



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority

Report on vocational learning provision at key stage 4

Annex 4: Monitoring Curriculum and Assessment Questionnaire Analysis

January 2006

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Methodology

Timeframe

The 2004/5 MCA Work-related learning, Careers Education and Guidance and Vocational Qualifications questionnaire was sent to schools in England in late February 2004. The cut-off date for the return of questionnaires was mid-April.

Purpose of questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire was threefold: to gather data on the management and provision of Careers Education and Guidance in schools at key stages 3, 4 and post-16; to gather data on the current structure, provision and management of work-related learning across key stages 3, 4 and post-16 but primarily at key stage 4; and to gather data on the type and range of vocational qualifications taking place in schools. The analysis in this paper covers only the latter of these areas, for analysis of Careers Education and Guidance and work-related learning please see the relevant research on the 14-19 learning website .

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was part of a suite of subject questionnaires sent to just over 1,000 secondary schools; the suite included all of the core and foundation subjects plus religious education, PSHE and business studies. The questionnaires were sent as a set to head teachers or, if the school requested, separately to individual subject heads.

The school sample

It is important to note that the sample of schools used for this questionnaire is a lot more representative than the sample used for the IVP questionnaire, for which schools were selected from a list provided by the DfES of the top 1,000 schools in terms of the number of students involved in vocational qualifications or the number of vocational qualifications offered.

Schools were not forced to complete and return the questionnaire. Therefore, the schools that did return the questionnaire were a self-selected sample and were likely to offer vocational qualifications. If the questionnaire was not relevant to a school's provision, it is not likely that they would have completed it.

This analysis is based on 303 responses (a response rate of 30 per cent).

Headline findings

Management and coordination of vocational qualifications

- Sixty-three per cent of respondents said their school had a designated coordinator for vocational qualifications and 30 per cent said that their school had no current plans for such a position.
- Twenty-two per cent of respondents said their school had a written policy on vocational qualifications in place, 42 per cent said they would have one in place by 2006/7, while over one-third said their school had no current plans to have such a policy.
- Eighty-eight per cent of respondents said their school had vocational qualifications in the school development plan.

Qualifications offered

- Eighty-eight per cent of respondents said their school offered at least one vocational qualification to their key stage 4 students.

GCSEs in vocational subjects

- Eighty-eight per cent of respondents said their school offered at least one of the GCSEs in vocational subjects.
- The most common subject offered was leisure and tourism (offered by 54 per cent of the schools that offered the qualifications).
- The least common subject offered was manufacturing (offered by 14 per cent of the schools that offered vGCSEs).
- The most common reason for offering GCSEs in vocational subjects was staff expertise (70 per cent of respondents gave this as a reason) followed by the school's specialist status (63 per cent of respondents gave this as a reason).
- Fifty per cent of respondents said in the next year their school would be increasing the number of GCSEs in vocational subjects offered and 8 per cent said their school would be decreasing the number offered.

NVQs

- Thirty-one per cent of respondents said their school offered at least one NVQ to their key stage 4 students.
- The most common subject offered was hairdressing (46 per cent of schools said they offered NVQs in this subject), followed by catering (listed by 32 per cent of schools).

- Sixty-six per cent of respondents said the NVQs they offered were full NVQs as opposed to NVQ units.
- Ninety-one per cent of the NVQs offered were taught off site.
- Eighty-four per cent of NVQs were offered in collaboration with an FE college.
- The most common reason given as to why schools offered NVQs was the school's specialist status (70 per cent of respondents gave this as a reason). The next most common reason was availability of funding, given by 40 per cent of respondents.
- Forty-eight per cent of respondents said in the next year their school would be increasing the number of NVQs offered and 5 per cent of respondents said the number of qualifications offered would decrease.

'Other' vocational qualifications

- Forty per cent of respondents said their school offered at least one 'other' vocational qualification to their key stage 4 students.
- The most common subject offered was ICT (33 per cent of qualifications) and the most common type of qualification was a BTEC (27 per cent of qualifications).
- The majority of respondents (61 per cent) said the 'other' vocational qualifications were offered on site.
- Sixty-six per cent of the 'other' vocational qualifications were offered in partnership with an FE college.
- The most common reason respondents gave as to why their school offered the 'other' vocational qualifications was the school's specialist status (73 per cent).
- Sixty-four per cent of respondents said that in the next year their school would be increasing the number of 'other' vocational subjects they offered their key stage 4 students and 2 per cent said their school would be decreasing the number offered.

Activities and support for students' vocational learning

- It is important to keep in mind the fact that the activities we asked about were in addition to work experience. Around 95 per cent of the key stage 4 cohort will have at least one week's block work experience by the time they finish year 11.
- Among students doing NVQs, the most common activity was taking part in extended work experience.
- Students taking other vocational qualifications were most likely to take part when visitors come to the school.
- Among students taking a GCSE in a vocational subject, the most common activity was taking part in visits to industry.
- The most common activity listed as part of the key stage 4 programme for the majority of students was having visitors to schools.

- In terms of support from outside organisations for vocational learning, schools reported that the most help for GCSEs in vocational subjects and other vocational subjects came from EBLOs. Respondents listed other colleges as providing the most support for NVQs.

Attitudes towards vocational qualifications

- Respondents believed that vocational qualifications were most significant to students in the lower-attainment quartiles and least significant to students in the upper-attainment quartile.
- The majority of respondents said that teacher and parent attitudes towards vocational qualifications were very positive or generally positive.

The schools

- Fifty-two per cent of the respondent schools were Increased Flexibility Schools.
- Fifty-eight per cent of the respondent schools had a sixth form.
- In terms of specialist status, 74 per cent of respondents reported that their school already had a specialist status granted and an additional 16 per cent had applied for specialist status. Ten per cent had no specialist status.

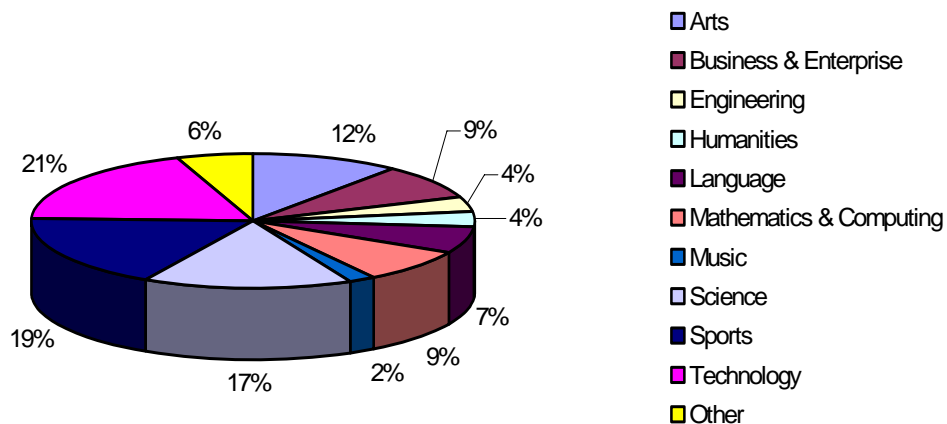


Figure 1. School's specialisms

J1. Does your school offer any vocational qualifications?

Eighty-eight per cent of respondents said their schools offered vocational qualifications to their key stage 4 students (these included the GCSEs in vocational subjects, NVQs and 'other' vocational qualifications).

J2. Does your school currently have a designated coordinator for vocational qualifications?

The majority of schools said they had a designated vocational qualifications coordinator. Just under one-third of respondents said that their school had no current plans to have one.

Coordinator for vocational qualifications	%
Yes	63
No, but will have for 2005/6	6
No, but will have for 2006/7	1
No current plans to have one	30

J3. What other responsibilities does the coordinator of vocational qualifications hold?

The most common other responsibilities held by the vocational qualification coordinators were that of subject head (51 per cent of respondents said this was at least one of the additional responsibilities held by the vocational coordinator in their school), followed by a senior management team member (35 per cent) and work experience coordinator (20 per cent).

J4. Does your school have a written policy for vocational qualifications in place?

Only 22 per cent of respondents said their school had a written policy in place. An additional 42 per cent said they would have one in place by 2006/7 if not by 2005/6.

Over one-third of respondents said their school had no plans to have a written policy on vocational qualifications.

J5. Are vocational qualifications in the school development plan?

The vast majority (88 per cent) of respondents said their schools had vocational qualifications in the school development plan.

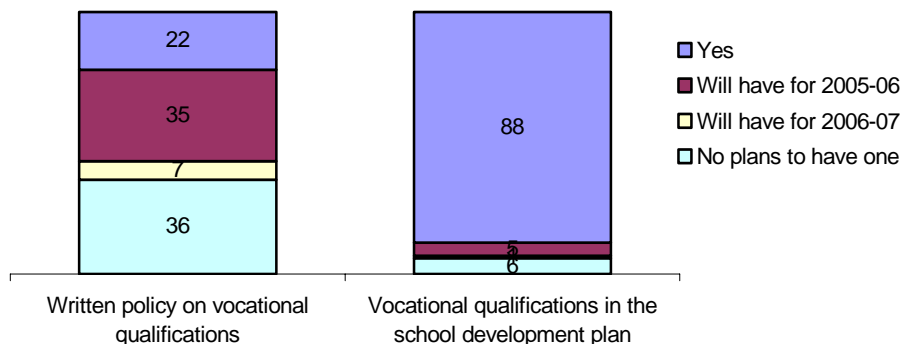


Figure 2. The percentage of schools with written policies on vocational qualifications and those with vocational qualifications in their development plan

Qualifications Offered

K1. Which GCSEs in vocational subjects does your school offer to key stage 4 students?

Eighty-eight per cent of schools said they offered the GCSEs in vocational subjects.

The most common subject offered was leisure and tourism (offered by 56 per cent of schools that offered GCSEs in vocational subjects), followed by health and social care (offered by 54 per cent of schools). The least common subject offered by schools was manufacturing.

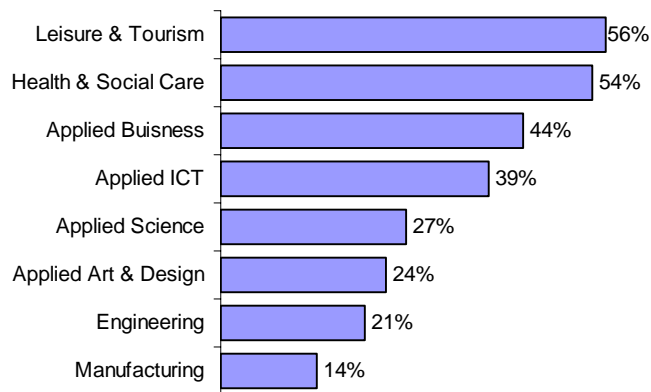


Figure 3. % Respondents offering the various GCSEs in vocational subjects

Numbers of Year 10 and 11 students taking GCSEs in vocational subjects

Subject	No. of respondents		Mean no. taking vGCSE		Range of student numbers taking vGCSEs			
	Y10	Y11	Y10	Y11	Min Y10	Min Y11	Max Y10	Max Y11
Applied Art & Design	30	22	20	20	5	8	30	69
Applied Business	59	51	28	27	6	2	120	90
Applied science	36	33	43	37	14	15	100	100
Applied ICT	54	46	50	49	10	10	185	182
Engineering	32	25	24	21	1	1	110	66
Health & Social Care	74	65	28	24	1	1	105	103
Leisure & Tourism	73	68	21	20	4	1	50	89
manufacturing	16	14	31	23	9	10	118	60

In terms of the numbers of students taking the qualifications, the highest average number of students taking a subject was in applied ICT.

Applied ICT, applied science and manufacturing all had larger minimum numbers of students than any of the other subjects offered by school

K2. Why do you offer the GCSEs in vocational subjects you selected?

The most common reason for offering a GCSE in vocational subject, given by 70 per cent of respondents, was staff expertise; this was followed by the school's specialist status.

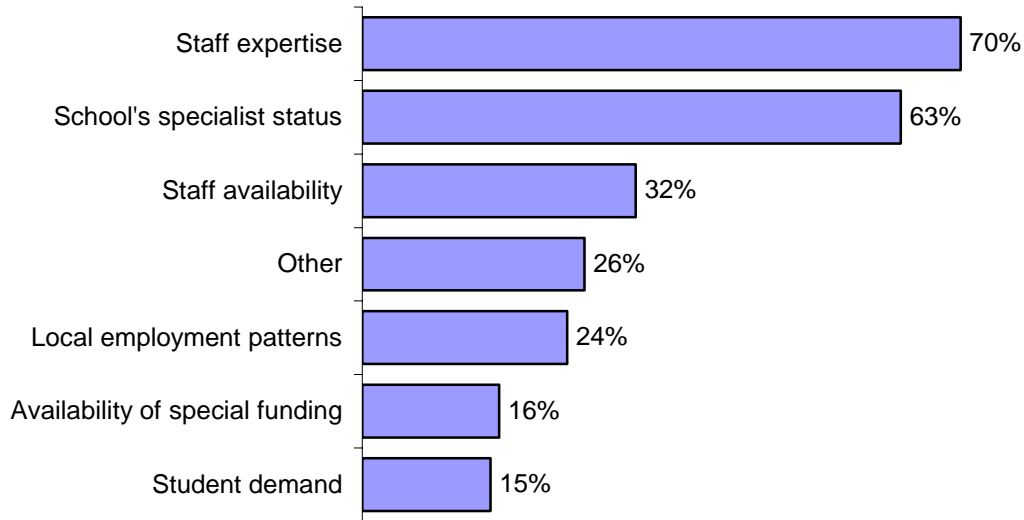


Figure 4. Respondents' reasons for offering GCSEs in vocational subjects

K3. In the next year does your school plan to increase or decrease the number of GCSEs in vocational subjects you offer?

Fifty per cent of respondents said they were going to increase the number of GCSEs in vocational subjects their school offered, while 8 per cent of schools planned to decrease the number offered.

Offer more/less vGCSEs?	%
Increase	50
Decrease	8
Stay the same	34
Don't know	8

NVQs

K4. Which NVQs does your school offer to key stage 4 students?

Thirty-one per cent of respondents said they offered at least one NVQ to their key stage 4 students.

The most common NVQ subjects schools offered their students were hairdressing, catering and construction.

The table below is a list of subjects in which respondents said they offered NVQs. This list is based on what respondents think their school offers. It is important to keep in mind the difficulty in getting respondents to report any non-mainstream provisions. This is a list of subjects that school have reported; these are not necessarily the precise subjects the school offers.

Subject	% schools offering
Hairdressing	46
Catering	32
Construction	30
Motor vehicle studies	28
Engineering	18
Health & beauty	15
Child care	13
Beauty care	8
Sports & recreation	6
Business administration	4
Hospitality	1
Leisure & tourism	1
Other	68
Unspecified	3

Figure 5. % of respondents and NVQ subject areas offered in schools

The average number of students taking an NVQ was eight in year 10 and seven in year 11. However, the range of numbers of students taking NVQs was from a single student to a maximum of 136 year 10 students in one school.

Sixty-six per cent of respondents said that the courses they offered were full NVQs (as opposed to NVQ units) and the majority of respondents (91 per cent) said that these qualifications were offered off site.

K5. If any of the NVQs are offered in partnership/collaboration, please tell us who the partners are.

The majority of NVQs (84 per cent) were offered in collaboration with an FE college.

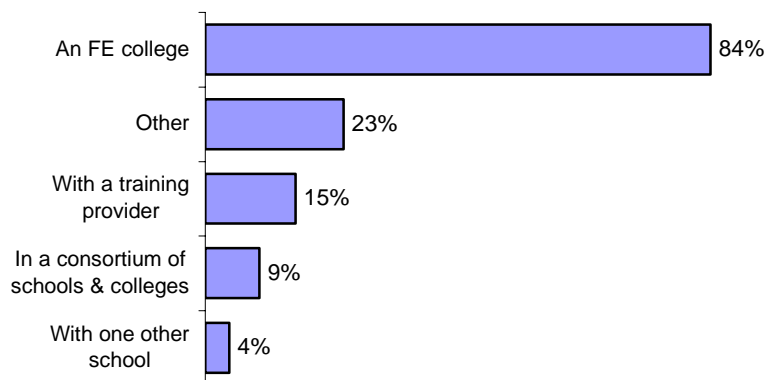


Figure 6. Collaboration when offering NVQs

K6. Why do you offer these NVQs?

The most common reasons given by respondents as to why their school offered NVQs were the school’s specialist status and the availability of special funding.

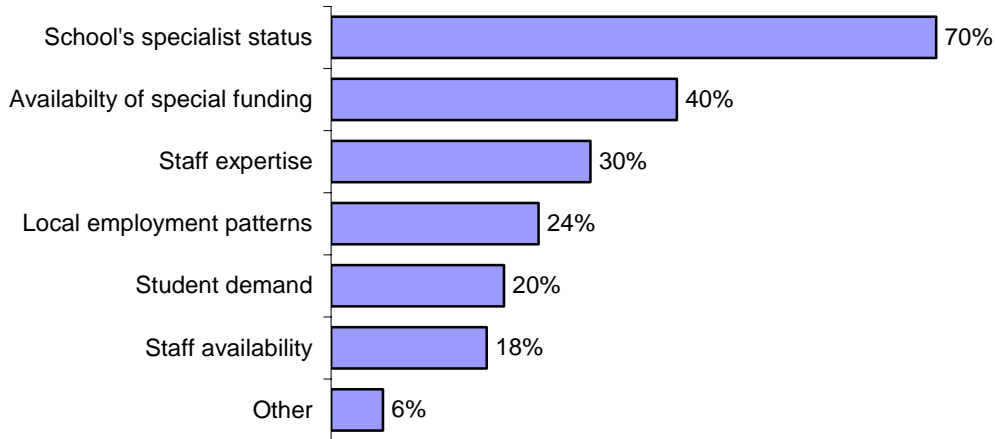


Figure 7. Reasons why schools offer NVQs

K7. In the next year does your school plan to increase or decrease the number of NVQ titles offered to your key stage 4 students?

Forty-eight per cent of respondents said that in the next year their school would be increasing the number of NVQs offered to their key stage 4 students, 37 per cent expected the number of NVQs offered to stay the same and 5 per cent said the number would decrease.

K8. Which other vocational qualifications does your school offer to key stage 4 students?

Forty per cent of respondents said their school offered at least one ‘other’ vocational qualification to their key stage 4 students.

The table below is a list of the subject areas in which respondents said they offered ‘other’ vocational qualifications. Please be aware that this is based on the responses of respondents and what they think their school offers. It is important to keep in mind the difficulty in trying to get respondents to accurately report any non-mainstream provision. This is a list of subjects that school have reported; these are not necessarily the precise subjects the school offers.

Subject area	%
ICT	33
Sport	17
Performing arts	16
Child care	15
Construction	14
Business	11
Skills for working life	11
Motor vehicle studies	11
Health & social care	10
Preparation for working life	6
Hairdressing	6
Career planning	5
Travel & tourism	4
Junior Sports Leader Award	3
Work related learning	1
Other	61
Unspecified	8

Figure 8. % of respondents and ‘other’ vocational qualification area offered

The most common type of ‘other’ vocational qualification offered by schools was BTECs, followed by GNVQs.

Qualification type	% of schools offering
BTEC	27
GNVQ	23
ASDAN	8
CACHE	4
Entry Level	4
Unspecified	23
Other	11

Figure 9. Qualification type offered and % of schools

The average number of students taking ‘other’ vocational qualifications in year 10 is 26 students; the average number of students in year 11 is 28. The range of numbers of students taking other vocational subjects goes from a minimum of one to a maximum of 234 year 10 students and 210 year 11 students. The most common student group size in year 10 is 15 and in year 11 is 10 students.

The majority of respondents (61 per cent) reported that ‘other’ vocational qualifications were offered on site, 36 per cent said they were offered off site and 3 per cent reported they were offered both on and off site.

K9. If any of the ‘other’ vocational qualifications are offered in partnership/ collaboration, please tell us who the partners are.

The majority of respondents (91 per cent) said that they offered the ‘other’ vocational qualifications in partnership/collaboration. The most common partner with which to offer ‘other’ vocational qualifications with was an FE college.

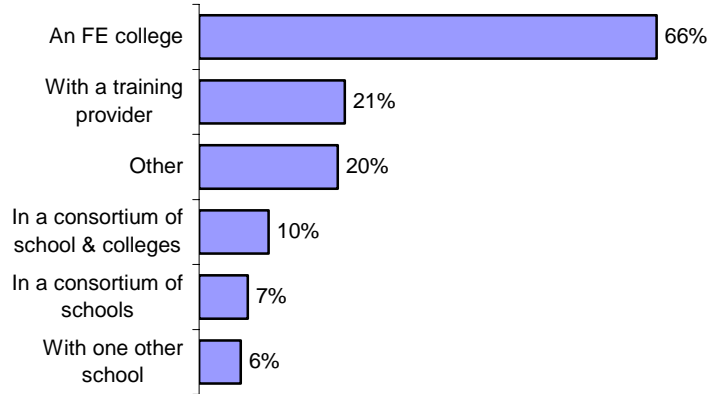


Figure 10. Collaboration when offering ‘other’ vocational qualifications

K10. Why do you offer these qualifications?

The most common reasons given by respondents as to why their school offers other vocational subjects are because of the school’s specialist status and staff expertise.

Figure 11. Reasons why schools offer ‘other’ vocational qualifications

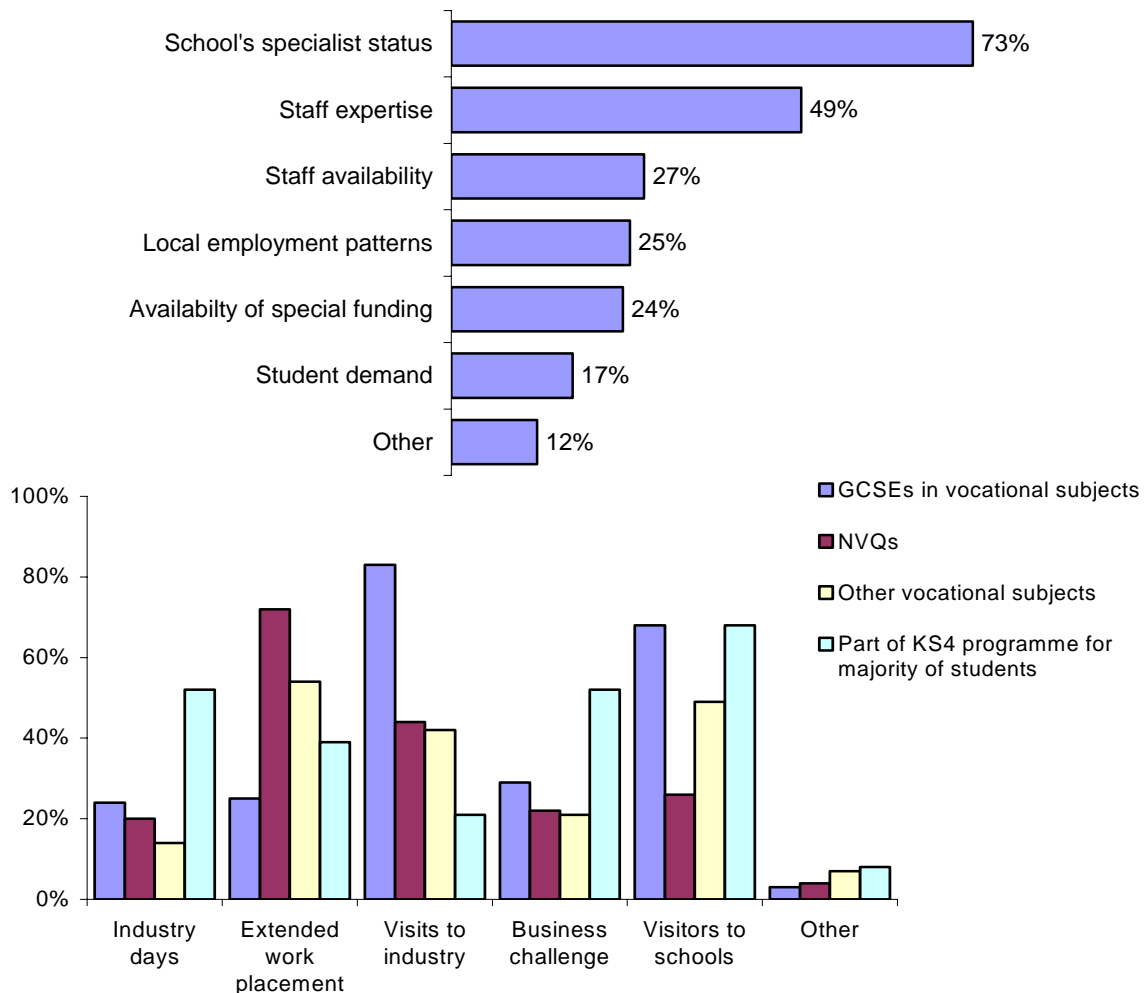


Figure 12. Activities supporting vocational learning

K11. In the next year does your school plan to increase or decrease the number of other vocational qualifications offered to your key stage 4 students?

Sixty-four per cent of respondents said their school would be increasing the numbers of other vocational qualifications they offered to their key stage 4 students, 24 per cent said the number they offered would stay the same and 2 per cent said the number would decrease.

Activities supporting students' vocational learning

L1. What activities do your key stage 4 students take part in to enrich the vocational aspect of their qualifications?

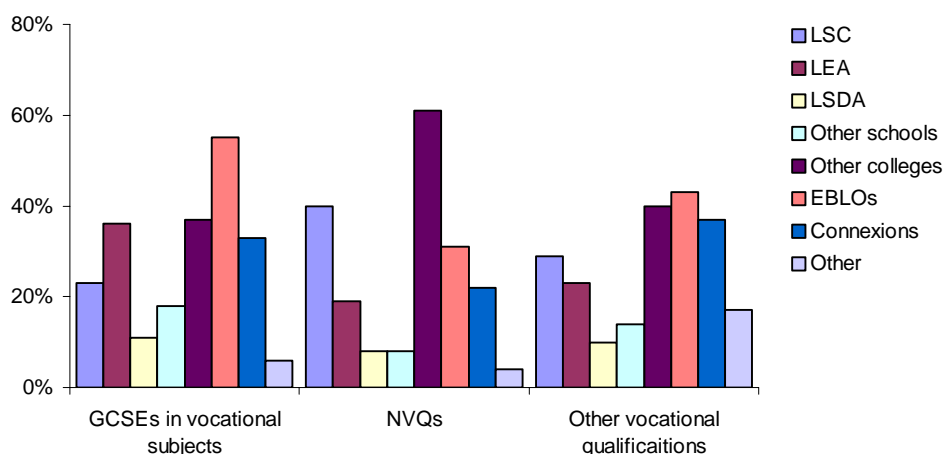
It is important to keep in mind that the activities we asked about are in addition to work experience. About 95 per cent of key stage 4 students will take part in at least one week's block work experience by the time they finish year 11.

The most common activities that students doing GCSEs in vocational subjects take part in are visits to industry and having visitors into schools. Students taking NVQs are most likely to take part in extended work experience and visits to industry and students doing 'other' vocational qualifications are most likely to take part in extended work experience or have visitors to schools. The most common activities that the majority of students do as part of their key stage 4 programme are industry days and having visitors into schools.

L2. Which outside organisations are helping support the activities you offer?

Respondents listed EBLOs as offering the most support for the activities they offer the key stage 4 students taking GCSEs in vocational subjects. Most respondents named other colleges as offering support for NVQs. For 'other' vocational qualifications, most respondents named EBLOs followed by other colleges.

Figure 13. Organisations supporting qualifications and activities

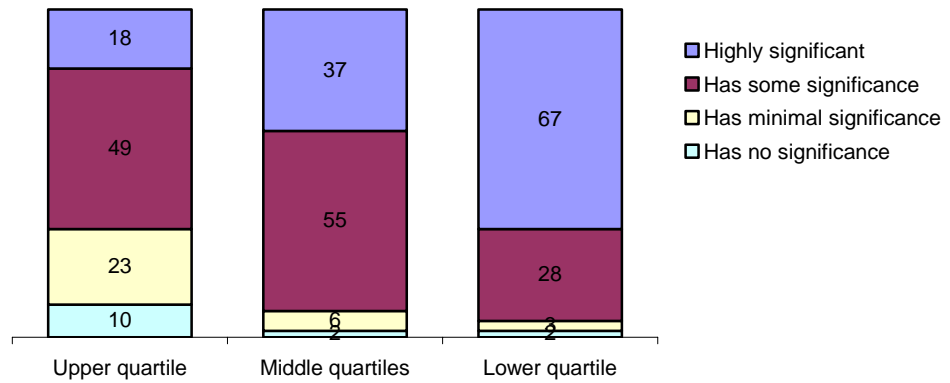


Attitudes towards qualifications

M1. In your view how significant are vocational qualifications in helping students of different abilities achieve their life goals?

Respondents believed that vocational qualifications were the most highly significant for students in the lower-attainment quartile and least significant for students in the upper-attainment quartile.

Figure 14. Significance of vocational qualifications on different ability students



The majority of respondents said that teacher and parent attitudes towards vocational qualifications were very positive or generally positive.