



Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills

**BIS RESEARCH PAPER NUMBER
260**

Prior Qualifications of Adult OLASS
learners 2015

JANUARY 2016

RESEARCH

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Research paper number 260

December 2015

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Chapter 1: Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of research into the prior qualifications of adults undertaking learning through the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) in the period January – March 2015.

The research, commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and undertaken by IFF Research, looked at the highest prior qualifications of adult prisoners (aged 18 plus) who were undertaking learning whilst in custody, and their reasons for learning.

Adults undertaking learning in custody do so via the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS). OLASS provision allows offenders in custody to receive education and training with the aim of enabling prisoners to gain the skills and qualifications they need to get sustainable employment and have a positive role in society when they leave prison.

Four providers currently deliver OLASS provision – The Manchester College, Weston College, Milton Keynes College and People Plus, formally A4E, (a private provider). This research included only the three colleges (across 8 prisons) and so results cannot be generalised to the full OLASS population.

This report is based on the responses from 343 learners who were in receipt of OLASS funded provision.

Motivations for starting the course and the level of this learning

A high proportion of learners on OLASS provision were undertaking courses for work-related reasons (53%), with many motivated to do the course, at least in part, to help them set up a business when leaving prison (25%).

The following groups were all more likely to have embarked on their course for job-related reasons:

- Those on vocational service sector courses (83%). Conversely, those studying Maths and English courses were less likely to have cited any job-related reason (38%);
- Women (75% compared with 52% of men);
- Those of White ethnicity (59% compared to 43% among non-White learners).

46% of learners felt the course was at the level they wanted, rising to 54% among those who were in learning due to job-related reasons. One in five (19%) had wanted to undertake a higher level course than the one they were undertaking in custody, rising to one in four (24%) among those who were in learning due to job-related reasons. Over half (54%) of these learners indicated that the reason why they did not end up studying at a higher level was that the prison did not run the course at that level, whilst smaller

proportions were either told they could not study at the higher level by their tutor (20%) or reported that they did not have the qualifications to do so (16%). One in eight (13%) simply did not have the confidence to study at a higher level (13%).

Prior qualifications of learners

The majority of survey respondents had a qualification of some level before they started their course (71%), with around four in ten (43%) already having a qualification at Level 2 or above - equivalent to at least 5 GCSEs Grade A-C.

Around one in five (22%) did not have any prior qualifications. The remaining 7% of learners is made up of those who did not know whether they had a previous qualification (6%) or who left the question blank (1%).

Overall, among learners for whom both their current level of learning and highest prior qualification could be determined from the survey¹, just over a third were studying at a higher level (35%), a similar proportion were studying at a lower level (38%), and slightly fewer were on a course at the same level as they had previously achieved (27%).

The proportion of OLASS learners (across all levels) undertaking higher, lower or the same level of qualification was similar to that found amongst adults (aged 19 plus) undertaking Level 2 learning in Further Education in 2012/13².

Learners aged 45 plus were more likely than average to have been studying a higher level qualification (47%) – this reflects the fact that a high proportion of these learners had no prior qualification (40% vs. 16% among those aged 18-24 and 20% of those aged 25-44).

¹ 310 respondents in total – it was not possible to determine both the current level of learning and the highest prior qualification for the remaining 33 respondents due to missing responses.

² Published as a report in the BIS Research Series, paper number 198

Chapter 2: Introduction

This report presents the findings of research into the prior qualifications of adults undertaking learning through the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) in early 2015.

The research, commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and undertaken by IFF Research, looked at the highest prior qualifications of adult prisoners (aged 18 plus) who were undertaking learning whilst in custody, and their reasons for studying.

Research background and objectives

A series of research studies have been carried out since 2004 investigating the prior qualifications of adult learners (aged 19 plus) to examine the extent to which learners were undertaking qualifications at a higher, the same or lower level as they had previously attained.

The Prior Qualification Surveys undertaken have covered many strands of publicly-funded provision. The most recent of the Prior Qualifications Survey series (of learners on provision in 2013, conducted in early 2014 and published in December 2014), for instance, covered adults undertaking apprenticeships, classroom-based further education courses and Adult Community Learning provision³. To date adults undertaking learning in custody via the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) have not been covered in the prior Qualifications Survey series. OLASS provision allows offenders in custody to receive education and training with the aim of enabling prisoners to gain the skills and qualifications they need to get sustainable employment and have a positive role in society when they leave prison. We know that skills lead to employment, and we know that employment reduces re-offending. The learning offer in custody matches that in the mainstream skills system, adapted only to reflect the particular circumstances of delivering in prisons.

The current research was commissioned to understand the background of those undertaking learning in prisons. It looks specifically at the highest prior qualifications held by learners in order to examine the extent to which investment in OLASS funding has been directed towards providing individuals in custody with higher level skills and qualifications. Four providers currently deliver OLASS provision – The Manchester College, Weston College, Milton Keynes College and People Plus, formally A4E (a private provider): the first three of these were included in the current research.

This report is based on the responses from 343 learners who were in receipt of OLASS funded provision between January-March 2015.

³ Published as three reports in the BIS Research series, paper numbers 197, 198 and 199

Methodology

Approval to conduct this research was gained from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in July 2014.

In discussion with BIS a sample of prisons to include in the survey was drawn to ensure a reasonable number of prisons were included and that a good spread of prisons across the three OLASS providers was achieved in terms of:

- Number of learners within each prison;
- Region;
- Gender; and
- Category of prison (from the highest security category A to category D open prisons).

Approval was then sought from the governors of each selected prison. Fourteen prisons were initially contacted to take part in the survey, of which eight agreed to take part.

The sample of courses to include in the survey was selected for each prison to ensure a mix of English, Maths and non-English/Maths courses.

Batches of self-completion questionnaires were sent in November 2014 to the three OLASS providers, who then distributed these to the tutors of relevant courses within the selected prisons. Prisoners completed the questionnaires anonymously, sealed their completed questionnaires in envelopes, returned them to their tutor, who then returned them to IFF (directly or via their provider). The questionnaire and the instructions for the distribution and collection of questionnaires are appended to this report.

Between January and March 2015, 343 self-completed questionnaires were returned. As shown in the Table 2.1, this included a relatively even spread of responses across the three providers, as well as a good overall spread of gender and category of prison.

Table 2.1: Profile of responses achieved

	Number of completed questionnaires	Number of prisons
Provider:		
Milton Keynes	139	4
Weston	108	2
Manchester	96	2
Gender and category:		
Female	112	2
Male category A & B	74	2
Male category C & D	157	4
Total	343	8

The vast majority of survey respondents completed the questionnaire themselves (89%), with the remainder reporting that someone else either helped them to fill it in (5%) or completed it for them (5%) (2% did not specify).

The survey data was weighted at the analysis stage to reflect the population of adults (aged 18+) on OLASS courses in January to March 2015. The data was weighted by age within level to ensure the profile of respondents was representative by these variables. This corrected for the lower response rate among younger respondents (aged 18-24) and those on entry level courses. A further rim weight was then applied to ensure that the gender profile of respondents matched the population of OLASS learners⁴. This rim weight corrected for the oversampling of female prisons (in relation to the total OLASS female population).

Table 2.2 shows the unweighted and weighted distribution of age, level and gender. Further information on the weighting can be found in Annex A.

⁴ The source of the gender profile of adult OLASS learners, which this survey data was weighted was [OLASS: participation and achievement by equality and diversity & English and maths Level: 2010/11 to 2013/14](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-education-and-training). It can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-education-and-training>

Table 2.2: Comparison of unweighted and weighted figures by age, level and gender

	All 343 % Unweighted percentages	All 343 % Weighted percentages
Age:		
18-24	16	23
25-44	62	58
45-64	20	18
65+	1	*
Unknown	1	1
Level of course:		
Entry Level	6	23
Level 1	37	37
Level 2	53	37
Level 3	1	*
Unknown	3	3
Gender:		
Female	32	8
Male	67	92

*= <0.5% but >0%

Note that the figures shown are the variables by which weighting was undertaken

Note that in the charts and tables throughout this report the bases for findings are shown unweighted to indicate the raw number of interviews on which data is based, though the results presented within the tables and charts are weighted survey data.

As indicated by the weighted survey data in Table 2.3⁵, learners undertaking OLASS funded provision in the period January to March 2015 were typically either studying Maths and/or English (38%) or vocational qualifications, including vocational qualifications related to building and gardening services (23%) and other services (including beauty therapy, hospitality and customer services) (17%).

Table 2.3: Course subjects undertaken through OLASS learning in January–March 2015

All	
343	
%	
Maths and English	38
Vocational - building and gardening services	23
Vocational – other services	17
Employability and Personal Skills	12
IT	7
Other	2
No course recorded	1
Total	100%

Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data

⁵ Note that the survey data has been weighted to represent the population in terms of age, level of learning and gender. Figures shown for course subject, health issues, ethnicity and working status immediately before entering prison, however, are derived from weighted figures. They should not be taken as an accurate description of the full OLASS learner population, rather as a guide to the profile of OLASS learners.

The majority of OLASS learners in the January to March 2015 period did not have any learning difficulties or disabilities (75%). Two-thirds were White (67%).

Table 2.4: Profile of adults undertaking OLASS learning in January–March 2015

All	
343	
%	
Learning difficulties, disabilities or health problems:	
Yes	23
No	75
Unknown	2
Ethnicity	
White	67
Non-white	31
Unknown	3

Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data

As shown in Table 2.5, immediately before entering prison, half had been in work (52%, most commonly full-time employment (36%)), around a quarter had been unemployed (27%), and one in ten had been in learning (10%).

Table 2.5: Working status of OLASS learning immediately before going to prison

All	
343	
%	
In work	52
<i>Full-time employment</i>	36
<i>Part-time employment</i>	6
<i>Self-employed</i>	10
In learning	10
<i>Full-time education</i>	8
<i>Part-time education</i>	2
Unemployed	27
<i>Unemployed and looking for work</i>	16
<i>Unable to work (e.g. poor health)</i>	8
<i>Looking after home and family</i>	2
<i>Retired</i>	1
<i>Other</i>	1
Unknown	11

Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data

The structure of the report

The structure of the report is as follows:

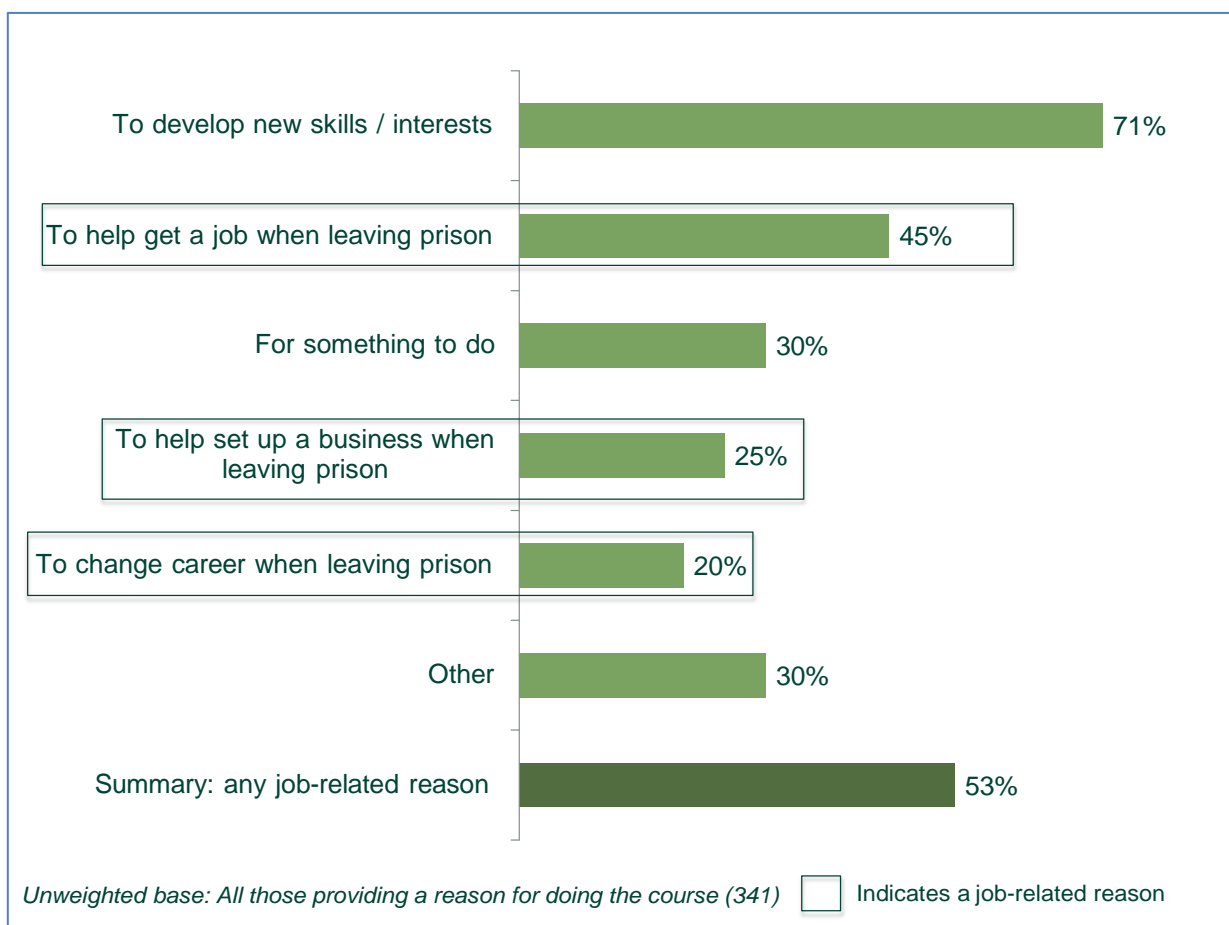
- Chapter 3 examines the reasons why learners embarked on their course, and their reasons for choosing the level of course that they did;
- Chapter 4 assesses the prior qualifications of learners and looks at the proportion undertaking a higher level course than they previously had.

The annexes provide a copy of the questionnaire, the instructions for distributing the questionnaires, and the weighting.

Chapter 3: Motivations for starting the course

When respondents were asked to select from a list the reasons why they had decided to undertake their course, around seven in ten indicated it was to develop new skills and interests (71%) while around two in five (45%) did so to help them get a job when they left prison. Responses are shown in Figure 3.1 along with the proportion selecting at least one job-related reason.⁶

Figure 3.1: Reasons for undertaking the course (prompted)



Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data

As shown in Figure 3.1, over half reported that they had started their course for a job-related reason (53%). Most commonly this was to help get a job when leaving prison

⁶ The 'Job-related-reason' bar includes those selecting 'to help get a job when leaving prison', 'to change career when leaving prison' or 'to help set up a business when leaving prison'.

(45%), though a quarter (25%) felt it would help them set up a business once they left prison, and a fifth (20%) did the course to help them change career.

It was common for respondents to cite non-job related reasons for starting the course (often alongside job-related reasons). This was most often to develop new skills and/or interests (71%), though some simply wanted something to do (30%) and a similar proportion had other non-job related reasons for starting the course (30%) such as wanting to increase their knowledge and confidence, wanting to make constructive use of their time or to pass the time, or the course being mandatory or part of their sentence plan.

Approaching half (47%) did not undertake the course for *any* job-related reason.

The following groups were all more likely to have embarked on their course for job-related reasons:

- Those on vocational service sector courses (83% compared to the 53% average). Conversely, those studying Maths and English courses were less likely to have cited any job-related reason (38%);
- Women (75% compared with 52% of men);
- Those of White ethnicity (59% compared to 43% among non-White learners).

Level of the course

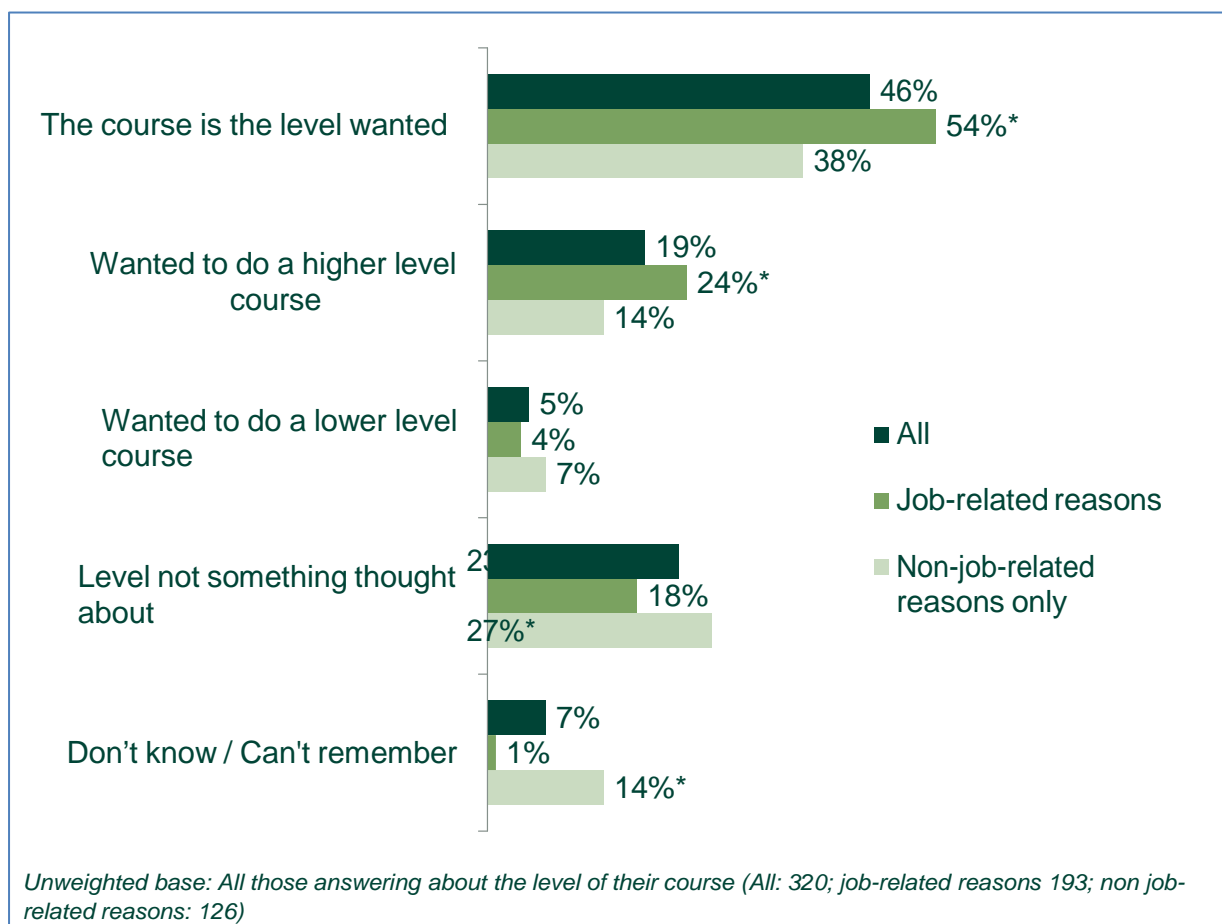
Respondents were also asked whether they had originally wanted to do a higher or lower level course, or whether the course was at the level they had wanted. Although this question was asked to all respondents, one in twenty (5%) left this question blank. The analysis in the remainder of this chapter is based on the 320 who answered this question.

Almost half (46%) felt the course was at the level they wanted, while around one in five had wanted to do a higher level course (19%). Few (5%) had wanted to enrol on a lower level course. Almost a quarter had not specifically thought about which level of qualification they wanted prior to starting their current course (23%).

Figure 3.2 shows the responses to this question, overall and split by whether respondents had taken the course for job-related reasons or not. Those studying for job-related reasons were more likely to be studying at their desired level (54% compared with 38% among other learners) or at a lower level than they ideally wanted (24% wanted to be studying on a higher level course compared with 14% among those starting the learning for non-job-related reasons).

Among those not motivated by future employment factors, the level of the course is quite often not a consideration: 27% indicated that the level of the course was not something they had considered or could not recall thinking about the level (compared with 18% studying for job-related reasons).

Figure 3.2: Course level compared with desired course level, split by whether job- related reason for undertaking the learning



Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data
 * signifies a significant difference from the total for all other learners

The desire to undertake a higher or lower level course was similar across all levels.

Table 3.1 shows the desired level of study by the type of prison (female prison, male category A or B, and male category C or D prison). While across each type just under half were on the level of course they had wanted, females were more likely to have wanted to do a higher level course (30% vs. 15% among men in category A and B prisons and 20% among men in category C and D prisons).

Table 3.1: Original intention of course split by prison type

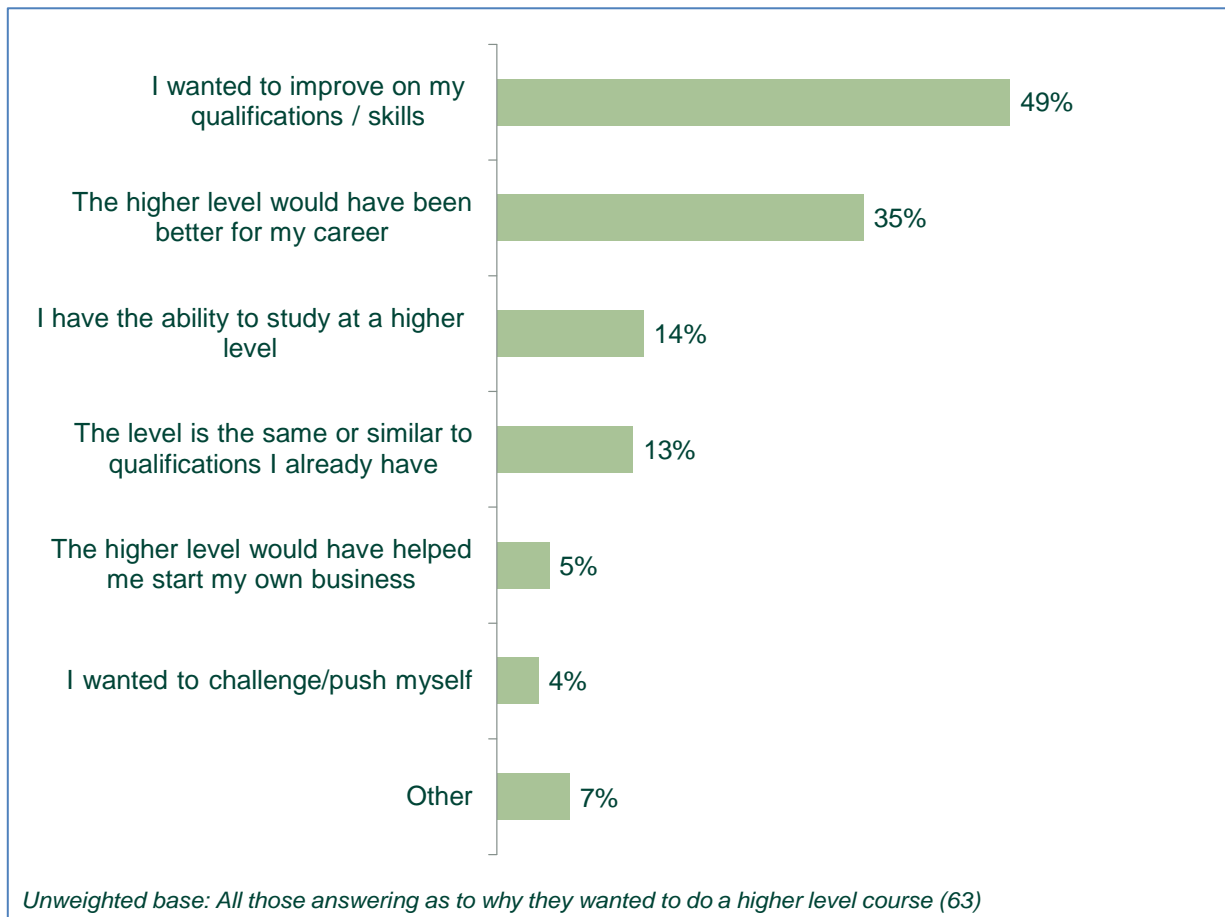
	All	Prison Category		
		Female	Male A&B	Male C&D
<i>Base: All OLASS learners</i>	320 %	104 %	65 %	151 %
The course is the level wanted	46	48	47	46
Wanted to do a higher level course	19	30**	15	20
Wanted to do a lower level course	5	1	8	5
Level not something thought about	23	19	26	22
Don't know / can't remember	7	2	7	8
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data

** signifies a significant difference from the total for all other learners

As an open ended question, respondents who had wanted to do a higher level course were asked why this was a case. These responses were then analysed and coded into the reasons shown in Figure 3.3. The most common reasons were wanting to improve on their qualifications or skills (49%, with a further 13% specifically commenting that the level was the same or similar to one they already had) or believing a higher qualification would have been better for their future job or career (35%). Around one in seven of these learners wanted a higher level course because they felt they had the ability to do so (14%).

Figure 3.3: Reasons for wanting to do a higher level course (spontaneous)



Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data

The same group of learners were also asked why they were not on the higher level course they had desired. Over half (54%) said the reason was that the prison did not run the course at the higher level, whilst smaller proportions were either told they could not study at the higher level by their tutor (20%) or reported that they did not have the qualifications to do so (16%). One in eight (13%) simply did not have the confidence to study at a higher level (13%).

Male prisoners were much more likely than female prisoners to have not done the higher level course they wanted because it was unavailable at the prison (60% male vs. 16%

female). Although this difference is statistically significant, relatively low base sizes should be noted (35 men and 28 women). (There were no other differences by gender that were statistically significant.)

At the other end of the spectrum, nine respondents had wanted to do a lower level course than they ended up on. They were generally learning to refresh their knowledge or felt that they needed to do a lower course before they could progress to a higher level. They typically ended up on a higher level course because the provider recommended it or the lower level course was not available.

Chapter 4: The prior qualifications of learners

This chapter presents findings on the prior qualification levels of OLASS learners, focusing in particular on the proportion of learners undertaking their first qualification at that level (hence who are undertaking a higher level qualification than previously attained).

Determining the level of highest prior qualification

In assessing the research findings regarding prior achievement, it is important to take into account the method used in the survey for determining the highest prior qualification.

The self-completion questionnaire used for the study is appended in Annex B4. It collected information on the qualifications that people had attained prior to their current course through the following steps:

- Respondents were first asked to indicate whether they had achieved any prior qualifications from school, college or university, from an Apprenticeship, through work or government schemes or through any other sources (Q6);
- Those who confirmed that they had achieved a prior qualification from these sources were asked to write in their highest qualification, together with their grade, level and date achieved (Q7);
- This same group were then presented with a list of qualification levels and asked to indicate if they had any previous qualifications at each of these levels (Q8). The options ranged from Level 5 to Level 1, then Entry Level, and then included two final options 'I have other qualifications but am unsure of the name or their Level' and 'No qualifications'. Example qualifications were provided for each level, for example for Level 3 the examples were as follows (Q8):

Qualification
<p>Level 3 qualifications, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two A Levels (or four or more AS Levels) NVQ Level 3 BTEC National Certificate or National Diploma Level (Level 3) OCR Nationals Level 3 City & Guilds Advanced Craft (Part 3) Key Skills Level 3 An Advanced (Modern) Apprenticeship

The approach to collecting prior qualification levels through two separate questions was used in this survey in light of the suggestions that came from previous research undertaken by IFF Research in 2013⁷. This previous research, which was undertaken specifically to test the self-completion methodology, found that whilst it was often more accurate to collect individuals' highest level of prior attainment through free-text, it recommended collecting information on prior qualifications by both free-text and tick-box formats as this allows learner responses to be validated and checked.

In terms of determining each learners' highest prior qualification from their recorded responses in the current survey, the verbatim (Q7) and the tick-box (Q8) were considered together. If the responses to both questions were inconsistent (i.e. suggested different levels of highest prior qualification) then the most feasible response was used. For example, if a respondent indicated by their verbatim that they had a degree level qualification (i.e. a level 5 qualification) but only ticked qualifications at Level 1 in the tick-box, it was felt that this was a completion error on the part of the respondent at the tick-box question as opposed to at the verbatim question, as writing in a qualification is an active process, whereas not ticking one of a number of qualification levels may well be one of omission. In such instances therefore, the qualification recorded by the verbatim was determined as their highest prior qualification.

⁷ This previous piece of research was undertaken, by IFF Research in 2013 on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, to specifically test the self-completion questionnaire methodology. The report was not published.

Levels of prior attainment of adult OLASS learners

The highest level of prior attainment of adults undertaking learning whilst in custody in early 2015 is shown in Table 4.1. The table also shows how the proportion differs by the level of their current course (for Entry Level / Level 1 or Level 2 courses - the base size of Level 3 learners (three respondents) is too low to draw any meaningful data from).

Table 4.1: Highest level of prior attainment amongst adults undertaking OLASS learning, by level

Level of course	All	Entry Level / Level 1	Level 2
	343	149	181
	%	%	%
No prior qualifications	22	26**	15
Entry Level	11	16**	2
Level 1	14	16	12
Level 2	23	17	30**
Level 3	8	5	12**
Level 4	2	*	5**
Level 5 or higher	10	5	17**
Other qualification, level not known	4	5	2
Unknown	7	8	5
Total	100%	100%	100%

Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data

- = zero

* = Less than 0.5%

** denotes the significantly higher result when comparing Entry Level / Level 1 learners with Level 2 learners

Overall, the majority of survey respondents had a qualification of some level before they started their course (71%), with around four in ten (43%) already having a qualification at Level 2 or above - equivalent to at least 5 GCSEs Grade A-C. It should be noted that learners who hold Level 2 or Level 3 qualifications may not necessarily hold that level in Maths or English.

In contrast, around one in five (22%) did not have any prior qualifications. The remaining 7% of learners is made up of those who did not know whether they had a previous qualification (6%) or who left the question blank (1%).

Learners currently undertaking lower level courses (Entry Level or Level 1) were more likely to have previously only achieved lower level qualifications: 26% had no prior qualifications (vs. 15% among current Level 2 learners); and 16% only held qualifications at Entry Level (vs. 2% among current Level 2 learners).

Level 2 learners, on the other hand, were more likely than those undertaking Entry Level / Level 1 courses to hold higher level qualifications: 64% held qualifications at Level 2 or above compared with 28% of Entry Level / Level 1 learners.

As shown in Table 4.2, there were few differences in levels of prior attainment across the different types of prisons offering OLASS provision although learners in female prisons were more likely to have Level 1 qualifications (23% vs. 14% overall) and less likely to have Entry Level qualifications (2% vs. 11% overall).

Table 4.2: Highest level of prior attainment amongst adults undertaking OLASS learning, by category of prison

	Prison category			
	All	Female	Male A&B	Male C&D
	343	112	74	157
	%	%	%	%
No prior qualifications	22	22	24	21
Entry Level	11	2**	15	9
Level 1	14	23**	10	14
Level 2	23	24	19	25
Level 3	8	10	2	11
Level 4	2	4	-	3
Level 5 or higher	10	9	5	12
Other qualification, level not known	4	4	10**	*
Unknown	7	2	13	5
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data

- = zero

* = Less than 0.5%

** signifies a significant difference from the total for all other learners

Learners undertaking Maths and English qualifications in prison were less likely to hold qualifications at Level 2 or above than learners in general (29% vs. 43% respectively). Specifically, Maths and English learners were less likely to have a degree level qualification (Level 5 or higher) (2% vs. 10% learners overall).

In contrast, those undertaking vocational subjects were more likely than other learners to hold qualifications at Level 2 or higher (60% of those undertaking building and gardening services and 57% undertaking other services, compared with 43% overall).

Table 4.3: Highest level of prior attainment amongst adults undertaking OLASS learning, by subject of course

	Course subject				
	All	Maths and English	Vocational – Other services	Vocational - Building and gardening services	Other
	343	89	81	79	89
	%	%	%	%	%
No prior qualifications	22	27	18	16	22
Entry Level	11	18	5	2**	11
Level 1	14	16	13	14	11
Level 2	23	24	28	26	16
Level 3	8	3	12	16**	6
Level 4	2	*	5	3	2
Level 5 or higher	10	2**	12	16	15
Other qualification, level not known	4	6	1	-	6
Unknown	7	4	6	8	11
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data

- = zero * = Less than 0.5%

** signifies a significant difference from the total for all other learners

Learners motivated to undertake learning for at least one job-related reason were more likely to already hold qualifications (84% vs. 70% among other learners) and were more likely to hold a Level 2 qualification (28% vs. 17%).

Table 4.4: Highest level of prior attainment amongst adults undertaking OLASS learning, by reasons for studying

	All	Reasons for studying	
		Studying for job-related reasons	Not studying for any job related reason
	343	209	132
	%	%	%
No prior qualifications	22	16	30**
Entry Level	11	7	15**
Level 1	14	15	13
Level 2	23	28	17**
Level 3	8	8	8
Level 4	2	2	2
Level 5 or higher	10	12	7
Other qualification, level not known	4	5	3
Unknown	7	8	6
Total	100%	100%	100%

Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data

** signifies a significant difference between those studying for job-related reasons and those who were not

Older learners in custody were more likely to have lower levels of prior qualifications: two in five learners aged 45+ had no prior qualifications (40%) compared with 16% among those aged 18-24 and 20% aged 25-44.

Table 4.5: Highest level of prior attainment amongst adults undertaking OLASS learning, by age

Age	All	18-24	25-44	45+
<i>Base: all</i>	343	55	214	69
	%	%	%	%
No prior qualifications	22	16	20	40**
Entry Level	11	10	12	6
Level 1	14	18	14	9
Level 2	23	18	27	18
Level 3	8	11	7	8
Level 4	2	3	2	-
Level 5 or higher	10	5	10	13
Other qualification, level not known	4	2	4	3
Unknown	7	17	4	3
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data

- = zero

** signifies a significant difference from the total for all other learners

Overall, among learners for whom both their current level of learning and highest prior qualification could be determined from the survey (310 respondents – the remainder 33 had missing answers in one or both of these questions), just over a third were studying at a higher level (35%), a similar proportion were studying at a lower level (38%), and slightly fewer were on a course at the same level as they had previously achieved (27%). Hence a minority of learners in prison are undertaking higher level qualifications than they previously had.

As would be expected, those studying a higher level qualification than they previously had were more likely to have no, or low levels of, prior qualifications whilst the reverse was true of those studying a lower level qualification (i.e. this group of learners were more likely to have qualifications at Level 2 or above).

Table 4.6: Highest level of prior attainment amongst adults undertaking OLASS learning, by whether studying at a higher, lower or same level as previous highest qualification

	Relationship of current course level to previous highest qualification		
	Higher	Lower	Same
	111	108	91
	%	%	%
No prior qualifications	73**	-	-
Entry Level	12	-	27**
Level 1	14	9	25**
Level 2	*	35**	46**
Level 3	-	23**	2
Level 4	-	6**	-
Level 5 or higher	-	28**	-
Other qualification, level not known	-	-	-
Unknown	-	-	-
Total	100%	100%	100%

Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data

- = zero * = Less than 0.5%

** signifies a significant difference from the total for all other learners

The proportion of OLASS learners (across all levels) undertaking higher, lower or the same level of qualification was similar to that found amongst adults (aged 19 plus) undertaking Level 2 learning in Further Education in 2012/13⁸ with:

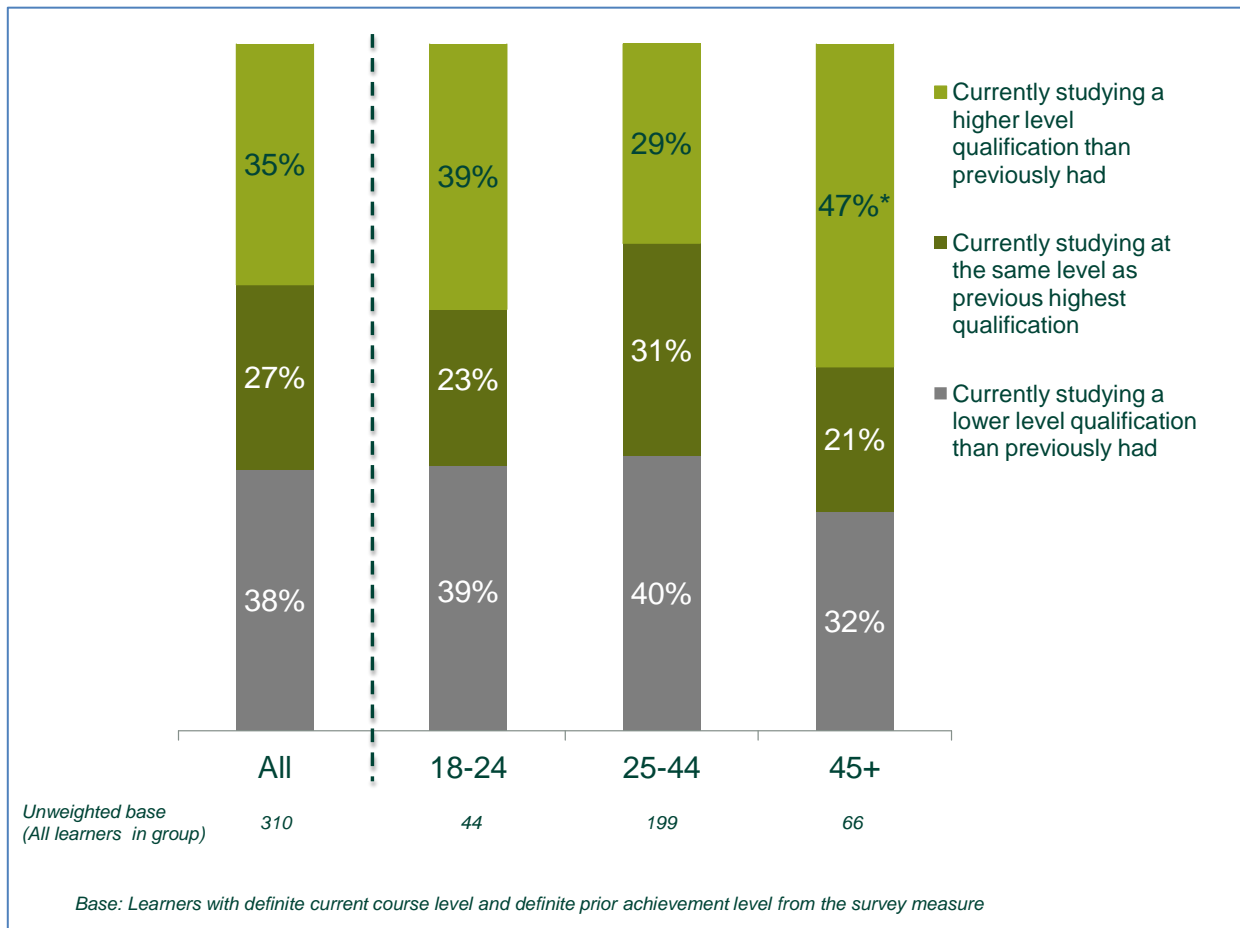
- 28% Level 2 FE learners undertaking a higher level qualification than previously attained (compared with 35% OLASS provision across all levels);
- 43% undertaking lower level qualifications (compared with 38% OLASS provision across all levels); and
- 28% undertaking the same level of qualification (compared with 27% OLASS provision across all levels)

None of these differences are statistically significant.

⁸ Published as a report in the BIS Research series, paper number 198

Older learners were more likely to be studying at a higher level than previously attained than younger learners (48% aged 45+ compared with 39% aged 18-24 and 29% aged 25-44). This reflects the fact that older learners are more likely to have started their course not having any previous qualifications. Figure 4.1 illustrates these findings.

Figure 4.1: Comparison of the prior qualification level and current course level of OLASS learners by age



Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data
 * signifies a significant difference from the total for all other learners

The type of prison, in terms of security category and gender of prisoners, had little bearing on whether prisoners were undertaking qualifications at a higher level, lower level or a similar level than previously attained.

Table 4.7: Comparison of the prior qualification level and current course level of OLASS learners by prison category

	All	Prison Category		
		Female	Male A&B	Male C&D
<i>Base: All learners for whom a prior and current qualification level could be determined</i>	310	105	59	146
	%	%	%	%
Currently studying a <i>higher</i> level course than previously had	35	34	43	31
Currently studying at the <i>same</i> level as previously had	27	35	30	25
Currently studying at a <i>lower</i> level as previously had	38	31	27	44
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data

Results did not differ significantly by whether the reason for study was job-related or not, as shown in the following table.

Table 4.8: Comparison of the prior qualification level and current course level of OLASS learners by reasons for studying

	All	Reasons for studying	
		Studying for job-related reasons	Not studying for any job related reason
<i>Base: All learners for whom a prior and current qualification level could be determined</i>	310	192	117
	%	%	%
Currently studying a <i>higher</i> level course than previously had	35	31	38
Currently studying at the <i>same</i> level as previously had	27	28	27
Currently studying at a <i>lower</i> level as previously had	38	41	35
Total	100%	100%	100%

Note: Data shown is from weighted survey data

Appendices

A – Weighting

Table A1 shows the profile of final achieved interviews by level of course and age.

Table A1: Final achieved interviews - OLASS learners (unweighted)

	18-24	25-44	45+	Age Unknown	Total
<i>Level of course:</i>					
Entry Level	8	9	7	-	22
Level 1	23	80	24	1	128
Full Level 2	24	118	35	4	181
Full Level 3	1	1	1	-	3
Level Unknown	1	6	2	-	9
Total	55	214	69	5	343

- = zero

At the analysis stage, the survey data was weighted (but not grossed up) to reflect the full population of adults (aged 18+) on OLASS courses in the period January to March 2015. The data was weighted to match the profile of OLASS learners by age and level. The proportions to which the survey data was weighted are shown in Table A2.

Table A2: Population distribution – proportions to which survey data was weighted

	18-24 %	25-44 %	45+ / Missing %	Total
Entry Level	4.99	13.3	4.42	22.71
Level 1	8.90	20.95	7.52	37.38
Full Level 2	8.55	21.39	6.87	36.82
Full Level 3	0.07	0.29	0.10	0.47
Level Unknown	0.29	1.75	0.58	2.62
Total	22.81	57.69	19.50	100

In addition, a rim weight was applied to ensure that the gender profile of the data matched the population of offender learners⁹ of 8% female, 92% male learners.

⁹ The source of the gender profile of adult OLASS learners, which this survey data was weighted was OLASS: participation and achievement by equality and diversity & English and maths Level: 2010/11 to 2013/14. It can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-education-and-training>

B – Guidance notes for the distribution and collection of the self-completion questionnaire

B1 Guidance notes for the Providers

For the attention of XXX

Thank you for your assistance with this research project into prior qualifications. The aim of the survey is to understand the main reasons why people undertake courses and to identify the level of qualifications learners already have when they undertake courses. It is being conducted on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Please distribute each prison pack to the Education Managers of HMP YYY (each pack is labelled). Please ensure the Education Manager reads the 'Education Manager instructions' (contained within each prison pack) for guidance on steps to be taken.

For reference, please find details of the steps involved in the research, and information on what each pack contains, overleaf.

Once again, many thanks for your participation with this research. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Coburn on Sarah.Coburn@IFFResearch.com or Becky Duncan on Becky.Duncan@IFFResearch.com.

All the best

IFF

Research

For your information, the steps involved in the research are as follows:

1. IFF will send over all documents to provider
2. Provider to distribute 'prison packs' to Education Manager at each prison
3. Education Manager distribute each 'tutor pack' to tutors of selected courses
4. Tutors distribute questionnaires to class. Prisoners complete questionnaire and return to tutor having sealed it in 'individual envelope' (having this to ensure total confidentiality).
5. Tutor collates all individual envelopes into 'course' envelope to return to Education Manager
6. Education Manager collates all course envelopes and returns each one to IFF using a self-adhesive pre-paid IFF addressed envelope.

For your information, each 'prison pack' contains:

- Paper instructions for Education Managers (about distribution and collection of questionnaires to tutors)
- 10 Self-adhesive pre-paid IFF addressed stickers (for the Education Manager to stick onto each of the tutor pack envelopes when questionnaires have been completed, to send back to IFF)
- 11 'tutor packs' which each contain:
 - Paper instructions for tutors (about distribution and collection of questionnaires to students)
 - 8 questionnaires in envelopes (which the prisoner can put their completed questionnaire into).

B2 Guidance notes for the Education Manager at each prison

Thank you for your assistance with this research project into prior qualifications. The aim of the survey is to understand the main reasons why people undertake courses and to identify the level of qualifications learners already have when they undertake courses. It is being conducted on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Please see below for instructions for distributing questionnaires to course tutors and for returning the questionnaires to IFF Research.

Distributing questionnaires

Please distribute each questionnaire pack to the tutors of the following courses:

- Course 1 XXX
- Course 2 XXX
- Course 3 XXX
- Course 4 XXX
- Course 5 XXX
- Course 6 XXX
- Course 7 XXX
- Course 8 XXX
- Course 9 XXX
- Course 10 XXX

Please ensure each course instructor is provided with the 'Course Tutor instructions' document enclosed in each tutor pack.

Returning questionnaires

Once tutors have collated all sealed 'learner' envelopes (paper envelopes containing the questionnaire) into the larger 'course' envelope (plastic envelopes containing all questionnaire paper envelopes) they will return it to you.

Please then use one of the self-adhesive return paid labels enclosed (ten in total, one per course) and send each 'course' envelope back to IFF Research.

Once again, many thanks for your participation with this research. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Coburn on Sarah.Coburn@IFFResearch.com or Becky Duncan on Becky.Duncan@IFFResearch.com.

All the best

IFF

Research

B3 Guidance notes for the course tutors within each prison

Thank you for your assistance with this research project. Please see below for instructions for distributing and returning the questionnaires.

Distributing questionnaires

Please explain the purpose of the research to all members of the class:

The aim of the survey is to understand the main reasons why people undertake courses and to identify the level of qualifications learners already have when they undertake courses. It is being conducted on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Please provide all willing members of your class with a questionnaire and learner envelope. This is the paper envelope containing the questionnaire we would like the individual to fill out.

While this is a self-completion questionnaire please do provide assistance where it is requested or you feel it is necessary. If you do provide assistance please ensure the rest of the class receives the same level of help in order to avoid singling anyone out and to keep things consistent.

The questionnaire should take around five minutes to complete. Please instruct learners to read the instructions on the front page of the questionnaire in full and complete the questionnaire at their own pace and discretion.

Returning questionnaires

Once learners have completed their questionnaire, please ask them to seal it in the learner envelopes provided before returning it to you to protect and reassure them about confidentiality: i.e. The work is being conducted on behalf of BIS by IFF Research, an independent market research company. IFF Research works strictly within the Market Research Society Code of Conduct, and all information collected by IFF will be treated in the strictest confidence. Any personal information provided will just be used to help us understand a little about the background of the people whose responses we receive. Any information that you provide will be held by IFF Research for nine months and then destroyed.

Once you have collated all sealed learner envelopes into the larger plastic 'course' envelope provided, please return the 'course' envelope to the Education Manager who will send them back to IFF Research.

Once again, many thanks for your participation with this research. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Coburn Sarah.Coburn@IFFResearch.com or Becky Duncan on Becky.Duncan@IFFResearch.com.

B4 – The self-completion questionnaire



Qualifications of Learners Research

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this important survey.

It is being conducted on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The key aims of the study, which involves contacting around 9,000 learners in FE colleges and prisons, are:

- To understand the main reasons why people undertake courses
- To identify the level of qualifications learners already have when they undertake courses.

It is an important study for the Department, and will help them support appropriate courses for future learners.

Taking part is entirely voluntary. If you choose to take part, you can refuse to answer individual questions; or withdraw from the research at any point. Please note there will be no advantage or disadvantage to you as a result of your decision to take part or not to take part.

The work is being conducted on behalf of BIS by IFF Research, an independent market research company. IFF Research works strictly within the Market Research Society Code of Conduct, and all information collected by IFF will be treated in the strictest confidence. You do NOT need to provide us with your name, or anything which would identify you. Information about your age and gender, if you provide it, will just be used to help us understand a little about the background of the people whose responses we receive. Any information that you provide will be held by IFF Research for nine months and then destroyed.

The survey involves completing a questionnaire (the next few pages of this booklet). It will take no longer than 5 minutes to complete.

EXAMPLE:

PLEASE TICK ONE OPTION ONLY

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't Know	<input type="checkbox"/>

Once you have completed the questionnaire, please put the questionnaire back into the envelope and hand it to the person who gave you the questionnaire.

If you want more information about the study, have any queries or wish to make a complaint, please contact either the Head of Learning Skills and Employment (HoLSE) or the governor of your prison.

Your current course / learning

1) What course or courses are you currently studying?

PLEASE WRITE IN THE TYPE OF QUALIFICATION, IF ANY (e.g. NVQ)
PLEASE WRITE IN THE SUBJECT OF THE COURSE / LEARNING
PLEASE WRITE IN THE LEVEL OF THE COURSE IF KNOWN (E.g. Level 2)




2) Why did you decide to study this course / these courses?

PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY OR WRITE IN YOUR ANSWER

To develop new skills / interests	
To give me something to do	
To help get a job when I leave prison	
To change to a different career when I leave prison	
To help set up my own business when I leave prison	
Other reasons (<i>please write in</i>)	
No particular reason	

3) Thinking about the level of the course you are currently on, which ONE of the following applies:

PLEASE TICK ONE ONLY AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS NEXT TO THE OPTION YOU HAVE SELECTED

You originally wanted to undertake a higher level course		GO TO Q4 (the left hand side of the next page)
You originally wanted to undertake a lower level course		GO TO Q5 (the right hand side of the next page)
The course you are currently on is the level you originally wanted to do		
The level of the course wasn't something you really thought about		
Don't know / can't remember		PLEASE SKIP THE NEXT PAGE AND GO STRAIGHT TO Q6

**PLEASE ANSWER THIS SIDE IF YOU
ORIGINALLY WANTED TO DO A
HIGHER LEVEL COURSE**

4) Why did you want to study at a higher level? Please write in your answer

4a) Why are you studying at a lower level than you originally wanted to?

PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

A higher level course was not available at the prison	
I was told I couldn't study at the higher level by a tutor / provider	
I did not have the confidence to do the higher level course	
I did not have the qualification(s) needed for the higher level course	
The National Careers Service or the provider recommended I study at a lower level	
I decided the higher level course would be too much time and effort	
I wasn't eligible to take out a loan to pay for the higher level course	
I was put off by the need to take out a loan for the higher level course	
I was put off by the loans application process for the higher level course	
I decided it would not be of any benefit to get the higher qualification	
Other (PLEASE WRITE IN)	
Don't Know	



**PLEASE NOW GO TO QUESTION
6 ON THE NEXT PAGE**

**PLEASE ANSWER THIS SIDE IF YOU
ORIGINALLY WANTED TO DO A
LOWER LEVEL COURSE**

5) Why did you want to study at a lower level? Please write in your answer

5a) Why are you studying at a higher level than you originally wanted to?

PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

The provider recommended I study at a higher level	
A lower level course was not available at the prison	
I decided it would not be of any benefit to get the lower qualification	
The National Careers Service or the provider suggested it would not be of any benefit to get the lower qualification	
Other (PLEASE WRITE IN)	
Don't know / can't remember	





**PLEASE NOW GO TO QUESTION
6 ON THE NEXT PAGE**

Qualifications you had before your current course / learning

EVERYONE PLEASE ANSWER

- 6) Did you have any qualifications BEFORE you started the course or programme that you are currently on in prison (for example from school, college or university, connected with work, through a previous employer, from government schemes or from an Apprenticeship).

PLEASE TICK ONE ONLY

Yes		 PLEASE ANSWER Q7 AND Q8
No		
Don't know / can't remember		PLEASE GO STRAIGHT TO THE 'ABOUT YOU' SECTION ON THE LAST PAGE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE ANSWER THIS QUESTION IF YOU ANSWERED 'YES' TO Q6

- 7) Please use the grid below to tell us a little about the highest (or most advanced) qualification that you had achieved BEFORE you started your current course. For illustration an example is given below.

If you are unsure which is the highest or most advanced qualification, then please write in all those which you think may be the highest.

Please try and fill as many of the four columns as you can.

Example:

Qualification type	Subject	Grade or Level	or	Approximate date when achieved
<i>NVQ as part of Apprenticeship</i>	<i>Electrical and Electronic servicing</i>	<i>Level 2</i>		<i>1998</i>

Please write what you consider to be your highest / most advanced qualification(s):

Qualification type	Subject	Grade or Level	or	Approximate date when achieved

PLEASE ANSWER THIS QUESTION IF YOU ANSWERED 'YES' TO Q6

- 8) Listed below are some qualifications grouped by level. Please look at each and indicate whether you had *achieved any of the qualifications listed in each category, or any of a similar level*, BEFORE your current course by circling 'Yes', 'No' or 'Don't Know' (please circle one for each row)

Do **not** include the qualification you are currently undertaking.

Qualification	Yes	No	Don't Know
Entry Level qualifications such as: Skills for Life Entry Level Entry Level certificates, awards or diplomas Functional Skills at Entry Level (English, Maths and ICT) Foundation Learning at Entry Level English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	Yes	No	Don't Know
Level 1 qualifications, such as: GCSEs / O Levels but fewer than 5 grade A*-C Fewer than 5 CSEs at grade 1 NVQ Level 1 BTEC Introductory Awards and Certificates at Level 1 OCR Nationals Level 1 City & Guilds foundation (Part 1) Key Skills / Skills for Life or Functional Skills at Level 1 Foundation Learning Tier pathways	Yes	No	Don't Know
Any Level 2 qualifications, such as: 5 or more GCSEs/O Levels grade A*-C (or 5+ CSEs at grade 1) One A Level, or 2 or 3 AS Levels NVQ Level 2 BTEC Awards, Certificates, and Diplomas at Level 2 OCR Nationals Level 2 City & Guilds Craft (Part 2) Key Skills at Level 2 or Skills for Life at Level 2 An Apprenticeship or Foundation Modern Apprenticeship	Yes	No	Don't Know
Level 3 qualifications, such as: Two A Levels (or four or more AS Levels) NVQ Level 3 BTEC National Certificate or National Diploma Level (Level 3) OCR Nationals Level 3 City & Guilds Advanced Craft (Part 3) Key Skills Level 3 An Advanced (Modern) Apprenticeship	Yes	No	Don't Know
Level 4 qualifications, such as: NVQ Level 4 BTEC Professional Certificate or Diploma Certificate of Higher Education	Yes	No	Don't Know
Level 5 or higher qualifications, such as: Postgraduate qualification, doctoral or masters degree, or PGCE Bachelors degree or Foundation degree NVQ Level 5 HNC or HND BTEC Advanced Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards Diploma in Higher Education	Yes	No	Don't Know

About you

The last few questions are about you, and are to help us analyse responses. Just to remind you, our results will be anonymous so you cannot be identified from your responses: all responses are held securely and in confidence: all responses will be destroyed within 9 months.

- a. Which of the following age bands do you fit into?

PLEASE TICK ONE ONLY

18-24 years	
25-34 years	
35-44 years	
45-54 years	
55-64 years	
65+ years	
Prefer not to say	

- b. Do you consider yourself to have any learning difficulties, disabilities or health problems which limit your day-to-day activities?

PLEASE TICK ONE ONLY

Yes	
No	

- c. Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?

PLEASE TICK ONE ONLY

White British	
White non-British	
Mixed	
Black or Black-British	
Asian or Asian-British	
Chinese	
Other ethnic background	
Prefer not to say	

- d. Did you....

PLEASE TICK ONE ONLY

Complete the questionnaire for yourself	
Did another person help you to complete the questionnaire	
Did another person fill in the questionnaire on your behalf?	

- e. Which one of the following best describes your working status immediately before you went to prison?

PLEASE TICK ONE ONLY

In full time education or learning (16 hours or more per week)	
In full time paid employment (30 hours a week or more)	
In part time paid employment (working less than 30 hours a week)	
Self-employed	
In part time education or learning (less than 16 hours per week)	
Unemployed and looking for work	
Unable to work due to ill health or disability	
Looking after home or family	
Retired	
Other (PLEASE WRITE IN HERE)	
Prefer not to say	

- f. What is the name of your current prison?

PLEASE WRITE IN THE NAME OF YOUR PRISON

Please put the questionnaire back into the envelope and hand it to the person who gave it to you so your answers can be included in our analysis



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BIS/16/31