 2. A small proportion (2%) of the sample proved to be ineligible due to some institutions having closed or no longer offering post-16 education.

Almost a third of the sample is categorised as 'other' where it was not possible to achieve an interview with the institution by the end of fieldwork, though they had not refused to take part.

Table A3: Response rate achieved from eligible sample by institution

Institution type	Total sample	Ineligible sample	Eligible sample	Interviews achieved	Refused	Other	% of eligible sample interviewed
General FE colleges	108	0	108	62	11	35	57%
Specialist colleges	13	1	12	3	2	7	25%
Sixth Form colleges	47	1	46	36	2	8	78%
Schools with Sixth Forms	623	12	611	323	69	219	53%
Special schools	84	2	82	61	8	13	74%
Studio Schools	15	1	14	12	0	2	86%
University Technical Colleges	15	0	15	9	1	5	60%
Total	905	17	888	506	93	289	57%

Annex B: Weighting

The weights used to ensure the findings were representative of the entire population by institution type were calculated using counts of the number of post-16 institutions from Edubase, as outlined in Table B1 below.

The secondary weight, which weights responses to the proportion of all students that institutions cover, was also calculated from Edubase as outlined in Table B2.

Table B4: Population (number of institutions)

Institution type	n	%
General college	217	7.2%
Specialist college	27	0.9%
Sixth form college	94	3.1%
Schools with sixth forms	2,049	67.8%
Special schools	572	18.9%
Studio schools	33	1.1%
University technical colleges	30	1.0%
Total	3,022	100.0%

Source: Edubase

Table B5: Population (number of students)

Institution type	n	%
General college	575,397	46.8%
Specialist college	21,819	1.8%
Sixth form college	159,864	13.0%
Schools with sixth forms	451,332	36.7%
Special schools	14,089	1.1%
Studio schools	2,510	0.2%
University technical colleges	4,168	0.3%
Total	1,229,179	100.0%

Source: Edubase



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