

EMC Survey of English Teachers on A Level Recruitment November 2019 – The Full Report

The Background – EMC’s First Survey, September 2017

In September 2017, prior to accurate national statistics for A Level entries being readily available, EMC undertook a national survey of English teachers to find out what was happening to A Level English recruitment. It was a response to anecdotes and murmurings suggesting that English recruitment was suffering a severe dip in all three subjects: English Literature, English Language and English Language and Literature.

The picture emerging from the 2017 survey was disturbing¹. Teachers reported significant drops in numbers across all three subjects, with a particularly marked reduction in English Language. We asked them to give us their thoughts on the reasons why and they offered a range of ideas. These included some that we listed for them and asked them to pick between and others that they themselves identified that were not on our list. The headlines were that teachers believed that the following had particularly influenced recruitment:

- The structural changes that have led to the AS exam no longer being offered by most institutions. (Most students now do 3 rather than 4 or 5 subjects.)
- The promotion of STEM in schools
- The perceived greater value of STEM in HE, including concerns about future employability post-degree
- Students’ negative feelings about GCSE English
- Particular aspects of GCSE English that were impacting on recruitment, particularly to A Level English Language
- The fact that English seemed like a hard, high pressure subject
- Students were no longer reading for pleasure
- The fact that the marking of English seems to students (and teachers) to be unreliable.

In interpreting the results, one question that was raised in the months that followed was whether it was all an inevitable consequence of the removal of AS subjects and the shrinkage of all A Levels. However even then, teachers were reporting a more marked percentage dip in English than in other subjects, including other Humanities subjects, such as History. Another question was whether the demographic had changed, with an overall reduction in the numbers of students of that age in education. Again, responses suggested that if this was the case, it was affecting English more than other subjects. A third question was raised about whether the promotion of STEM to girls was affecting English (a subject that traditionally attracts more girls), disproportionately more than some other Humanities subjects like History, which traditionally have a more equal gender balance. More research is needed to prove this.

¹ The students choosing A Level courses at the time of the first EMC survey were the first to sit the newly reformed GCSEs of 2015, and are the cohort whose results are now reported in the 2019 JCQ statistics referred to in this report.

Official JCQ Examination Entry Statistics 2018-19 (and Since 2012)

Since the 2017 Survey, we have had official national statistics from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), giving the 2017-19 actual examination entries for all three English subjects in England.² These told the same story as that that which emerged from our first survey but, if anything painted an even more troubling picture, with figures continuing to fall between 2017 and 2019. They also give answers to some of the questions about English recruitment in relation to other subjects (APPENDIX 2). The headlines are:

English Literature A Level

| | |
|------|--|
| 2019 | 37,179 (-8% on 2018) (<i>approximately 25% on 2011</i>) ³ |
| 2018 | 40,456 (-4% on 2017) |
| 2017 | 42,246 (-4% on 2016) |

English Language A Level

| | |
|------|---|
| 2019 | 13,689 (-22% on 2018) (<i>approximately -42% on 2011</i>) |
| 2018 | 17,875 (-16% on 2017) |
| 2017 | 21,210 (-3% on 2016) |

English Language & Literature A Level

| | |
|------|---|
| 2019 | 7479 (-16% on 2018) (<i>approximately -56% on 2011</i>) |
| 2018 | 8878 (-13% on 2017) |
| 2017 | 10,250 (-10% on 2016) |

All English A Level subjects

| | |
|------|---|
| 2019 | 58347 (13.5% on 2018) (<i>-31% on 2012. Data here from JCQ</i>) |
| 2018 | 66923 (-9% on 2017) |
| 2017 | 73137 (-6% on 2016) |
| 2012 | 83,721 |

This is in the context of figures for all subjects showing a much less significant drop:

All A Level subjects

| | |
|------|--|
| 2019 | 736,734 (-1% on 2018) (<i>-7% on 2012 Data from JCQ</i>) |
| 2018 | 745,537 (-2% on 2017) |
| 2017 | 759,233 (-1% on 2016) |

To put it into the context of other Humanities subjects, History had a percentage *increase* in numbers of 6% between 2018 and 2019, with 47,914 entries as compared with 44,403. (For comparison, History in 2019 was 2% up on the entries in 2012.

The shrinkage of all English A Level subjects by 30% since 2012 is a cause for great concern. Though there has been a pattern of percentage reductions over the whole of this period, it has sharply accelerated since 2016. It has also been particularly extreme in English Language, which is now just over half the size it was in 2012.

² Full statistics are available from Joint Council for Qualifications, GCE A Level <https://www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results/a-levels>. We have extracted the relevant data to produce these statistics, showing the percentage rise and fall over time in each subject in England. We also include a full UK breakdown (England, Wales and Northern Ireland but not Scotland, where the main exams taken are Highers and Advanced Highers). (APPENDIX 1).

³ The statistics for the 2011 breakdowns into separate subjects (above) are taken from a different source. See APPENDIX 1)

The New EMC Survey, October 2019

207 teachers completed our survey. This was almost double the number in the 2017 survey. The results came from state and independent schools of different types and colleges across the country.

We are confident that the figures and comments presented are reliable and representative of what is happening in terms of English A Level recruitment and teaching as a whole, and would be broadly replicated in any similar survey. Our purpose in presenting the figures, however, is not to draw definitive conclusions, but to draw attention to significant issues facing A Level English teaching at the moment and to call for further research and an urgent action plan from the DfE to address the problem.

We would like to point out two anomalies in the data. While we do not regard them as statistically significant, they are worth noting.

- There might be occasional replication of data where multiple teachers from the same school have completed the survey. However, we are confident that instances of this occurring are negligible. 70% of the 212 teachers completing the survey named their school, with only five instances of replication. If these figures are replicated for the remaining 30% then that would mean seven instances of replication.
- A small number of responses came from teachers working in schools outside of England, which operate within different social pressures and policy directives. Given these schools still follow English examination syllabuses, they have also been included in the final figures.

Recruitment for A Level English Subjects

Although the JCQ statistics give clear, incontrovertible national information regarding entries, we still thought it worth asking a set of questions about whether our respondees were experiencing recruitment swings in line with these national figures and how the changes were impacting on class sizes and numbers of classes on offer.

Q. Is your experience broadly in line with the national picture? Please use the comment box to outline changes in subjects offered, numbers of classes, numbers of students.

The figures suggest that the national picture is broadly replicated across all schools and colleges, with only a small number showing increases in any of the English subjects. Only in exceptional circumstances was the increase significant.

| | Participating schools + colleges | Recruitment dropping in line with national picture, or worse | Numbers no longer offering this A Level as an option |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|
| Literature | 207 | 163 (79%) | 2 (1% decline) |
| Language | 124 | 102 (82%) | 19 (15% decline) |
| Language and Literature | 72 | 37 (99%) | 34 (47% decline) |

Where schools and colleges were bucking the trend, increases were generally small. Instances of a sustained increase in numbers over more than one year were rare:

- Literature 8 schools (4%)
- Language 7 schools (6%)
- Language and Literature 0 schools (0%)

In many ways the figures and comments in the EMC Survey of October 2019 are more worrying than the OFQUAL raw data about 2019 examination entries from the Awarding Bodies. Lying beneath these figures is a story about large numbers of schools and colleges dropping A Level English subjects altogether.

- 1% decline in centres offering AL Literature
- 15% decline in centres offering AL Language
- 47% decline in centres offering AL Language and Literature

The small dip in centres dropping Literature does not paint the full picture of what is happening on the ground. A large number of centres reported offering fewer classes for this subject area. Comments such as the following were common in the responses:

We have seen a significant decrease in the numbers taking Literature from 60 students (3 classes) prior to the spec changes to only 1 class of between 15 and 19.

Historically, we have had four groups of Language (80-90 students) each. This year, we were expecting three classes (approx 70 students). In the end, we only have two classes (43 students).

We used to run two A-level groups studying English Literature. However, we only now have one group averaging 15 students.

We used to fill two classes per year group for A Level English Literature and now have just one class for Year 12 and one for Year 13.

We used to offer two sets for Literature at A Level, with cohorts between 20 and 25 entries. Now, we've had our sets reduced to one, with class sizes between 6 and 9.

Similarly, a significant number of respondents commented on large decreases in class size itself. Here are some examples:

Our class size has reduced from 15-20 to 4-8 students.

We used to have approximately 20/22 students wanting to study English Lit – numbers have consistently fallen over the past years to around 10 to 2 this year

Literature numbers have collapsed to single figures.

Language has gone from around 20 pupils to 3-4.

Language reduced from over 110 to less than 70 students.

We have a massive decrease in all English subjects:

- Literature: 2009 = 100; 2019 = 33*
- L & L: 2009 = 88; 2019 = 19*
- Language: 2009 = 90; 2019 = 32*

The above is across the 2 year course

We once had 25-30 A level Lit students – we recruited 5 this year – 260 in the year group. We believe some studied A level English Lit elsewhere – but not many. In the past we would have 10 – 15 studying Language. It dropped so low we went through a spell of not being able to offer it. We resurrected it this year and have 8 students studying it.

We used to have all three subjects flourishing, now we only have a Lang/Lit course of 10 students.

In 2010-2016, we had two classes for language, and two for literature. Each subject cohort never dropped below 40. In 2017, budget restrictions forced us to move to one class per subject, and students were no longer able to take both language AND literature as they were timetabled against each other. We now have 6 language students, and 12 literature students

Reasons for Fall in Numbers

This section forms the bulk of this report. Reporting on views of over 200 teachers on why recruitment has fallen gives us valuable information and insights that could form the basis of further, more substantial research and action to effect change. The raw statistics are very useful but equally so are the individual comments that most of the teachers were eager to offer. The comments are especially interesting if they occur repeatedly, forming a pattern across all those surveyed. This we often found to be the case. There were some dissenting voices but these were rare and it was easy to see big patterns of agreement, where a huge majority of respondents seemed to concur, and even use the same words repeatedly to express their view of what was occurring and why.

It's worth noting that in this survey, as compared with that in 2017, we decided to refine the questions to allow us to glean more information about individual subjects within the English suite. This made the answers a little more complex to process but it does give a clearer picture of differences between the English subjects – for instance some insight into why English Language and English Literature A Levels seem to be under particularly severe pressure.

Q. Here are some reasons why recruitment may have fallen. If you have noticed a fall in recruitment, please tick your top three reasons for each subject.

Nine reasons were offered for teachers to select from. They are listed and numbered here (1-9), with the most commonly selected first.

| | Literature | Language | Language and Literature |
|--|------------|----------|-------------------------|
| Students not enjoying GCSE English | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| STEM being seen as the best option in HE and for employment | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| STEM being promoted in schools | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Students no longer reading for pleasure | 2 | 9 | 4 |
| Loss of offer of 4 AS Levels in Year 12, leading to shrinkage | 7 | 3 | 6 |
| Parental pressure to do subjects that are perceived as more vocational | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Students' perception of English as a high pressure, difficult subject | 5 | 7 | 7 |
| English exam grading perceived by students to be unreliable | 8 | 6 | 7 |
| Students not enjoying KS3 English | 9 | 8 | 9 |

The picture is similar to that reported in 2017. Teachers had space to provide additional ideas of their own (or to add more detailed comments) about the possible causes for a reduction in numbers recruited. These have been summarised below.

Additional reason 1 – The diminished cultural status of English

There seems to be a significant cultural shift away from Literature and the humanities and this is very short-sighted in my opinion.

I think that the culture of instant access to knowledge, created by the internet is producing a generation who don't know how to sit for hours and just read for pleasure, hence the decline in English numbers.

Students, parents, education and society in general now value maths and sciences more. English is no longer prestigious with too many students viewing it as a necessary evil.

National and cultural perceptions of both Englishes are the root cause of our slump at our school.

Social value has decreased: perception of where English can take you.

Additional reason 2 – Competition from a wider range of subjects

Our school, two years ago, introduced Psychology as an A Level option and this has definitely impacted our numbers as well.

developing more of the other humanities/arts subjects such as psychology, sociology, politics, philosophy and criminology.

Another reason I feel are students selecting more 'new' subjects such as Criminology and Psychology. The numbers for these subjects are high in comparison to other subjects in our college.

It's partly to do with students lack of enjoyment with the new GCSEs; and partly due to the popularity of 'new' A level subjects such as Politics (where our numbers have increased dramatically).

GCSEs and Their Relationship to A Level

Given the importance attached to the 2015 GCSEs in the last survey we thought it worth asking a specific question about it in this one:

Q. What are your thoughts about the relationship between 2015 GCSEs and the A Levels (for example how well they prepare students, how far they encourage continuing study)?

While not all teachers who responded were critical of the current GCSEs, a large majority of those answering this question were. Words like 'dry', 'dull' (or 'deadly dull'), 'limiting', 'narrow', 'boring', 'relentless' kept recurring.

Some of the common themes have been identified and exemplified below.

English GCSEs actively put students off further study

GCSE syllabuses just aren't sufficiently stimulating and engaging – students are switched off.

The nature of the GCSE syllabus discourages enthusiasm for continuing with English.

The Language GCSE is still very dry and does not encourage an enjoyment of the subject amongst some of the students, despite our best efforts.

Students find it all tedious. Language students are pleasantly surprised when they see that A level is not like GCSE

They are driving students away from the subject

Students often find English language GCSE very dull and I think this puts them off further study.

I have the impression that English as it is currently widely prescribed in schools is as likely to put off pupils off as inspire them.

GCSE too dry so not a recruitment tool at all

Students hate the GCSE and seem to be being taught 'English by numbers'. It is definitely putting them off.

The course deters students as it is challenging and can be quite dry.

The new GCSE specifications have really killed the joy of English.

GCSE English Language is dry, dull and difficult and disaffects students of all ability levels. There used to be an uptake at A level by less able students with a C, but who enjoyed the subject and were therefore open to A level lit. No longer, sadly.

Texts for GCSE literature are often not seen as relevant, so enjoyment has dropped.

Insufficient connection between GCSE and A Level (particularly for Language)

The Language paper does not prepare them very well. Where is the spoken language element? It is a very dry exam.

The GCSE is a very prescribed and narrowly focused in terms of Literature, which has been documented and does not really prepare students for studying this subject effectively at KS5.

For Language, the GCSE is so redundant in relation to A Level Language that they barely see a connection between them.

There is no resemblance between GCSE English Language and A Level

Language – formulaic, repetition of same question types and dullness of (paper 2) texts is killing enthusiasm for studying Lang and bears little relation to the empirical nature of A Level study. No opportunity for reading for pleasure. Our school's prescriptive, mechanical SOWs for GCSE are killing off teachers' enthusiasm, never mind pupils'

There seems to be a big jump between GCSE and A-level now, and far less independent thinking, so the NEA poses problems.

GCSEs are too narrow – in terms of what is taught and how

I have taught and examined the new GCSEs and have tried to remain positive but they are awful. The focus of the literature course is narrow (as in, dead white men) and the lack of opportunities to write slowly re draft is holding students of all abilities back.

The narrowness of the GCSE specifications and the increased focus on nineteenth century canonical texts has decreased enjoyment and variety somewhat and does not prepare students for the more varied diet at A Level.

The narrowing GCSE Language curriculum doesn't encompass the thrust of language as a social tool. The content of the Language A-Level students find interesting (e.g. gender, child language, spoken language, social media) is not represented at GCSE

The new GCSE is very restrictive, offering a very narrow range of text choices and encouraging students to be prescriptive in the way they approach writing questions. We have to do a lot of work at the beginning of Year 12 on how to write a proper essay!

The texts chosen for study are largely white, male and old. This makes English Literature seem outdated and dry – this does not help recruitment. We refer to our modern texts and wider reading to stimulate interest in the students.

A problem is the lack of 'different cultures' texts available for study.

I think that the very prescriptive way of answering the GCSE Language questions has put many off carrying on with English. Also, the push towards learning by heart has also given a sense of 'what's the point?' to some.

Language in particular is very prescriptive and a lot to do... The students feels like they're just churning out the same old same old. In terms of Literature, they feel bogged down in having to learn quotes.

Absence of coursework

Lack of coursework element for Lit is damaging.

Loss of coursework hugely disadvantages, lack of sustained answers, enjoyment quashed by overly fussy and pedantic rubrics for discrete questions, deadly dull Language reading texts in exams, increase in content means relatively whistlestop tours.

The A Level doesn't build on anything from the GCSE really and the coursework is too unfamiliar for students when there is no coursework or controlled assessment at GCSE.

The lack of coursework at GCSE could put some students off further study.

The content of the new GCSEs means there is a lot of 'exam preparation' – the course is in danger of becoming only exam focused. Also, students don't develop the skills in literary analysis that GCSE coursework used to help them achieve. For bright, academic students, coursework was a great stretch opportunity and prepared them effectively for A level.

The loss of the spoken language coursework I feel limited their understanding of the breadth of language exploration at GCSE.

Losing study of spoken English has made a difference.

Language is not a fair prep for A Level. I miss teaching the spoken language element and felt that that gave an insight into what it may be like at A Level.

Students are being 'spoon-fed'

We ask so much more of students at A Level, whilst at GCSE (as it is a key measure of our success) we spoon feed. Many students then struggle with the independence.

GCSE spoon-fed; A Levels require genuine engagement.

GCSEs constrain, [students] seek spoon-feeding received opinion.

Not enough independence. Pressure to spoon feed for GCSE and pupils find very big gap for 'A' level.

The spoonfeeding is a major problem for more independent thinking. Formulaic writing isn't helpful. They've been put off by boring texts and boring teaching.

A matter of social justice

Several private schools reported teaching the IGCSE, and finding that this provides a better link to A Level. Given that this qualification isn't available to state school students, this raises serious concerns about social justice: are state-school students more likely to be put off taking English A Levels than their private school counterparts?

We do IGCSE Edexcel, which leads very effectively to A level.

We are fortunate in being able to offer IGCSE English Language and Literature (CIE). Although there are issues with these specs, I feel they are better and more engaging than the new 2015 GCSEs.

I feel that the jump between GCSE and A Level is as large as ever. I particularly regret the loss of coursework as a means of helping pupils to learn through their own writing. We switched to IGCSE five years ago and one key consideration for us was the continuing availability of coursework.

We did OCR for two cycles and then switched back to CIE IGCSE. Found GCSEs reductive, prescriptive and full on.

We do IGCSE which is much better preparation and feed into A Level

We follow IGCSE, which is a good lead-in to A Level.

Literature working better than Language

It's important to note that teachers were much more critical of GCSE Language than Literature. Many teachers felt that the latter did prepare for A Level, though these same teachers were still often critical about the limited selection of texts on offer and the lack of contemporary and broadly representative texts. The following comments highlight the mixed feelings about GCSE English Literature.

The new GCSE Literature course does prepare students well in terms of the analysis skills required and the evaluative aspect and those that are still choosing to pursue it are writing more effective responses right from the start of the course. The volume of poetry studied at GCSE either completely puts students off or they become passionate about it. Another issue that is a problem is the lack of 'different cultures' texts available for study.

The 2015 GCSEs prepare the students for A Level Literature quite well in one respect as they are more challenging. They have helped the students to read in more depth and undertake more difficult questions under examination conditions.

I think the lit course prepares students rather well as the level of essay writing is high and the need to engage with the texts as a whole has ensured students develop their own thoughts and ideas on the text. I think a larger range for the modern text options may help encourage further study. The heavy focus on analysis and limited time to write each essay does take away slightly from student's ability to fully develop their own ideas/arguments but in the whole, I think they're much better preparation for A Level.

Literature working better than Language (cont.)

Literature – two year GCSE is good preparation for linear course; no preparation for NEA. Pressure to complete all exams as closed book is a major deterrent to continuing study, despite A Level being partly open book. Language – formulaic, repetition of same question types and dullness of (paper 2) texts is killing enthusiasm for studying Lang and bears little relation to the empirical nature of A Level study. No opportunity for reading for pleasure. Our school's prescriptive, mechanical SOWs for GCSE are killing off teachers' enthusiasm, never mind pupils'

GCSE Lit is more of a memory test rather than a springboard to independent critical thinking. Students are less resilient and skilled when taking up Lit because of this.

There is an incessant brutality about the 16 poems and 10 non-fiction pieces which crushes the joy. They are trying to get too much in.

Syllabuses at GCSE do not encourage, or reward, independent thinking. Far too many repetitive questions in English Language. Too many different assessment objectives for each text in Literature.

Literature would be better with more breadth, do 2 novels and choose one for the exam, higher focus on craft, genre, etc otherwise just another form of language exam.

I think that Literature GCSE can put students off as there is more focus on remembering key quotations than there is on exploration of themes and ideas!

Literature does a decent job of introducing literary approaches to students, but focuses too much on narrow recall of detail/quotations whereas the A Level exams are at least partially open book.

The lack of tiering makes Literature particularly punishing for middle – and lower-ability students.

Lit is good preparation for A Level ... it's the less academic kids that it is incredibly poorly suited for.

Q. Anything else you'd like to tell us about A Level recruitment?

The comments below draw attention to potential wider implications of continuing falls in numbers.

The decline in numbers has really hurt departments. Fewer students, fewer classes... more unhappiness in departments because staff do not get to experience A Level. This is often the newer staff which leads to less job satisfaction and therefore makes [teacher] retention harder.

I love teaching A Level but it is becoming very difficult with smaller classes as discussions become stilted and too teacher-led. Also by retaining only less suited/able students makes teaching the course more difficult and time consuming as students lack the understanding needed at this level and find it hard to express themselves or develop a line of argument in a reasoned manner.

I've loved teaching for 20-years and now feel so fed up with it.

How the survey was carried out

The survey was carried out by the English and Media Centre in October 2019 on behalf of the Common English Forum. This is an umbrella group of organisations representing English subject specialisms at all levels from primary to university.

The survey was open to all English teachers, who were alerted to it via our email list and social media accounts. 207 schools took part. All of these provided data about A Level English Literature, 124 about A Level Language and 72 about combined A Level Language and Literature.

APPENDIX 1

Figures based on Joint Council for Qualifications, GCE A level summer results (provisional), available at <https://www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results/a-levels>

| | England only | | UK (England, NI, Wales) | |
|-------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---------|
| | English (all subjects) | History | English (all subjects) | History |
| 2019* | 58347 (c.12: -31%, c.18: -13.5%) | 47114(+2% on 2012, +6% on 2018) | 63,135(-12% on 2018) (-25% on 2016) (-30% on 2012) | 51,438 |
| 2018 | 66923 (c.12: -21%, c.17: -9%) | 44403 (-4% on 2012, -2% on 2017) | 72,015(-8% on 2017) | 48,937 |
| 2017 | 73137 (c. 12: -13%, c.16: -6%) | 45241 (-3% on 2012, -8.2% on 2016) | 78,647(-7% on 2016) | 50,311 |
| 2016 | 79072 (c. 12: -6%) | 49302 (+6% on 2012) | 84,710 (-5.5% on 2012) | 54,731 |
| 2012 | 83721 | 46169 | 89,638 | 51,652 |

| | England only | UK (England, NI, Wales) |
|------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | English Literature | |
| 2019 | 37179 (-8.1%) (-15.7% on 2016) | 40,824 (-8% on 2018) (-16% on 2016) |
| 2018 | 40456 (-4.3%) | 44,290(-5% on 2017) |
| 2017 | 42246 (-4.2%) | 46,411(-5% on 2016) |
| 2016 | 44095 | 48,697 |
| 2012 | NA | NA |

| | England only | UK (England, NI, Wales) |
|------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | English Language | |
| 2019 | 13689 (-22.2%)(-40.5% on 2016) | 14,114(-22% on 2018) (-40% on 2016) |
| 2018 | 17589 (-14.8%) | 18,049 (-15% on 2017) |
| 2017 | 20641 (-10.3%) | 21,178(-10% on 2016) |
| 2016 | 22993 | 23,575 |
| 2012 | NA | NA |

| | England only | UK (England, NI, Wales) |
|------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | English Lang and Lit | |
| 2019 | 7479 (-15.8%) (-34.6% on 2016) | 8197 (-15% on 2018) (-34% on 2016) |
| 2018 | 8878 (-13.4%) | 9676(-12.5% on 2017) |
| 2017 | 10250 (-10.4%) | 11,058(-11% on 2016) |
| 2016 | 11433 | 12,438 |
| 2012 | NA | NA |

| | All subjects England only | All subjects UK (England, NI, Wales) |
|------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 2019 | 736734 (-1.2% on 2018) (-7% on 2012) | 801,002(-1.4% on 2018) (-4.3% on 2016) (-7.1% on 2012) |
| 2018 | 745537 (-1.9% on 2017) | 811,776(-2% on 2017) |
| 2017 | 759233 (-1.4% on 2016) | 828,355(-1% on 2016) |
| 2016 | 769340 | 836,705 |
| 2012 | 791761 | 861,819 |

Notes on Appendix 1

1. The first cohort of students to study GCSE 2015 sat their A Levels in summer 2019. The last cohort of students to study the previous GCSEs sat their A Levels in summer 2018. The decrease in numbers between summer 2018 and summer 2019 might, therefore, be seen to have some relationship to the GCSE reforms. (13.5% across all English subjects).
2. The breakdown for separate subjects into Literature, Language and Language & Literature is not available in the JCQ statistics pre-2016. However, in a presentation to CCUE in 2013, Adrian Barlow quoted GCE Inter-Board Statistics of entries for 2011 as follows:

English Literature: 49,478

English Language: 23,690

English Language & Literature: 17,240

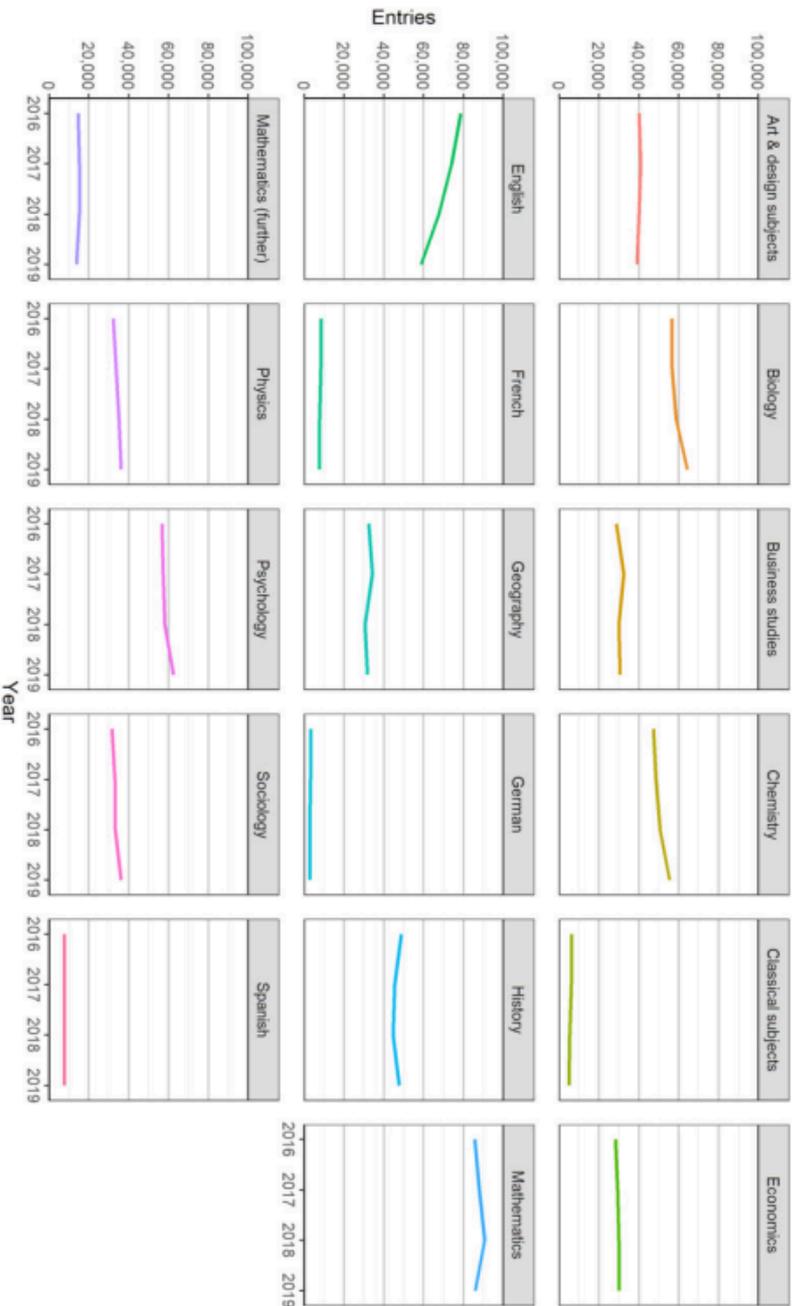
These provide an indication of the fall in numbers over time, so we have used these in the background to the survey, whilst using the JCQ figure for the combined subjects for 2012.

3. We have referred to the figures for entries in England in our report. The UK-wide entry includes Wales and Northern Ireland. The figures are broadly comparable. Further research might want to examine whether there are any statistically significant differences worth investigating further.

APPENDIX 2

Change in A level entries over time for 'facilitating' and larger entry subjects

The graphs below show the change in entries from 2016 to 2019 for subjects with relatively large entry in 2019 (more than 30,000) and subjects which are regarded as 'facilitating subjects' at A level, ie subjects identified by some universities as giving the widest range of options for university study.



Entries have increased over time in biology, chemistry, physics, psychology and sociology and declined in English subjects. Entries between 2016 and 2019 have remained relatively stable in all other subjects.