

Historical Association

Survey of History in Secondary Schools in England 2019

Katharine Burn¹ and Rebecca Harris²

1. Summary

1.1 Data on which this report is based

This online survey was launched in August 2019, just after the publication of the A-level and GCSE results, and closed in October. Responses were received from 285 history teachers working in 278 different schools, including 213 non-selective, state-maintained schools, 15 grammar schools, 32 independent schools, four sixth-form colleges and three special schools or pupil referral units. Three-quarters of the respondents had been teaching for at least five years and two-thirds were either heads of department (57%) or senior leaders (9%), so the opinions reported here tend to reflect those of experienced practitioners.

1.2 Key Stage 3 history

Continuing impact of the revised National Curriculum

The proportion of state-funded schools (36%) that claim to follow the National Curriculum *closely* is somewhat higher in 2019 than among 2018 respondents (27%), which may reflect changes to the Ofsted education inspection framework, which places a new emphasis on the ‘quality of education’.

Approaches adopted to assessment at Key Stage 3

GCSE-style grading is still the dominant model being used to evaluate and report on students’ achievement at Key Stage 3. Overall, nearly half of state-funded schools report that they use a GCSE-style model. The majority of schools require tracking data to be submitted at three points in the year, although 40% of independent schools have much more frequent tracking, with six data-collection points. The influence of GCSE on approaches used within Key Stage 3 is also evident in the fact that the most frequently used forms of assessment activity are extended written tasks (used by 65% of respondents); GCSE-style source questions (used by 57%); and GCSE-style written questions *not* based on sources (used by 55%). There is also an emphasis on short factual knowledge tests, used by 47% of respondents, reflecting an emphasis placed on securing knowledge through regular retrieval practice.

While the vast majority of history departments have a high degree of control over the form of assessment within their subject, the timing of assessment points is generally determined more centrally within schools.

The impact of GCSE and of the new Ofsted inspection framework on Key Stage 3

The majority of teachers continue to report that the demands of the GCSE specifications have an influence on the kinds of questions that they set at Key Stage 3, on the way in which they use sources and on their teaching of historical interpretations. However, the proportion acknowledging this impact

¹ University of Oxford

² University of Reading

is considerably lower than in the past two years in relation to the types of question asked (56% in 2019 compared with 79% in 2018) and to the way in which sources are used (59% in 2019 compared with 68% in 2018). The impact of GCSE on the Key Stage 3 curriculum remains more pronounced in state-funded non-selective schools than it is in the grammar or independent school sectors.

There are other signs that tendencies to treat Key Stage 3 as the start of a five-year GCSE programme are also diminishing. Fewer than 40% of comprehensives, academies and free schools in 2019 report deliberately planning their Key Stage 3 and GCSE curricula in ways that allow them to revisit content, compared with 46% of such schools in 2018. Nearly a quarter now report that they specifically devise their Key Stage 3 curriculum to *avoid* repetition and to broaden students' encounters with the past. State-funded non-selective schools are, however, still more likely than grammar or independent school respondents to acknowledge that they address concerns about content coverage at GCSE either by revisiting content or by choosing content that will provide relevant contextual knowledge for the topics studied at GCSE. While the proportion of schools that now include teaching on different timescales within their Key Stage 3 curriculum is higher this year (43% of state-funded non-selective schools, compared with 33% last year), the proportion of all schools that deliberately include teaching of local history or some aspect of the historic environment remains much smaller and is virtually unchanged at 18%.

There is some evidence that the reduction of the direct influence of GCSE on Key Stage 3 curriculum design is a reflection of the new Ofsted education inspection framework. Respondents from about half of the state-maintained schools claim that the framework now has a 'considerable' or 'profound' impact on the planning of their Key Stage 3 curriculum. This impact is generally well regarded, with three-quarters of teachers in the state-maintained sector claiming that they regard the new framework positively.

The length of the Key Stage 3 curriculum

The proportion of comprehensive, academy and free schools that report offering a three-year Key Stage 3 curriculum is similar to that reported in 2017 and 2018, at around 57%. While previous surveys asked respondents whether they had a two-year or a three-year Key Stage 3, the 2019 survey allowed them to indicate more precisely whether they began teaching the GCSE specification part-way through Year 9. Responses in this category suggest that around 13% of schools have taken this option (although the proportion here varies depending on whether the question is framed specifically about the length of Key Stage 3 or about the length of GCSE). What is clear is that 30% of state-funded non-selective schools are allowing students to give up history at the end of Year 8.

1.3 Provision at Key Stage 4

Teachers' views of the GCSE (9–1) specification

Teachers remain very concerned about the suitability of the GCSE specifications for many young people: 90% of teachers disagree with the claim that the current specifications are appropriate for those with low levels of literacy and 70% disagree with the suggestion that they are appropriate for those with low prior attainment.

Respondents continue to appreciate the range of content (i.e. the fact that the specifications include the study of history from three different periods and across different timescales), but only 20% regard

the amount of content as manageable. Thirty per cent of schools claimed that they were unable to fit the content they had to cover into the time available.

In terms of specific concerns related to particular examination boards, the issues raised most frequently by those taking the AQA specification focused on the thematic study and the historic environment element, while those taking Edexcel most commonly raised concerns about the amount of content in Paper 2 (which comprises both the British depth study and the period study) and the 'narrative account' questions. Very few comments were received from those working with other examination boards (reflecting the smaller number of entries), which makes it very difficult to assess their typicality, but multiple concerns were raised within OCR's SHP specification about the period study 'The Making of America' and about the historical environment unit ('History Around Us'), and within Eduqas about the thematic unit.

The length of time allocated to GCSE

The reported difficulty in addressing all the content occurs in a context in which 30% of respondents allocate a full three years to teaching GCSE (9–1) history, while a further 20% allocate some part of their Year 9 curriculum time to teaching the GCSE specification.³

While a small majority of schools (54%) report that they have left the length of their GCSE courses unchanged in the past three years, one-third report that they have lengthened the course. Only 12% report a reduction. These proportions seem to reflect decisions made in response to the introduction of the 9–1 GCSEs (first examined in 2017), with some influence of the new Ofsted education inspection framework beginning to be felt.

The pathway systems at GCSE and the extent to which students can choose history

The pattern of option systems is essentially unchanged from previous years. Around 40% of schools require that *all* students take at least one of the two EBacc humanities subjects (i.e. history or geography) and generally also allow students to take both if they wish. Another 10% of schools make this a requirement for *some* students. Just under half of schools claim that they seek to give students an entirely free choice about whether or not they study history at GCSE.

Around 30% of all school respondents acknowledge that they actively prevent or discourage certain students from taking history. Although there are some differences in terms of the *range* of reasons for steering students away from history (with only 6% reporting that students are placed on a pathway in which history does not feature as an option), there is no change in the overall proportion of schools steering some students away from the subject, which remains entirely consistent with what has been reported in the past two years. The main reasons reported for discouraging or preventing students from taking history are that their levels of literacy are too low for history to be an accessible qualification (10%) or that their current attainment is too low for it to be regarded as worthwhile (8%).

1.4 A-level history

³ As noted above, the proportions vary depending on whether the question is asked in relation to Key Stage 3 or 4. This is because the *total* number of schools answering each batch of questions is different. Some middle schools, for example, teach Key Stage 3 students but not Key Stage 4, while some independent schools only receive pupils at age 13.

The proportion of students within Years 12 and 13 taking A-level history

Although there are some indications across all types of school that more schools are teaching smaller cohorts of students – with 28% of schools reporting that their Year 12 classes include less than 10% of the cohort, compared with 23% last year – uptake essentially appears to be fluctuating, with no stable patterns.

Time allocation

The figures for time allocated to face-to-face teaching appear to be lower than in previous years, with 47% of schools reporting a time allocation of five or more hours, compared with 61% reporting that allocation last year. Independent schools provide the most time, with 54% of respondents reporting that they offer five or more hours of history teaching a week, followed by comprehensive, academy and free schools, with 46% reporting that they provide this amount of teaching.

Concerns expressed about particular units

The most common issue raised when respondents were invited to comment on any specific concerns about A-level related to the quality and consistency of marking, which was often linked to non-exam assessments, followed by comments on the amount of detailed knowledge that students were expected to deal with. Some teachers felt that the weighting of the exams did not reflect the amount of material that students were expected to deal with in different units, while others were concerned that the exam questions focused on very narrow aspects of a topic, and did not allow students to demonstrate the range of knowledge that they had developed.

1.5 School history and diversity

One-fifth of schools reported that students from certain ethnic backgrounds are either somewhat or significantly under-represented or do not tend to take history at GCSE. The figure is around a third at A-level. Our questions about uptake were asked in response to the Royal Historical Society's (2018) 'Race, ethnicity and equality report', which drew attention to both the narrowness of the school curriculum and the under-representation of BAME students studying history. Most HA survey respondents report a close match between the proportion of students from different backgrounds who opt to study history and the proportion of students from such backgrounds within their school population. Where teachers noted that there was some kind of under-representation, they identified Chinese, Asian, Black and Roma students as being less likely to take history. Of the few who offered any explanations for this pattern, teachers mentioned that Chinese and Asian students were more likely to take STEM subjects at A-level.

Where schools claimed to have been successful in attracting large numbers of minority ethnic students, teachers were asked to suggest what they thought were the reasons for this success. The 15 responses to this question focused variously on the quality of teaching (which resulted in students achieving high grades); on making history relevant to the lives of students; and on selecting topics that reflected a more inclusive curriculum.

Schools were asked about any specific recent changes that they had made in response to the RHS report, or more generally to include a more diverse representation of people in the past or to engage a wider pool of students. Approximately one-third of schools claimed to have made some change of

this kind in the past two years, with most highlighting changes to the topics included within their curriculum, particularly within Key Stage 3, which seemed to offer the most scope for change. While reference was most commonly made to trying to ensure that students learned more about Africa than simply its involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, different schools highlighted different emphases, including India, China and the Middle East, as well as a deliberate focus on Black British history. The inclusion of women's lives in the past was also a prominent theme, and a few schools also made specific reference to the history of LGBT people.

1.6 Teachers' concerns

The predominant concerns reported by teachers are the impact of budget cuts on their students' experience of history (identified as a current or serious concern by 51% of respondents); the lack of opportunity to attend subject-specific CPD (a current or serious concern for 40% of respondents); and the lack of provision of history-specific CPD (a current or serious concern for 36% of respondents). More than a quarter of respondents regard the lack of high-quality applicants for history posts as a current or serious concern. Almost a quarter are also concerned about the amount of history being taught by non-specialist teachers.

The impact of budget cuts

One of the most notable impacts of budget cuts is on class size. Overall, nearly a third of schools report increasing class sizes at Key Stage 3 and GCSE as a response to financial pressures. This is most evident in state-funded non-selective schools, with 44% reporting increased class sizes at Key Stage 3 and 39% at GCSE.

A less common response, but of considerable concern where it is happening, is reduction in teaching time. Ten per cent of comprehensives, academies and free schools report having cut teaching time at Key Stage 3, with 5% having to do the same at GCSE.

Budget cuts have also had an impact on schools' ability to purchase textbooks and photocopy resources. A quarter of teachers in state-funded non-selective schools report that they have had to buy essential classroom resources from their own money due to financial constraints in school.

The provision of teaching assistants in history

A deeply worrying impact of budget cuts is the reduction in support from teaching assistants (TAs). Nearly two-thirds of comprehensives, academies and free schools report reductions in this provision at Key Stage 3 and half at GCSE. Given the important role that such staff can play in supporting students' progress and the additional pressures that teachers face without appropriate provision for those with special educational needs, this move has profound implications for many young people.

In 2019, just under 60% of schools reported that they were unable to provide regular TA support in Key Stage 3 for students with a formal statement of needs (an Education and Health Care plan, or EHCP). Where students in Key Stage 3 with special needs do not have an EHCP, only 5% of schools offer regular support from a TA. At GCSE, less than 40% of schools are able to provide support on at least a regular basis, even for those *with* an EHCP. Where students do not have an EHCP, only 5% of state-funded non-selective schools reported being able to provide any regular form of TA support, compared with almost 10% in 2018.

1.7 History teacher qualifications and recruitment

Nearly 17% of the state-funded non-selective schools reported that they employ history teachers without qualified teacher status (QTS). This proportion is much higher than that found in last year's survey (7%) and is much closer than in previous years to the proportion of independent schools (20%) that report employing history teachers without a formal teaching qualification. While the total may include a significant number who are undertaking employment-based salaried training programmes, the fact that many children are being taught history by unqualified teachers is a matter of real concern.

The high proportion of schools employing unqualified history teachers may also reflect the continuing difficulties that schools have with recruitment. Of the 93 schools that had advertised a history vacancy during the academic year 2018–19, only 34% reported having received a 'good field of applicants' (a proportion similar to that found the previous year). Almost 8% of the state-maintained non-selective schools reported that they had been unable to recruit or chose not to appoint any of the applicants.

2. Nature of the survey

The findings reported here are based on the response of history teachers in England to an online survey sent by the Historical Association to all schools and colleges teaching students in the 11–18 age range. The survey was launched in August 2019, just after the publication of the A-level and GCSE results, and closed in October.

2.1 Number of responses

Responses were received from 285 history teachers in England, working in a range of different contexts, although five of these did not provide sufficient details about their context for the nature of their school to be categorised, and two provided details about their school's characteristics but failed to answer any substantive survey questions. While some responses – such as those related to teachers' concerns – were analysed at an individual level, multiple responses from teachers within the same school were eliminated to ensure that each school was counted only once in response to questions about the nature of provision for history at different key stages. The school-level responses were analysed in relation to different types of schools: state-funded non-selective schools (comprehensives, academies and free schools), state-maintained grammar schools, independent schools and sixth-form colleges.

2.2 The range of schools represented

Of the 273 schools from which responses were received with sufficient detail for us to be able to categorise them, 213 were state-funded non-selective schools (comprehensives, academies and free schools), 15 were grammar schools, 32 were independent schools, four were sixth-form colleges and three were pupil referral units or other schools catering exclusively for students with special educational needs.

Responses to questions about teaching history at Key Stage 3 (traditionally the first three years of secondary school, for students aged 11–14, but reduced in many schools to the first two years of secondary provision) were received from 267 individual schools: 218 comprehensives, academies or free schools, 14 grammar schools, 32 independent schools and three special schools or pupil referral units. Responses to questions about provision at Key Stage 4 (conventionally for students aged 14–16, but now often including a span of three years, from 13–16) were received from 241 schools, while 152 individual schools and sixth-form colleges reported on their A-level history provision. (A further eight respondents reported that their school had a sixth form but did not offer A-level history.)

2.3 Ethnicity of respondents

Of the 285 individual respondents, six preferred not to disclose their ethnicity. The vast majority of respondents, 261 (93%), described themselves as white, including 247 white British, four white Irish, one white gypsy or traveller and nine white 'other'. Nine respondents (3%) described themselves as Asian or Asian British. Three respondents (1%) identified themselves as having some kind of black heritage – one as black African/Caribbean/black British and two with 'mixed' or multiple heritage, including black and white.

2.4 The experience of the teachers

The opinions reported here tend to reflect those of experienced practitioners. The overwhelming majority of the 283 teachers who gave details about the length of their experience had been teaching for more than five years. This was the case for 212 (75%) respondents. A further 50 (18%) had been teaching for between one and five years, with the remainder being NQTs (18) or in training (three). Of the 271 respondents who gave details about their position within the school, 155 (57%) were designated as the lead teacher or head of department for history, 24 (9%) as members of senior leadership teams (SLT) and 89 (33%) as main-scale teachers. Three described themselves as trainees.

3. Key Stage 3 history

3.1 Continuing impact of the revised National Curriculum

Since the introduction of the most recent version of the National Curriculum in 2014, we have been interested in the extent to which schools adhere to it, given that academies (of all kinds – both selective and non-selective) and free schools are not explicitly required to do so. As can be seen in Figures 1 and 2, there appear to be no significant differences in the extent to which schools follow the requirements of the National Curriculum. The proportion of state-funded schools (36%) that claim to follow the curriculum closely is slightly higher in 2019 than in 2018 (27%), which may reflect changes to the Ofsted education inspection framework, which places a new emphasis on the ‘quality of education’, with the National Curriculum regarded as a benchmark for comparison in judging the breadth and depth of a school’s curriculum.

Figure 1: The extent to which respondents’ schools in 2019 were following the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum

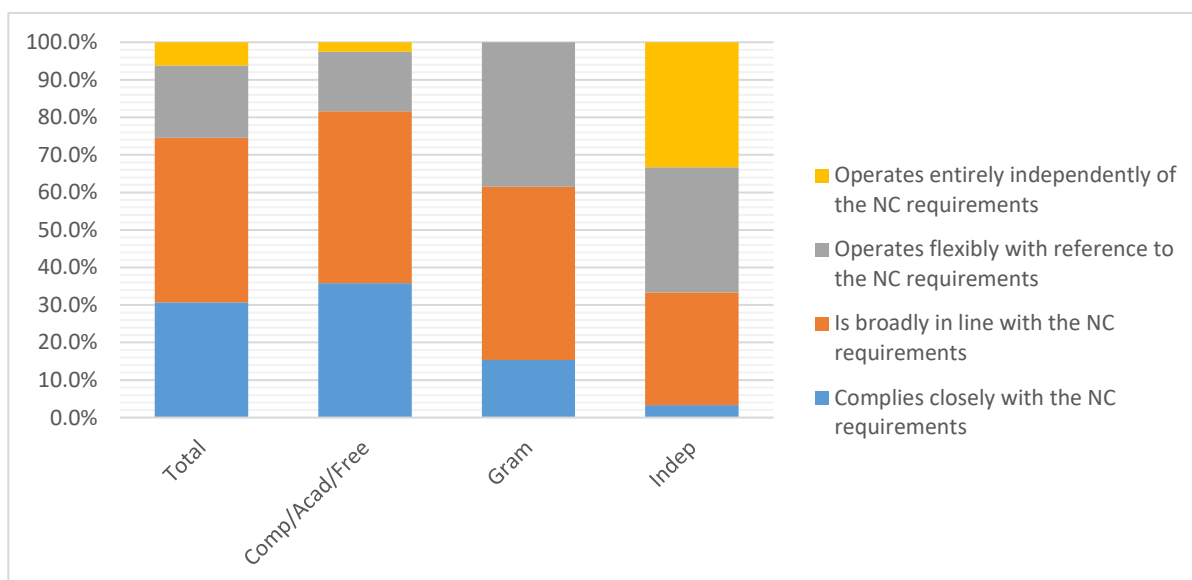
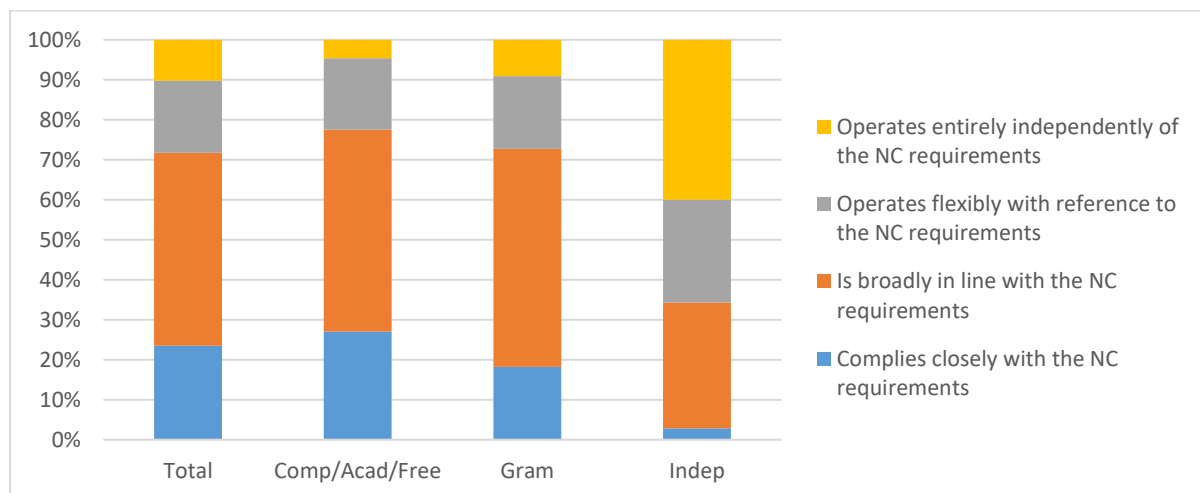


Figure 2: The extent to which respondents’ schools in 2018 were following the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum



3.2 Approaches adopted to assessment at Key Stage 3

Between 2017 and 2018, our annual survey revealed a marked increase in the proportion of schools that had adopted GCSE-style grading in Key Stage 3. In the past year, there seems to have been less change in the way in which schools are approaching assessment. GCSE-style grading is still the dominant model, but the proportion of schools reporting this approach, as shown in Figure 3, is very similar to that reported in 2018 (see Figure 4). Overall, nearly half of state-funded schools have adopted a GCSE-style model. Although the number of grammar schools that responded to the survey is small, making general conclusions difficult to draw, there appears to be a shift among schools of this kind, with a higher proportion now reporting the use of a GCSE-style approach. The independent school sector seems to be less inclined to mirror GCSE-style grading in their lower school curriculum.

Our concern with a reliance on GCSE-style assessment is that students come to understand progress in history predominantly in terms of GCSE grades, rather than appreciating that progress is about developing a more sophisticated conceptual understanding of the past and of how history works.

Figure 3: The approaches to assessment being used in 2019 within Key Stage 3

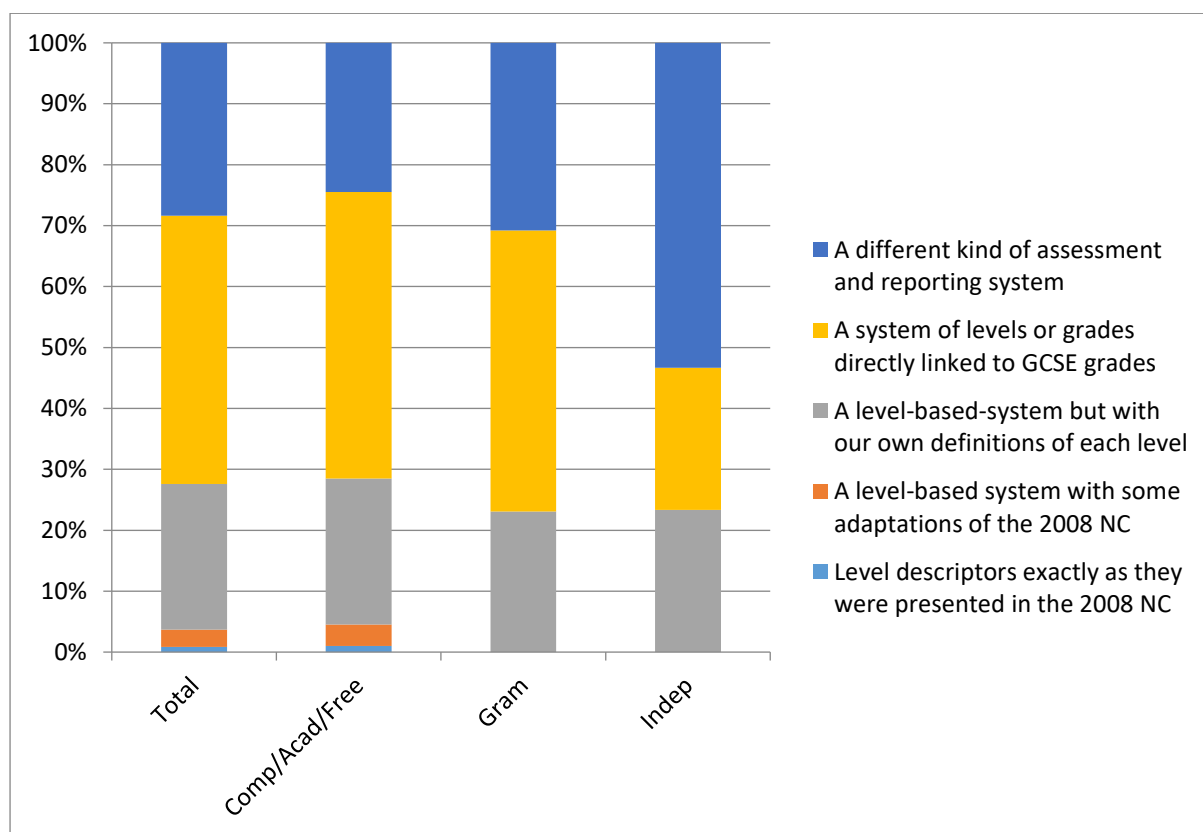
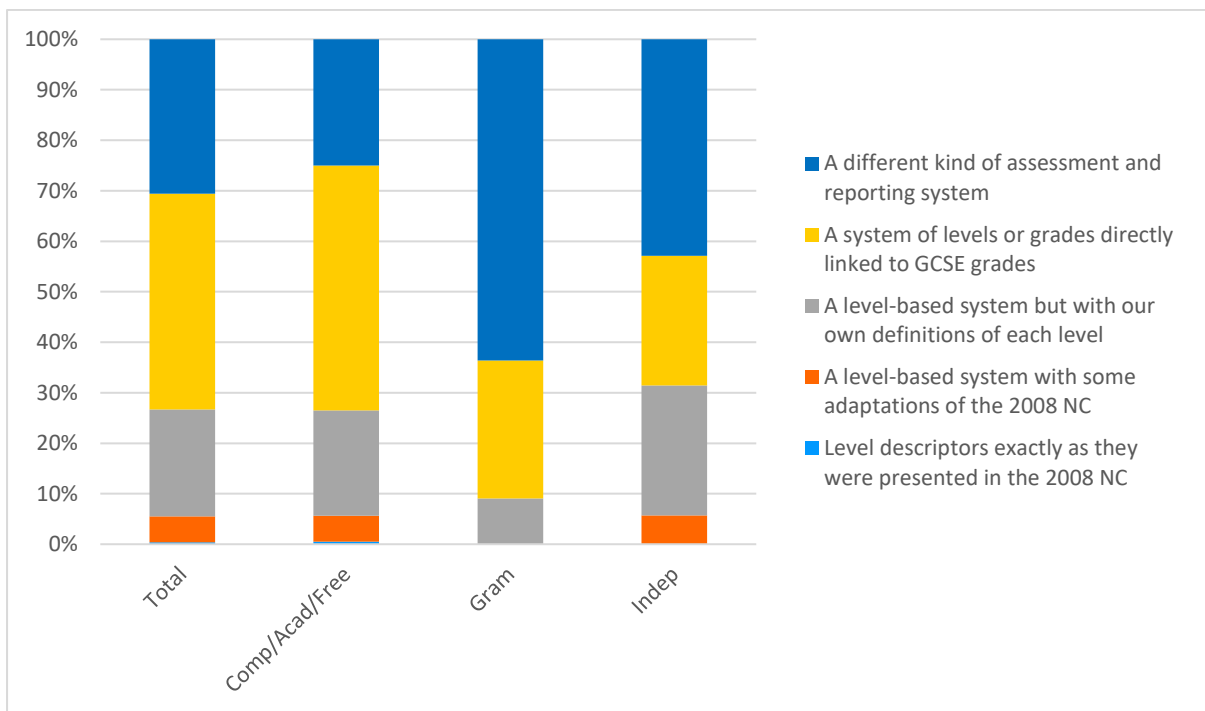
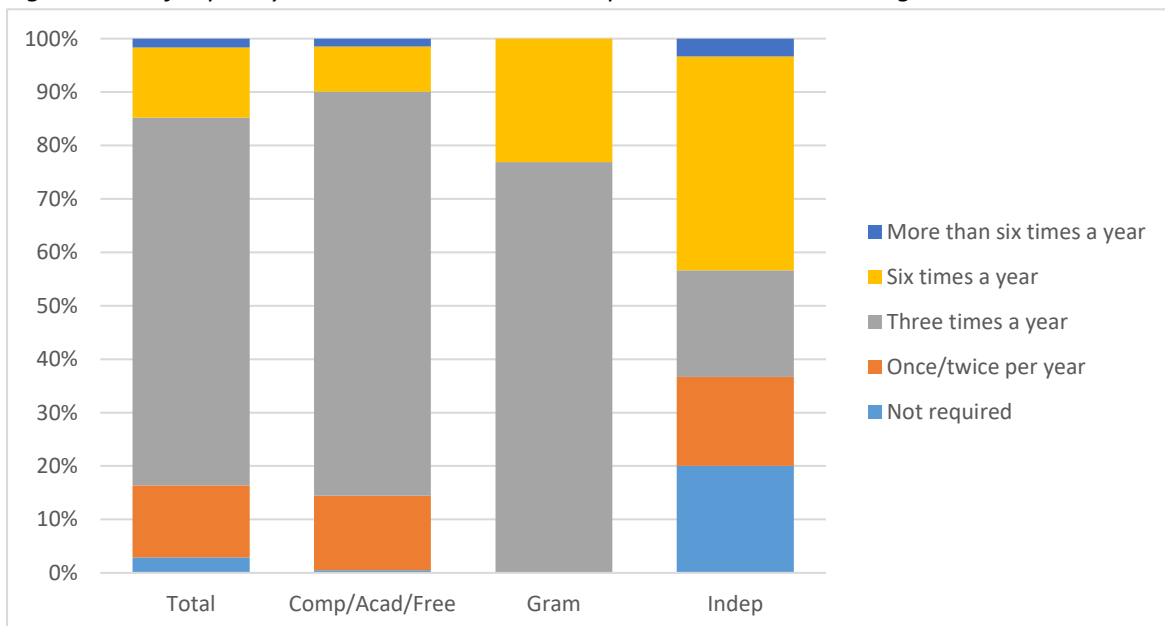


Figure 4: The approaches to assessment being used in 2018 within Key Stage 3



Given the importance of assessment in shaping a student’s experience of learning, the survey included a number of additional questions intended to probe this experience further. One new focus was on the frequency with which tracking data needed to be submitted – an issue that also has a potential impact on teacher workload. The data presented in Figure 5 shows that the majority of schools require tracking data to be submitted at three points in the year. The picture in the independent sector is different, with 40% of schools requiring such data six times a year.

Figure 5: The frequency with which teachers are expected to submit tracking data



Although we could not ascertain exactly what kind of data was being collected, respondents were asked to identify all the different types of assessment activity that were commonly used in their departments. In presenting this data (in Table 1), percentages are used to show the proportion of schools (of each particular kind) that used each type of assessment activity.

As Table 1 reveals, the most frequently used forms of assessment activity were extended written tasks (used by 65% of respondents), GCSE-style source questions (used by 57%) and GCSE-style written questions *not* based on sources (55%). This suggests another way in which GCSE expectations are impacting on the experience of students at Key Stage 3, with this key stage potentially being seen as providing preparation for later examination success rather than also developing an understanding of the nature of history *per se*. The emphasis on short factual knowledge tests (47%) may reflect the importance that many schools now place on a ‘knowledge rich’ curriculum or on retrieval practice.

Table 1: Types of assessment used at Key Stage 3

Year	Type of school	Multiple choice questions	Short factual knowledge test	Timeline activities	GCSE-style written questions (not based on sources)	Extended writing tasks of other kinds	GCSE-style source questions	Another kind of source-based activity	N/A formal tracking not used	Other
2019	Comprehensives, academies & free (n=218)	59 (27.1%)	108 (49.5%)	27 (12.4%)	128 (58.7%)	140 (64.2%)	130 (59.6%)	68 (31.2%)	1 (0.5%)	5 (2.3%)
	Grammar (n=14)	3 (21.4%)	7 (50.0%)	2 (14.3%)	8 (57.1%)	9 (64.3%)	9 (64.3%)	5 (35.7%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (14.3%)
	Independent (n=32)	9 (28.1%)	10 (31.3%)	3 (9.4%)	10 (31.3%)	22 (68.8%)	12 (37.5%)	11 (34.4%)	6 (18.8%)	0 (0.0%)
	All (n=264)	71 (26.9%)	125 (47.3%)	32 (12.1%)	146 (55.3%)	171 (64.8%)	151 (57.2%)	84 (31.8%)	7 (2.7%)	7 (2.7%)

Teachers were also asked about the extent to which their history department had control over the form of assessment used at Key Stage 3 and the timing of assessments. It is clear from Figure 6 that in the majority of cases history departments have complete or a high degree of control over the *form* of assessment, although around an eighth of schools overall entrusted little or no control to the department. Departments had less control over the *timing* of assessment points, as shown in Figure 7, with only just over half having complete or a high degree of control over this aspect. This comparative lack of freedom suggests that many schools have common tracking and reporting points to which all departments have to adhere.

Figure 6: The extent to which history departments have control over the form of assessment used at Key Stage 3

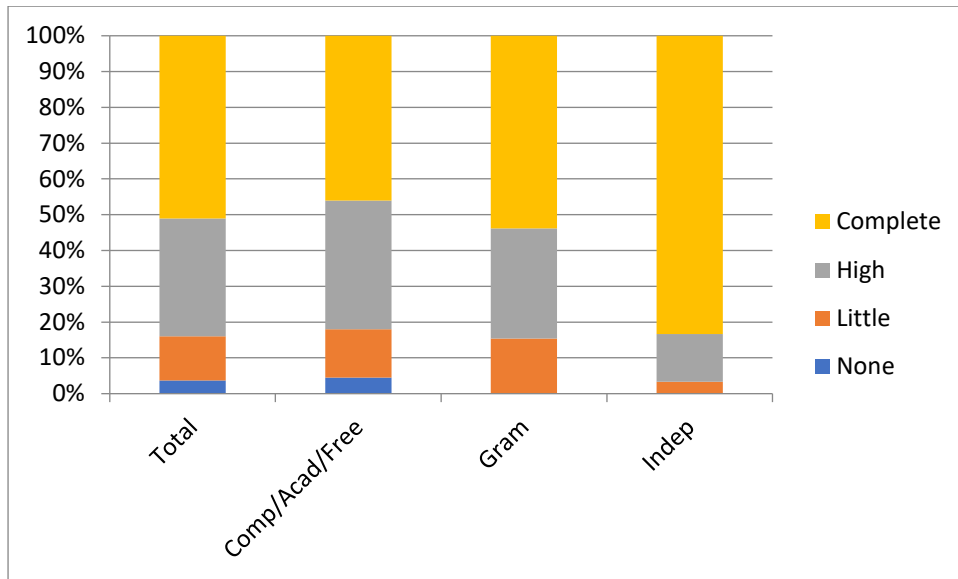
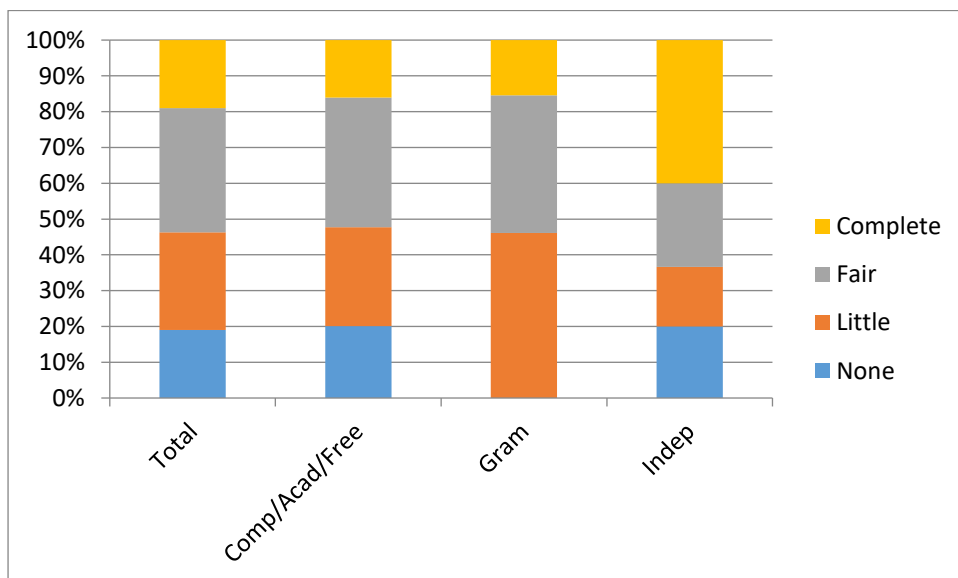


Figure 7: The extent to which history departments have control over the timing of assessments at Key Stage 3



3.3 The impact of GCSE and of the new Ofsted inspection framework on Key Stage 3

Last year's survey indicated that the new GCSE specifications were having a significant impact on the ways in which many teachers approached the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Table 2 shows the ways in which teachers have adapted their curriculum in light of GCSE demands, giving an insight into trends over the past three years. In 2019, the majority of teachers continued to report that the demands of the GCSE specifications have an influence on the kinds of questions that they set, on the way in which they use sources and on their teaching of historical interpretations. However, the proportion acknowledging this impact is considerably lower than in the past two years in relation to the types of

question asked (56% in 2019, compared with 79% in 2018) and the way in which sources are used (59% in 2019, compared with 68% in 2018). The impact of GCSE on the Key Stage 3 curriculum is more profound in state-funded non-selective schools than it is in the grammar or independent school sectors, but there does appear to be a shift in how schools are looking at Key Stage 3.

Table 2: The ways in which GCSE was reported to have influenced schools' approaches to assessment and teaching of particular aspects at Key Stage 3

Number of responses (as a percentage of the schools that answered this question)⁴

Type of school	The kinds of questions that we ask students to tackle (to reflect the style and focus of new GCSE questions)	The way in which we use sources in Key Stage 3 history	The way in which we introduce students to different historical interpretations at Key Stage 3	The number of schools that answered this question
Comprehensive/academy/free 2019	135 (61.9%)	137 (62.8%)	126 (57.8%)	218
<i>Comprehensive/academy/free 2018</i>	<i>154 (80.6%)</i>	<i>133 (69.9%)</i>	<i>138 (72.3%)</i>	<i>191</i>
<i>Comprehensive/academy/free 2017</i>	<i>155 (79.5%)</i>	<i>128 (65.6%)</i>	<i>126 (64.6%)</i>	<i>195</i>
Grammar 2019	8 (57.1%)	6 (42.9%)	8 (57.1%)	14
<i>Grammar 2018</i>	<i>7 (77.8%)</i>	<i>5 (55.6%)</i>	<i>6 (66.7%)</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Grammar 2017</i>	<i>13 (76.5%)</i>	<i>8 (47.1%)</i>	<i>5 (29.4%)</i>	<i>17</i>
Independent 2019	6 (18.8%)	13 (40.6%)	9 (28.1%)	32
<i>Independent 2018</i>	<i>11 (57.9%)</i>	<i>11 (57.9%)</i>	<i>8 (42.1%)</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Independent 2017</i>	<i>13 (59.1%)</i>	<i>14 (63.6%)</i>	<i>12 (54.5%)</i>	<i>22</i>
All 2019	149 (56.4%)	156 (59.1%)	143 (54.2%)	264
<i>All 2018</i>	<i>172 (78.5%)</i>	<i>149 (68.0%)</i>	<i>152 (69.4%)</i>	<i>219</i>
<i>All 2017</i>	<i>181 (77.4%)</i>	<i>150 (64.1%)</i>	<i>143 (61.1%)</i>	<i>234</i>

For some, there is an emphasis on examination preparation:

We frame all our assessments to the wording of the AQA GCSE questions so that we are developing skills from Year 7. This is run in conjunction with fact tests and informal assessment of progress in lessons. At Year 7 and 8, these assessments are graded as Red, Amber and Green, plus an effort score 1–4. At Year 9, pupils receive a GCSE prediction grade and assessments are graded as we would with GCSE, although slightly pared down to take on board the fact that they are Year 9. We have adapted the curriculum this year so that, broadly speaking, each Key Stage 3 year group covers a specific site study, a thematic study and a depth study. This is in response to both the changes at GCSE and Ofsted's curriculum framework.

[Teacher 80, grammar school]

⁴ The percentages add up to more than 100 as schools could tick more than one response.

For others, there is a clear understanding that the Key Stage 3 curriculum is effectively distinct from GCSE:

We aim to give students a broad and balanced curriculum with a focus on different skills each term, which will improve their learning in history. Although some planning has influences in GCSE, we do not intend to teach a '5 Year' GCSE, and seek instead to embed the core and second-order concepts into our Key Stage 3 alongside engaging curriculum content.

[Teacher 221, comprehensive/academy/free]

Obviously, it is unclear from a survey of this type precisely how teachers address particular aspects such as the use of sources, but it is a matter of some concern that mimicking the demands of the GCSE specification at Key Stage 3 may over-emphasise the specific strategies required to obtain good examination results without developing a genuine understanding of the subject discipline.

Table 3: The way in which GCSE has been influencing the choice of content at Key Stage 3
Number of responses (as a percentage of the schools that answered this question)⁵

Type of school	Specific content – avoid repetition	Specific content – revisit aspects at GCSE	Specific content – background for GCSE	Number of KS3 schools that answered this question
Comprehensive/academy/free 2019	51 (23.4%)	84 (38.5%)	122 (56.0%)	218
<i>Comprehensive/academy/free 2018</i>	<i>34 (17.8%)</i>	<i>88 (46.1%)</i>	<i>106 (55.5%)</i>	<i>191</i>
<i>Comprehensive/academy/free 2017</i>	<i>48 (25.5%)</i>	<i>92 (47.2%)</i>	<i>104 (53.3%)</i>	<i>195</i>
Grammar 2019	7 (50%)	1 (7.1%)	5 (35.7%)	14
<i>Grammar 2018</i>	<i>2 (22.2%)</i>	<i>1 (11.1%)</i>	<i>6 (66.7%)</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Grammar 2017</i>	<i>5 (29.4%)</i>	<i>5 (29.4%)</i>	<i>10 (58.8%)</i>	<i>17</i>
Independent 2019	7 (21.9%)	4 (12.5%)	10 (31.3%)	32
<i>Independent 2018</i>	<i>6 (31.6%)</i>	<i>4 (21.1%)</i>	<i>7 (36.8%)</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Independent 2017</i>	<i>11 (50.0%)</i>	<i>6 (27.3%)</i>	<i>10 (45.5%)</i>	<i>22</i>
All 2019	65 (24.6%)	89 (33.7%)	137 (51.9%)	264
<i>All 2018</i>	<i>42 (19.2%)</i>	<i>93 (42.5%)</i>	<i>119 (54.3%)</i>	<i>254</i>
<i>All 2017</i>	<i>64 (27.4%)</i>	<i>103 (44.0%)</i>	<i>124 (53.0%)</i>	<i>234</i>

Last year, the survey revealed teachers' concerns that the need to cover a vast array of content at GCSE was affecting curriculum content choices at Key Stage 3, with decisions taken deliberately to *revisit* content at both key stages. The responses in 2019 present a rather different picture of curriculum development compared to that seen in recent years. In particular, fewer than 40% of comprehensives, academies and free schools report deliberately *revisiting* content, compared with over 46% in 2018. Nearly a quarter of such schools claimed in 2019 that they specifically devise their

⁵ Since schools could tick more than one response, some schools may have claimed to be doing both these things (in relation to different topics). The percentages reported in Table 3 thus add up to more than 100.

Key Stage 3 curriculum to *avoid* repetition and to broaden students' encounters with the past. These state-funded non-selective schools are, however, still more likely than those in the grammar school and independent sectors to address concerns about content coverage at GCSE through their Key Stage 3 content choices (*either revisiting content or teaching content to provide context*).

In 2019, fewer teachers provided comments about their choice of content. Among those that did, the pressures of GCSE did not come through as acutely as in previous years:

The re-planning of Key Stage 3 was required anyway, and was raised by both new members of the department. It has not been re-planned because of the new GCSEs, but we are conscious of giving the hinterland knowledge of the role of the medieval church to students in order to ensure that they understand why the Church was so important in medieval medicine (for example), rather than spending time on that at GCSE, which would be difficult in a two-year Key Stage 4.

[Teacher 253, comprehensive/academy/free]

We are looking at history more globally – Africa before the transatlantic slave trade, Silk Road, Mughal India as well as local.

[Teacher 234, comprehensive/academy/free]

It may be that the experience of teaching GCSE has given teachers more confidence about what is needed to be successful in the examination, so they are feeling more comfortable in viewing the Key Stage 3 history curriculum in a different way. Some teachers are clearly taking the opportunity to review their Key Stage 3 curriculum (now that changes to both GCSEs and A-levels have been completed), and teachers feel that they can consider more carefully how the curriculum fits together across different key stages.

We also asked about a range of other possible influences of the 9–1 GCSE specifications on the Key Stage 3 curriculum in respondents' schools: influences on their approach to developing students' knowledge of recurring substantive concepts; on the timescales across which their topics ranged; on the ways in which they taught particular second-order concepts; and on the extent to which they focused on local history (or the historic environment). These results are set out in Table 4, which shows that most thought is being given to the kinds of substantive concepts with which students will need to be familiar (considered by 53% of respondents), while a significant proportion (46%) are paying careful attention to students' understanding of relevant second-order concepts. Of course, both elements are actually central to a secure knowledge and understanding of history, and while it is encouraging to see that attention is not solely focused on substantive concepts, it is perhaps a matter of concern that only 85 schools (32% of respondents) are looking at how they teach *both* substantive and second-order concepts in light of the current GCSE specifications. It is also notable that only a fifth of all schools are focusing attention on teaching local history or looking at the historic environment, despite the fact that all GCSE specifications include a unit related to 'the historic environment'. This neglect was equally apparent last year and may reflect the fact that only one exam board (OCR) has offered a specification that explicitly promotes *local* history by inviting schools to choose a relevant site (subject to the board's approval). In other cases, the particular environment is specified by the examination board, and is linked to another unit within the specification.

The requirements of the current GCSE specifications that all students should learn about history on different scales (i.e. in depth, in breadth and across time in a thematic study), as well as studying ‘the historic environment’, have exerted a rather more variable influence. In comparison with results in previous years, more state-funded non-selective schools (43%, compared with around one-third in 2018) are teaching Key Stage 3 topics on different timescales. There seems to be little change, however, in the proportion of schools (18%) that deliberately include teaching of local history or some aspect of the historic environment, which is virtually identical to the responses in 2018.

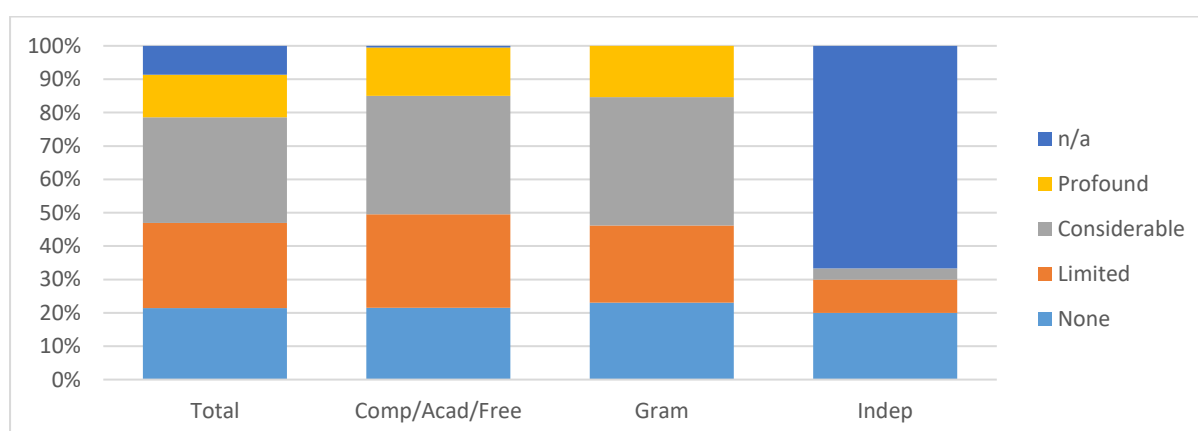
Table 4: The way in which 2019 respondents reported that GCSE has been influencing other aspects of their Key Stage 3 planning and teaching

Number of responses (as a percentage of the schools that answered this question)⁶

Type of school	Knowledge of substantive concepts (such as 'parliament' or 'empire')	The timescales of the topics taught (breadth, depth and thematic studies)	Teaching of particular second-order concepts such as causation or change and continuity	Teaching of local history or the historic environment at Key Stage 3	Number of KS3 schools that answered this question
Comprehensive/ academy/free 2019	123 (56.4%)	95 (43.6%)	105 (48.2%)	43 (19.7%)	218
Grammar 2019	8 (57.1%)	7 (50.0%)	4 (28.6%)	1 (7.1%)	14
Independent 2019	8 (25.0%)	6 (18.8%)	12 (37.5%)	4 (12.5%)	32
All schools 2019	139 (52.7%)	108 (40.9%)	121 (45.8%)	48 (18.2%)	264

Generally, it appears that history teachers are giving more careful consideration to their Key Stage 3 curriculum planning, and that, although still strong, the direct influence of GCSE on that planning is slightly diminishing. This shift may reflect the influence of the new Ofsted education inspection framework. Figure 8 shows that respondents from about half of the state-maintained schools claim that the new framework is now having a considerable or profound impact on the planning of their Key Stage 3 curriculum.

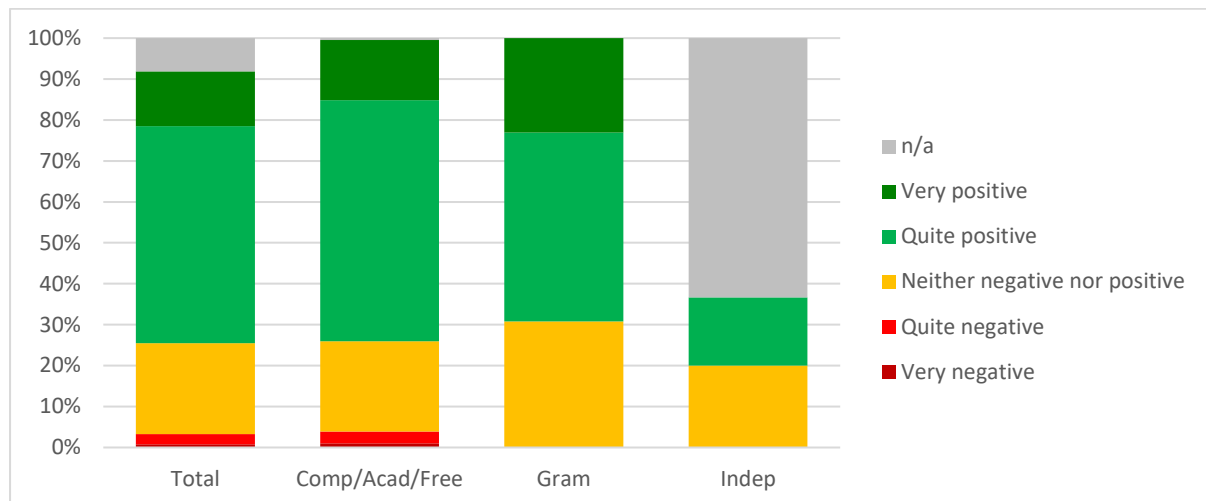
Figure 8: The extent of the impact that teachers report the new Ofsted inspection framework to be exerting on their Key Stage 3 curriculum



⁶ Since schools could tick more than one response, some schools may have claimed to be doing both these things (in relation to different topics). The percentages reported in Table 4 thus add up to more than 100.

The framework’s new emphasis on the ‘quality of education’ is focused on the entitlement of all young people to an ‘ambitious’ curriculum that provides ‘the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life’ and that is ‘coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment’. Given the influence that it already appears to be exerting, it is encouraging to see from Figure 9 that three-quarters of teachers in the state-maintained sector regard the new inspection framework positively.

Figure 9: The extent to which history teachers feel positive about the new Ofsted inspection framework



Overall, the emphasis on the quality of students’ experience of the curriculum is welcomed:

I'm feeling really positive about this – I think it has prompted my entire department to really reflect on whether we are teaching specific topics or substantive ideas simply because it is 'easy' for teachers to plan or will support students' learning at GCSE. I think the new emphasis on 'quality of education' has allowed my department to agree that those rationales are not good enough when selecting what goes into our curriculum, and has given us an opportunity to think more about what our students might want to learn and might be more relevant to their lives and to the historical ideas, second-order concepts and writing skills that we want them to become confident with.

[Teacher 88, comprehensive/academy/free]

Most reservations were about how the framework would work in practice or whether senior leaders in school were ‘interpreting’ the new framework correctly:

Waiting to see how this will work in practice once Ofsted begin inspecting based on this new framework.

[Teacher 139, comprehensive/academy/free]

Uncertain if the expectations of leadership correlate with Ofsted's intentions/desires.

[Teacher 123, comprehensive/academy/free]

3.4 The length of the Key Stage 3 curriculum

In previous years, the survey has shown an increase in the proportion of schools reporting the use of a two-year Key Stage 3 (rather than a three-year curriculum, as originally envisaged when the National

Curriculum was introduced). In 2017 and 2018, around 43% of schools in the state-funded sector reported that they allocated only two years to Key Stage 3. Unfortunately, our framing of the question about the length of Key Stage 3 obscured the proportion of schools that had adopted a kind of ‘middle ground’, starting GCSEs *part-way* through Year 9. In 2019, options were included to capture this approach, which is why the data in Table 5 is presented in two different formats.

Table 5: The length of the Key Stage 3 programme in respondents’ schools

Year	Type of school	3-year Key Stage 3		More than two years but less than three		2-year Key Stage 3		Total
2019	Comprehensives, academies & free	113	56.5%	26	13.0%	61	30.5%	200
	Grammar	6	46.2%	2	15.4%	5	38.5%	13
	Independent	21	70.0%	3	10.0%	6	20.0%	30
	All schools	140	57.6%	31	12.8%	72	29.6%	243

Year	Type of school	3-year Key Stage 3		2-year Key Stage 3	
2018	Comprehensives, academies & free	110	56.1%	86	43.9%
2017	<i>Comprehensives, academies & free</i>	113	55.9%	89	44.1%
2016	<i>Comprehensives, academies & free</i>	159	68.5%	73	31.5%
2015	<i>Comprehensives and academies</i>	180	75.9%	57	24.1%
2014	<i>Comprehensive and academies</i>	174	75.6%	56	24.3%
2018	Grammar	4	40%	6	60%
2017	<i>Grammar</i>	12	66.7%	4	33.3%
2016	<i>Grammar</i>	19	86.3%	3	13.6%
2015	<i>Grammar</i>	9	56.3%	7	43.8%
2014	<i>Grammar</i>	5	62.5%	3	37.50%
2018	Independent	29	82.9%	6	17.1%
2017	<i>Independent</i>	35	85.4%	6	14.6%
2016	<i>Independent</i>	40	93.0%	3	7.0%
2015	<i>Independent</i>	49	89.1%	6	10.9%
2014	<i>Independent</i>	34	89.5%	4	10.5%
2018	All schools	152	59.8%	102	40.2%
2017	<i>All schools</i>	162	60.7%	6	39.3%
2016	<i>All schools</i>	219	73.5%	79	26.5%
2015	<i>All schools</i>	238	77.3%	70	22.7%
2014	<i>All schools</i>	213	77.2%	63	22.8%

As can be seen in Table 5, the proportion of comprehensives, academies and free schools that report offering a three-year Key Stage 3 curriculum is similar to 2017 and 2018, at around 56%. There is more variation in the proportion of grammar schools offering a three-year Key Stage 3, but the number of

grammar school respondents is too small to allow us to identify any statistically significant differences. There also appears to be an increase in the proportion of independent schools that report adopting a shorter Key Stage 3. Giving respondents the opportunity to identify a third middle position, between two and three years, reveals some interesting distinctions, suggesting that fewer schools than previously thought are allocating *only* two years to Key Stage 3. The fact remains, however, that around 30% of state-funded non-selective schools are allowing students to give up history at the end of Year 8.

4. Key Stage 4 provision (GCSE)

4.1 The range of history qualifications offered

Of the 241 schools that gave details of their Key Stage 4 provision, the vast majority only offered the new GCSE (9–1) specification. Just over half of the independent schools offered IGCSE rather than the reformed GCSE qualification – a similar proportion to that noted last year. Although many respondents expressed concerns about the inappropriate nature of the 9–1 qualification for students with special educational needs or low prior attainment, only one special school reported offering a history option within the ASDAN Certificate of Personal Effectiveness, while four other schools (including another special school) offered an entry-level history qualification.

Only five schools – all of them comprehensives, academies or free schools – reported that they offered a GCSE in ancient history, and in all cases this was an additional option, since the schools also offered GCSE history. No schools reported offering humanities GCSE or the Middle Years IB programme.

Table 6: The types of post-16 qualifications offered by survey respondents' schools in 2019

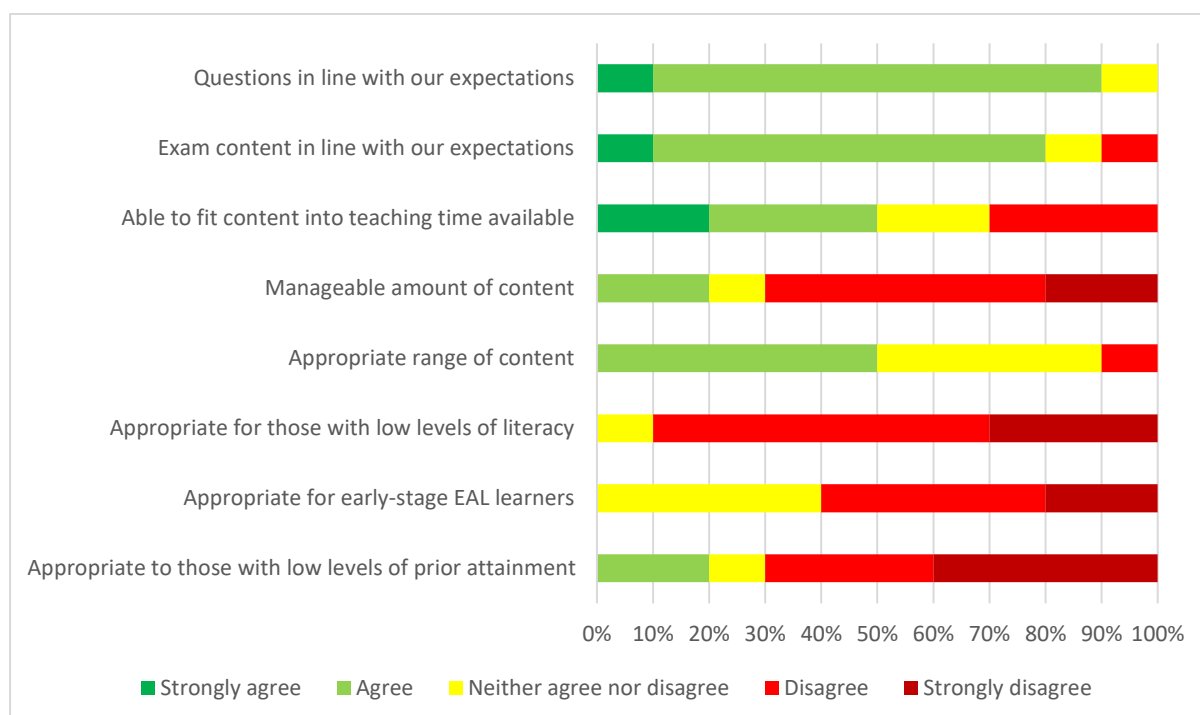
	Comprehensives/ academy/free (n=191)	Grammar (n=14)	Independent (n=29)	Special schools (n=3)	Number of schools offering this qualification
History GCSE	190	13	14	1	218
IGCSE⁷	1	1	16		18
Ancient history GCSE	5				5
Entry-level qualification	3			1	4
ASDAN award				1	1

4.2 Teachers' views of the GCSE (9–1) specification

While teachers are obviously now much more familiar with the nature of the new GCSEs, they remain very concerned about the suitability of the GCSE specifications for many young people – particularly those with low levels of literacy and those with low levels of prior attainment. As Figure 10 shows, 90% of teachers disagree with the claim that the current specifications are appropriate for those with low levels of literacy and 70% disagree with the suggestion that they are appropriate for those with low prior attainment.

⁷ The only state-maintained non-selective school to offer the IGCSE qualification was on the Isle of Man, rather than in England. One independent school reported offering both GCSE and IGCSE in history.

Figure 10: Teachers' responses to the GCSE (9–1) specifications (all boards)



While respondents continue to appreciate the *range* of content (i.e. the fact that the specifications include the study of history from three different periods and across different timescales), only 20% regard the *amount* of content as manageable. Thirty per cent of schools claimed that they were unable to fit the content that they had to cover into the time available. This apparent contradiction between welcoming the *range* of types of history content and criticising the amount of content that results from it was equally apparent last year. It reflects the parameters prescribed by the Department for Education – and the way in which they were interpreted by Ofqual – which effectively require five different types of study (thematic, period and depth – British and non-British – and the historic environment) to be accommodated within two or three examinations.

The survey also invited respondents to note any specific concerns that they had about particular aspects of the specification that they were following. The weight that should be accorded to these comments obviously varies, as the number of respondents taking each specification varied considerably.

AQA

Comments were received from 36 schools out of the 74 schools that reported taking the AQA specification (i.e. 49% chose to comment). The single biggest concern related to the thematic study, with comments on all the different options raising concerns about the sheer amount to be covered and the level of detail required, which was regarded either as unclear or as excessive within a study intended to focus on patterns of change over time.

Five comments were related to the historic environment, with teachers concerned about the lack of clarity about what the exam board expected, compounded by the fact that the site changes regularly and by what they regarded as the ‘ridiculous’ nature of certain questions.

Edexcel

Comments were made by 61 schools out of the 100 that reported taking the Edexcel specification. The most prominent issues related to ‘Paper 2’, which was mentioned by over half (34) of those who made a comment. Sometimes no clarification was given about which of the two distinct options within Paper 2 (the British depth study and the period study) had been chosen, but the main issues were framed in terms of the sheer amount of content, with two distinct topics bundled together, and the narrowness of some questions. Specific concerns were also raised about the style of questions – with the narrative account question in particular identified as unhelpful or even ‘misleading’ in terms of the way in which it was phrased, failing to make clear the kinds of second-order concepts that needed to be addressed. Within Paper 2, the most frequently mentioned specific units were ‘The American West, c1835–c1895’, identified by 17 schools, and ‘Elizabethan England’, mentioned by seven schools. Five teachers commented that they regarded the approaches taken to source work and/or interpretations as less historically valid than in previous specifications.

Eduqas

Two schools chose to comment on specific issues that they regarded as concerns out of the ten schools that reported using the Eduqas specification. Both comments related to the amount of detailed knowledge required for the thematic unit.

OCR

Nineteen of the 32 schools (60%) that reported taking an OCR specification chose to comment, identifying specific issues causing concern. Within the SHP specification, the period study concerned with ‘The Making of America’ and the historical environment unit (‘History Around Us’) were each mentioned by four schools – the former for the amount of content and the latter for the challenging questions or for difficulties for low-attaining students in particular.

Movement between examination boards

Despite the expressions of concern, there is very little evidence that schools are seeking to switch from one board to another, although a slightly larger number of respondents are making changes to particular units. Seven schools reported that they had already changed exam boards altogether (i.e. for future cohorts), while 14 reported that they had changed units within their chosen exam specification. As shown in Table 7, a small number also reported that they were considering making changes in terms of either changing their choice of unit or switching exam board.

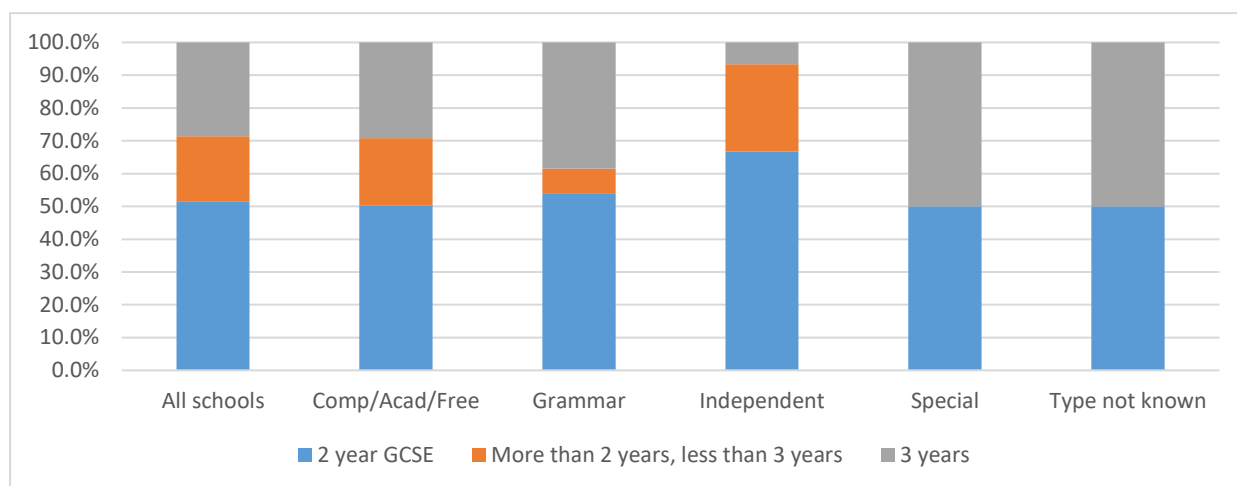
Table 7: Changes made or planned in relation to school’s choice of examination board

Board used in 2019 (total no. using this board)	AQA (74)	Edexcel (100)	Eduqas (10)	OCR (32)
Had already changed units	6	8		
Considering changing units	5	6	1	
Had already changed board	1	1	1	3
Considering changing board	8	5		5

4.3 The length of time allocated to GCSE

It is important to note that the difficulty in addressing all the content occurs in a context, as shown in Figure 11, in which 30% of schools allocate a full three years to teaching GCSE (9–1) history and a further 20% allocate some part of their Year 9 curriculum time to teaching the GCSE specification.

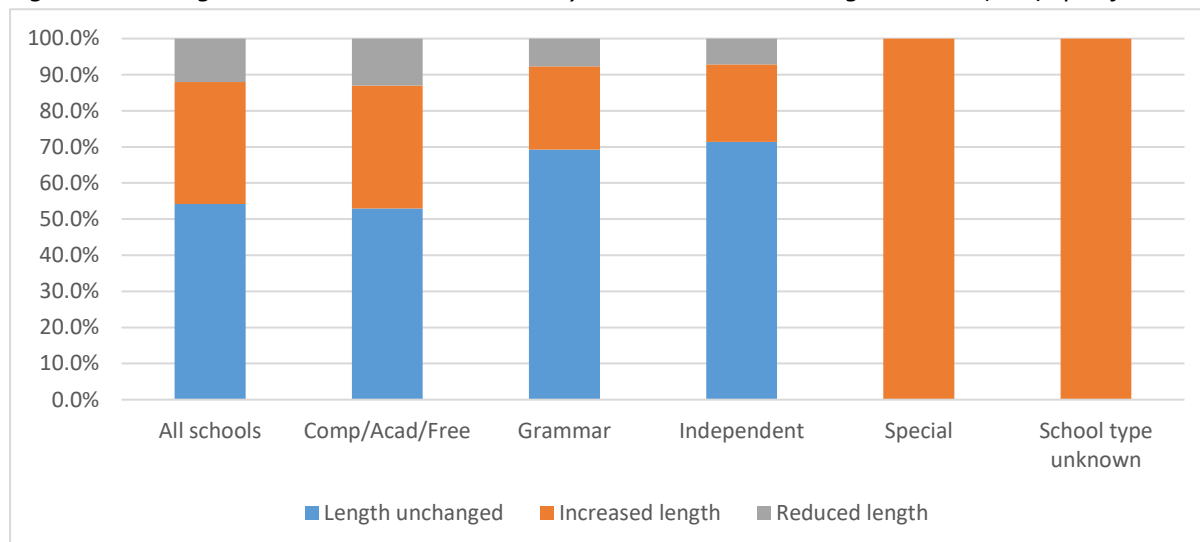
Figure 11: Length of time allocated to GCSE history by schools teaching the 9–1 GCSE specifications



The figures here relating to time allocation are different from those obtained when we asked respondents about the time allocated to their Key Stage 3 curriculum – when only 13% of schools reported that their Key Stage 3 curriculum was between two and three years in length. The discrepancy reflects the fact that this question about the length of the GCSE curriculum was answered by a slightly different sub-set of respondents – those schools that reported teaching Key Stage 4, as opposed to those that reported teaching students in the Key Stage 3 age range. (Some respondents teach in middle schools or in preparatory schools in the independent sector, and some respondents did not complete all sections of the survey.)

While a small majority of schools (54%) report that they have left the length of their GCSE courses unchanged in the past three years, the data presented in Figure 12 reveals that there have been quite a lot of adjustments made in recent years, as schools have responded to the demands of the 9–1 specifications. The general trend has been to increase the length of time allocated to GCSE, with 34% of schools reporting that they have lengthened the course and only 12% reporting a reduction. This obviously means that during this three-year period, a third of schools have reduced the time available for all students to complete their Key Stage 3 curriculum.

Figure 12: Changes in time allocated to GCSE by those schools teaching the GCSE (9–1) specifications



4.4 The lessons that teachers have drawn from their experience of the GCSE 9–1 specifications

The responses given by teachers when we asked explicitly about the lessons they had taken from two years' experience of the new GCSE specifications reveal that the sense of pressure – on both teachers and students – that was evident in so many responses last year continues to be felt. As in 2018, it is also clear that different departments are reacting in rather different ways to the same set of pressures, as the two following comments illustrate:

Keep lower ability out of the classroom. Testing, constant repetition of technique. Pace is essential.

[Teacher 184, comprehensive school/academy/free, AQA specification]

I have found it is important to make sure my students buy in to their lessons. Conveying the rationale for what they are learning and ensuring we have engaging stimulus material has had a positive impact on both engagement and retention.

[Teacher 90, comprehensive school/academy/free, Eduqas specification]

The predominant impression is that of a very dense curriculum, in which detailed knowledge is highly prized and has to be secured by regular retrieval practice (usually in the form of short factual-knowledge questions). This particular approach was identified in 30 individual comments, while several others included the phrase 'interleaving', which implies returning regularly to topics (even if that return does not necessarily include the kind of low-stakes testing to which many explicitly refer).

You have to test them little and often, particularly on chronology and facts.

[Teacher 174, comprehensive school/academy/free, Edexcel specification]

Emphasise the scale of the knowledge students need to acquire, revisit this knowledge regularly and assess it regularly through low-stakes testing.

[Teacher 9, comprehensive school/academy/free, Edexcel specification]

Test, test, test. Practise, practise, practise.

[Teacher 247, comprehensive school/academy/free, Edexcel specification]

To teach quickly and focus on memory recall techniques.

[Teacher 212, comprehensive school/academy/free, Edexcel specification]

Need for interleaving content testing over two years.

[Teacher 100, comprehensive school/academy/free, Edexcel specification]

In some cases, respondents have concluded that recall of substantive knowledge is the most important aspect on which to focus, suggesting that this will yield the best returns for many students.

The importance of facts rather than historical skills. It has become clear that a student who can repeat facts in the correct order will stand a very good chance of a 4 or 5. Hence we are now focusing on drilling students with facts to get them across the line.

[Teacher 11, comprehensive school/academy/free, AQA specification]

Others, however, see the regular emphasis on recall as underpinning the historical thinking that they are seeking to develop:

Regular review (one lesson/fortnight content or exam question review). Weekly review through homework. Provide information and get them thinking, explaining, making judgements, prioritising, etc. Start with familiar topics and build from there.

[Teacher 166, comprehensive school/academy/free, Edexcel specification]

Knowledge is key, so regular recall tests for factual details are vital to ensure that this is embedded, so that students can free up space to do the thinking for the more challenging judgement questions. Question stems that appear multiple times (e.g. 12-mark 'explain why') were generally answered better than the ones that students were less familiar with, so practice of a range of question styles is important.

[Teacher 201, comprehensive school/academy/free, Edexcel specification]

In terms of the content, respondents refer both to the sheer amount of what needs to be covered (which is mentioned in 24 comments) and also to the level of detail that students are required to retain in relation to each element.

Constant retrieval practice essential. Less able learners and those with deprived background just find the amount of content and detail required unmanageable. This is why the achievements of the least able have shrunk by 18% in recent government reports.

[Teacher 123, comprehensive school/academy/free, AQA specification]

It is the need for students to master this detail that gives rise to calls for a fast-paced curriculum to ensure that all the material can be covered – a point noted in 15 different comments, in addition to those advocating that GCSE courses simply need to start earlier to enable them to fit everything in.

Speed – have to keep pace when teaching. Content, content and more content. Quizzes/checks/retrievals.

[Teacher 165, comprehensive school/academy/free, AQA specification]

You haven't got time to develop their understanding; you need to push through the amount of content and hope the majority stick with you. You have to teach some of the content in Year 9 – regardless of their option choices – or you can't get through it all.

[Teacher 146, comprehensive school/academy/free, Edexcel specification]

Alongside the emphasis on retention and recall of substantive knowledge is a similarly pronounced stress on the need for students to understand the specific demands of different kinds of examination questions – an understanding to be reached through regular practice. While there is some variation in the way in which survey respondents express this need for students to understand exactly what is expected of them, the clear implication in most of these responses is that teachers have to ‘teach to the test’: using practice questions as the main means of ensuring that students know exactly how they are expected to respond to the specific demands of particular papers.

That frequent exam practice is key and to teach the knowledge very explicitly with frequent low-stakes testing. It is still necessary to 'drill' students in exam skills too.

[Teacher 167, comprehensive school/academy/free, AQA specification]

Sadly, I have learned that it is even more vital than before to teach to the test, as a) the contrived style of question and answer is further removed from ordinary meaning... and b) there is so much content with many difficulties for understanding to get through, squeezing creativity or purposeful digression.

[Teacher 114, comprehensive school/academy/free, Edexcel specification]

Several of the respondents refer not just to following the exam specification as closely as possible, but also to the importance of learning specific vocabulary identified as essential by the exam board:

Focus on the minutiae of the specification.

[Teacher 141, comprehensive school/academy/free, AQA specification]

Don't leave out the small details. Anything could be examined.

[Teacher 44, comprehensive school/academy/free, AQA specification]

Focus closely on the terminology in the specification – a few words tripped some students up this year.

[Teacher 141, grammar, Edexcel specification]

While the focus on content recall and the practice of specific question types are undoubtedly the two most common responses, not all schools have responded to the sense of pressure in the same way. Some have taken a very different stance, arguing that the only feasible option in the face of such detailed requirements is to ‘streamline’ the course – identifying what really matters and not trying to cram in every detail. Those adopting this approach highlight the need for lower attainers in particular to develop a much stronger sense of the ‘big picture’ – worrying less about the minutiae and focusing much more on the ‘story’ or line of development.

Manage the amount of content some students are asked to master – focus on their understanding of the overall stories instead.

[Teacher 140, comprehensive school/academy/free, Edexcel specification]

Plan for key learning points – don't try to cover everything. Link ideas to enquiry questions to develop students' ability to think for themselves. Focus on assessment opportunities.

[Teacher 124, comprehensive school/academy/free, AQA specification]

Although this is a minority view, there is a strong message from some respondents that success can be achieved by holding fast to a clear vision of what counts as 'good history', teaching with respect to the subject discipline and worrying less about detailed content specifications:

Teach good history skills, don't teach to the question type. Every year so far the mark schemes have changed.

[Teacher 217, comprehensive school/academy/free, OCR specification]

Some, however, are deeply frustrated by the nature of the questions asked in the examinations, condemning them for failing to demand or to reward any real historical thinking. While they claim that they would like to be able to go on teaching good history, many are pessimistic about the chances of such an approach actually being validated by the exam outcomes. They declare that the approach that they feel compelled to adopt actually demeans the discipline.

The mammoth amount of content, and removal of coursework, is too much to expect of a student who has seven other subjects (and many more exams to revise for). It is not sustainable and requires the Taylorist efficiency, which demeans not only the classroom experience but the discipline as a whole.

[Teacher74, comprehensive school/academy/free, OCR specification]

Students have to learn a rigid framework for answering questions in order to achieve the marks. This does not build skill in writing historically, set them up for progression to A-level, or foster a love of history.

[Teacher 82, grammar, AQA specification]

Cutting across the competing views is a common concern about the affective pressures that the GCSE curriculum imposes. Although the teachers recognise that, overall, results are essentially consistent over time (i.e. the proportion of students securing particular grades is roughly in line with the rates before the new qualification was introduced), they remain deeply concerned about the emotional pressures on students who experience repeated low marks and quickly come to feel that they can never succeed. For many of these teachers, the top priority is to try to sustain students' self-confidence – trying to build their resilience so that the low marks they consistently receive (on mock exams and other practice tasks) do not deter them.

Essential to pare down the content for lower ability students. Essential to prepare students that 'History is not a subject in which you can achieve top marks on questions' to prevent demoralisation throughout the course.

[Teacher 141, comprehensive school/academy/free, AQA specification]

The importance of constant consolidation and keeping students' sense of self-belief high in the face of, what they feel, is overwhelming content.

[Teacher 73, comprehensive school/academy/free, Edexcel specification]

Low prior attainment students must be encouraged to persevere, as they can do OK if they attempt the questions.

[Teacher 126, comprehensive school/academy/free, OCR specification]

4.5 The pathway systems at GCSE and the extent to which students can choose history

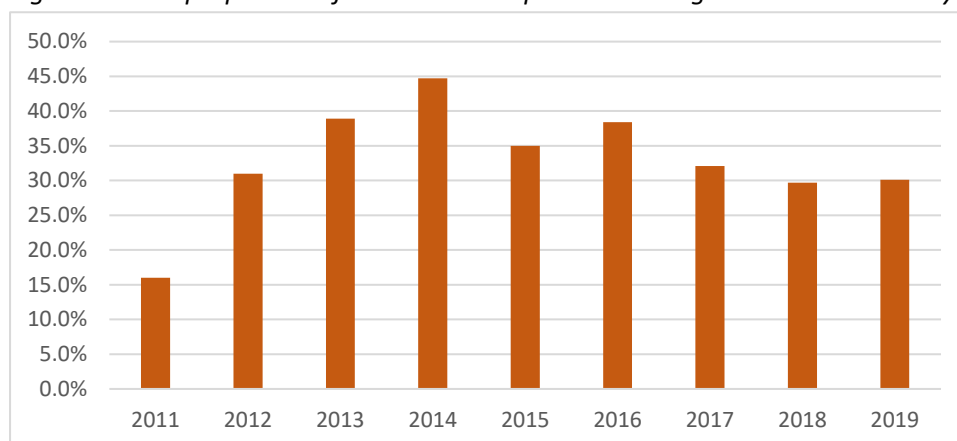
The pattern of option systems, as shown in Table 8, is very similar to that found among respondents in previous years – with around 40% of schools requiring that *all* students take at least one of the two EBacc humanities subjects (i.e. history or geography) and generally also allowing students to take both if they wish. Another 10% of schools make this a requirement for *some* students. Just under half of schools claim that they seek to give students an entirely free choice about whether or not they study history at GCSE.

Table 8: The kinds of choice related to history at GCSE that survey respondents over the past six years have reported are given to students across all types of school

	A requirement that <u>all</u> students must take						A requirement that <u>some</u> students must take						A completely free choice about history		Total
	History		History or geography		History &/or geography		History		History or geography		History &/or geography				
2019	4	1.7%	11	4.8%	86	37.2%	2	0.9%	2	0.9%	19	8.2%	107	46.3%	231
2018	5	2.0%	5	2.0%	92	37.1%	5	2.0%	2	1.2%	32	12.5%	107	42.7%	248
2017	5	1.9%	26	10.0%	85	32.6%	0	0	1	0.4%	33	12.6%	111	42.5%	261
2016	3	1.0%	16	5.6%	84	29.2%	3	1.0%	5	1.7%	34	11.8%	141	49.0%	288
2015	8	2.1%	10	2.7%	83	22.3%	3	0.8%	5	1.3%	50	13.4%	214	57.4%	373
2014	0	0	7	2.6%	44	16.5%	7	2.6%	8	3.0%	46	17.3%	154	57.9%	266

When asked whether students were given a free choice of studying GCSE or whether there were certain grounds on which schools steered particular students away from GCSE history, almost 70% of schools reported that they allowed students who wished to take the subject to do so. This means that around 30% of all schools actively prevent or discourage certain students from taking history. As shown in Figure 13, this proportion is entirely consistent with what has been reported in the past two years, which suggests that this figure has essentially stabilised.

Figure 13: The proportion of schools that reported steering some students away from GCSE history



There are, however, some differences evident in comparison with previous years in terms of the range of reasons for steering students away from history. As Table 9 shows, a slightly lower proportion of schools are reporting that students are placed on a pathway in which history does not feature as an option (almost 6%, compared with around 10% in previous years). The proportion that are steered away on the grounds that their levels of literacy are too low for history to be an accessible qualification is also considerably lower than last year (at 10% rather than 19%) – but this proportion has fluctuated more obviously in previous years. While these particular grounds are not cited by as many schools as in previous years, the lower proportion reporting this particular factor as a reason for discouraging students has not led to any *overall* reduction in the proportion of schools steering certain students away from the subject.

Table 9: The grounds on which students are steered away from history, as reported over the previous four years

Grounds on which students were steered away from history	Percentage of schools that reported steering students away from history on these grounds			
	2016	2017	2018	2019
Current attainment too low for it to be regarded as worthwhile	16.9%	15.1%	11.4%	7.8%
EAL students thought likely to struggle with written English	6.3%	10.4%	10.2%	4.5%
Low level of literacy	22.9%	9.7%	18.7%	10.0%
Not included in the options for those on 'vocational' pathways	11.3%	8.9%	9.8%	5.9%
Predicted low grade at GCSE	5.6%	5.0%	3.3%	4.5%

4.6 The influence of the EBacc and Progress 8 accountability measures

Since the introduction of the EBacc and Progress 8 accountability measures, the survey has monitored history teachers' awareness of these measures and their perceptions of the relative influence that they exert on their schools' decisions about GCSE options. In the past, the introduction of the EBacc measure drove an increase in the proportion of students that took GCSE history (from around 30% to 40% of the cohort), but the importance of securing a pass at C grade tended to mean that students were only encouraged (permitted in some cases) to take history if they were thought likely to secure a pass at a grade C or above. The Progress 8 measure was intended in part to combat a narrow focus on the C/D borderline and acknowledge students' *progress* – regardless of whether this was at the higher levels or lower levels of the GCSE grade range.

As Tables 10 and 11 reveal, while most state-funded schools, particularly the non-selective ones, regard both measures as having a relatively high level of importance, the fact that more schools report Progress 8 as having a 'very high' priority suggest that there is now greater awareness that progress in history *at all levels* will be recognised and acknowledged. However, as noted previously, this has *not* led to a further reduction in the proportion of schools that report steering some students away from taking history because they regard the GCSE as inappropriate for them. Overall, a higher proportion of non-selective state-funded schools (84%) regard EBacc as 'quite' or 'very' important than the proportion (72%) that regard Progress 8 in the same way.

Table 10: The priority that respondents report is accorded to the EBacc accountability measure within their school's decision-making

Priority accorded to Ebacc	All schools	Comp/acad/free	Grammar	Independent	Special
No importance	16.4%	15.7%	7.1%	50.0%	100.0%
Some importance	4.5%	0.0%	28.6%	50.0%	0.0%
Quite important	53.7%	57.4%	42.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Very high priority	25.4%	27.0%	21.4%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 11: The priority that respondents report is accorded to the Progress 8 accountability measure within their school's decision-making

Priority accorded to Progress 8 measure	All schools	Comp/acad/free	Grammar	Independent	Special	Type unknown
No importance	6.9%	5.5%	7.7%	40.0%	50.0%	0.0%
Some importance	24.1%	22.7%	30.8%	60.0%	50.0%	0.0%
Quite important	26.1%	26.5%	38.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Very high priority	42.9%	45.3%	23.1%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

5. A-level history

5.1 The proportion of students within Years 12 and 13 taking A-level history

National statistics for GCE exam entries published by the Joint Council for Qualifications each year provide clear evidence of the impact on the uptake of history of the A-level reforms first implemented from September 2015.⁸ The reinstatement of linear A-levels (with exams taken at the end of two years) and the severance of the link between AS and A-level (so that AS results no longer contribute to students' final A-level result) has been followed by a decline in the number of students entered for AS-level history – from 74,329 in 2015 to 9,782 in 2019 (a very small increase on the figure of 9,282 in 2018). This essentially reflects the number of schools that no longer routinely enter students for AS-level. In terms of A-level entries, the picture is more mixed, with some fluctuation, so the number of entries in 2019 was actually higher (44,117) than in 2018 – although clearly lower than the 50,365 entries in 2015. Analysis by FFT Education Datalab of data provided by JCQ reveals that history entries have decreased *across the UK* over the last five years.⁹ The -7.9% change in history needs to be seen in relation to the change of -5.8% in all A-level entries over the last five years. Over the same period, the 18-year-old population has changed by approximately -7.7%.

Table 12: The percentage of respondents with different proportions of their Year 12 cohort studying history – a comparison of survey results for summer 2015 with those of 2017, 2018 and 2019

Percentage of cohort studying history	All types of school	Comprehensive, academy and free schools	Grammar	Independent	Sixth-form colleges
<10% 2019	28.3%	31.7%	8.3%	21.4%	50.0%
<10% 2018	22.9%	27.8%	0.0%	11.8%	33.3%
<10% 2017	24.2%	31.0%	17.6%	10.1%	20.0%
<10% 2015	22.6%	25.3%	11.8%	14.5%	40.0%
11–20% 2019	42.8%	41.6%	33.3%	50.0%	50.0%
11-20% 2018	47.0%	50.4%	27.3%	41.2%	50.0%
11-20% 2017	40.9%	43.7%	23.5%	40.5%	40.0%
11-20% 2015	34.0%	36.8%	11.8%	29.1%	50.0%
21–30% 2019	21.4%	20.8%	50.0%	14.3%	0.0%
21-30% 2018	19.9%	14.8%	54.5%	26.5%	16.7%
21-30% 2017	24.2%	17.5%	41.2%	37.8%	40.0%
21-30% 2015	24.5%	23.15	41.2%	27.3%	10%
31–40% 2019	5.5%	5.9%	0/0%	7.1%	0.0%
31-40% 2018	8.4%	6.1%	9.1%	17.6%	0%
31-40% 2017	8.6%	7.9%	17.6%	8.1%	0%
31-40% 2015	14.3%	12.1%	23.3%	21.8%	0%
> 40% 2019	2.1%	0.0%	8.3%	7.1%	0.0%
> 40% 2018	1.8%	0.9%	9.1%	0.0%	0%
> 40% 2017	2.2%	2.4%	0%	2.7%	0%
> 40% 2015	2.3%	2.2%	11.8%	7.3%	0%

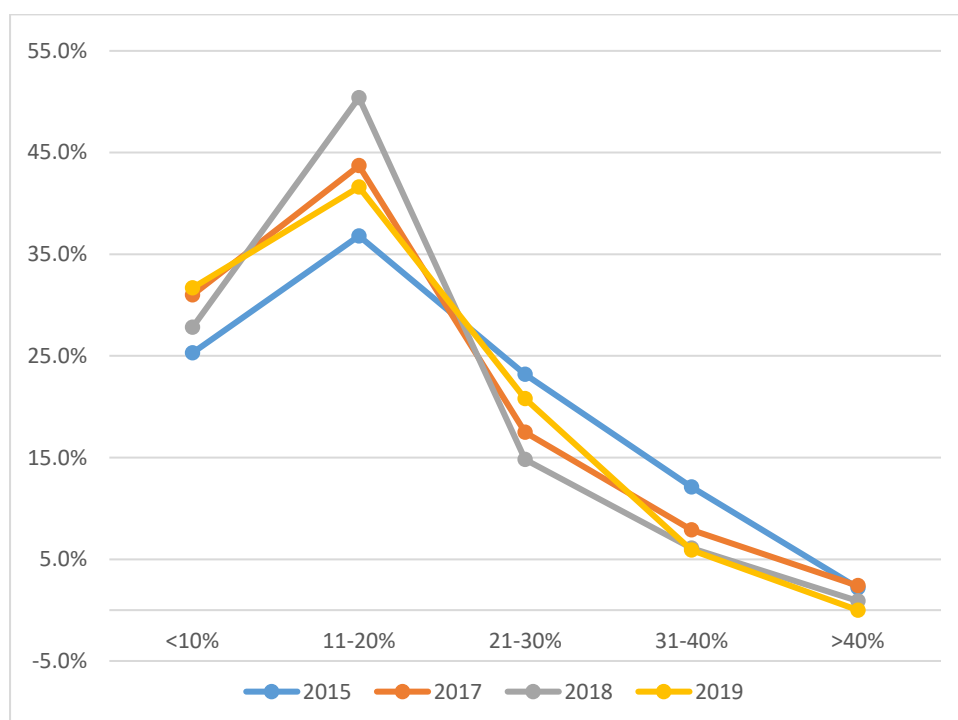
⁸ www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results/a-levels/2019/main-results-tables/a-level-and-as-results-summer-2019

⁹ <https://results.ftteducationdatalab.org.uk/a-level/history.php?v=20190822.2>

Our own data, presented in Table 12 show that the number of schools overall with cohorts that represent less than 10% of the sixth-form population has increased to over 28% from around 23% in 2018. There are, however, more comprehensive, academy and free schools reporting cohorts of between 21% and 30% of the sixth-form population, but both the grammar school and independent sectors report declining numbers of schools with this kind of cohort size. Overall, there is a mixed picture of recruitment to A-level history.

The pattern of change over time, as it has affected the comprehensive, academies and free school respondents, is shown in Figure 14. The figure reveals that fewer schools tend to have large proportions of students studying A-level history. Although it is unclear why this has happened, it would seem reasonable to presume that it is the result of the re-introduction of a linear model of assessment. Previously, schools would encourage students to start with, typically, four AS courses, with a view to ‘dropping’ one following AS exams. Under this system it would seem that more students took history and then chose to continue their studies. Today, students more typically embark on three A-level courses, which reduces the number of subjects that they are choosing to study.

Figure 14: The percentage of respondents from comprehensives, academies and free schools with different proportions of their Year 12 cohort studying history – a comparison of the survey results for the summer of 2015 with those of 2017, 2018 and 2019



Figures 15 and 16 allow comparisons to be made between different types of school in terms of the proportion of the cohort that were studying history in Years 12 and 13 during the academic year 2018–19.

Figure 15: The percentage of the Year 12 cohort reported by schools in 2019 to be studying history in Year 12

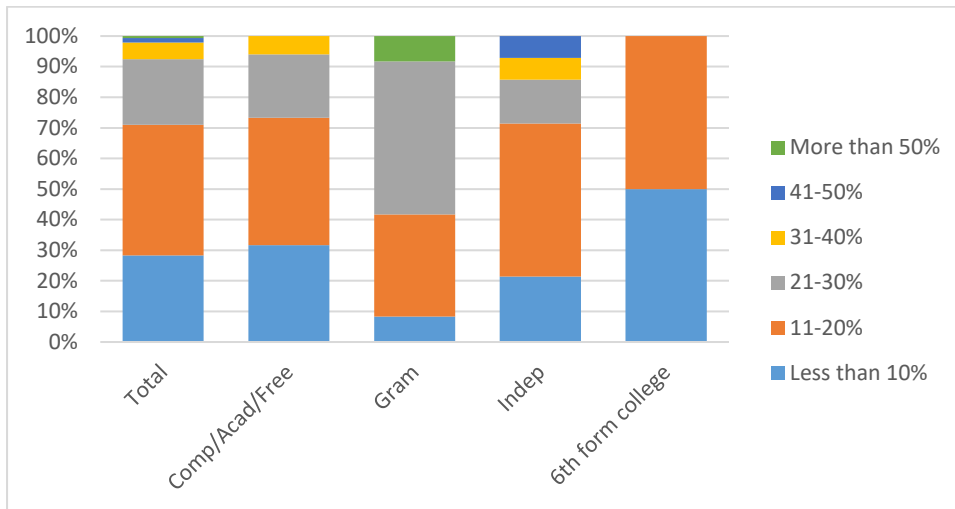
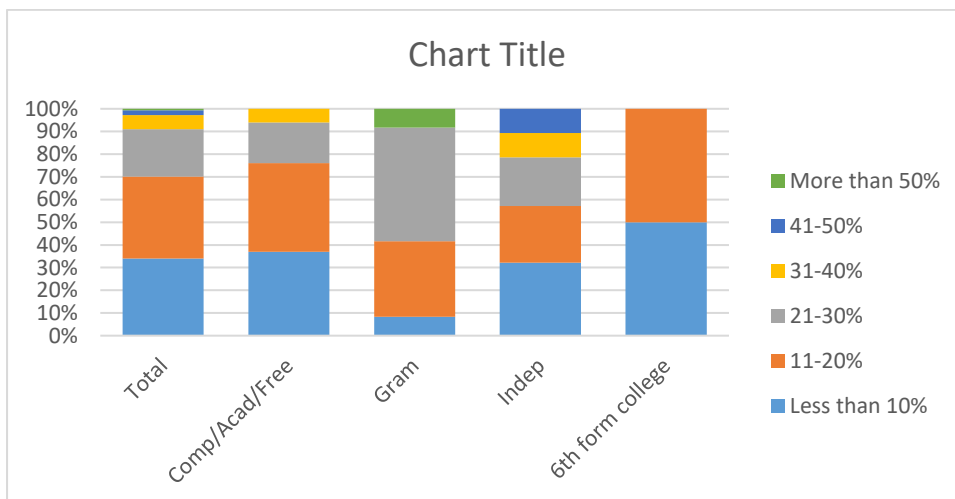


Figure 16: The percentage of the Year 13 cohort reported by schools in 2019 to be studying history



As these figures reveal, the independent sector and selective schools within the state sector tend to have a larger proportion of post-16 students studying history. This pattern mirrors the findings from the 2018 survey, although, as previously mentioned, fewer grammar schools and fewer independent schools than in 2018 report having large proportions of students studying history. In 2018, for example, over 18% of grammar schools reported that more than 30% of their sixth-form cohort were studying history; but in 2019, that figure that was true for just over 8% of grammar school respondents. For independent schools, the respective figures are around 20% and 14%.

5.2 Time allocation for A-level history

This year, data about time allocation was collected in a slightly different format to that used previously, which calls for caution about conclusions drawn from comparisons with previous years. In 2018, the figures indicated that around 61% of schools in total devoted five or more hours in a week to teaching history to Year 12 students. The figures for 2019, shown in Figure 17 and Table 13, seem

significantly lower, with around 47% of schools reporting a time allocation of five or more hours. Independent schools provide the most time for teaching history, with around 54% of such respondents offering five or more hours of history teaching a week, followed by comprehensive, academy and free schools, of which around 46% provide this amount of teaching. Grammar schools involved in this year’s survey were more likely to report providing four to five hours of subject teaching. The reasons for this reduction in hours are not entirely clear, but information about budget cuts presented in Section 7 suggests that financial constraints are having an impact on the amount of teaching provided.

Figure 17: Time allocation for Year 12 A-level history teaching in 2019

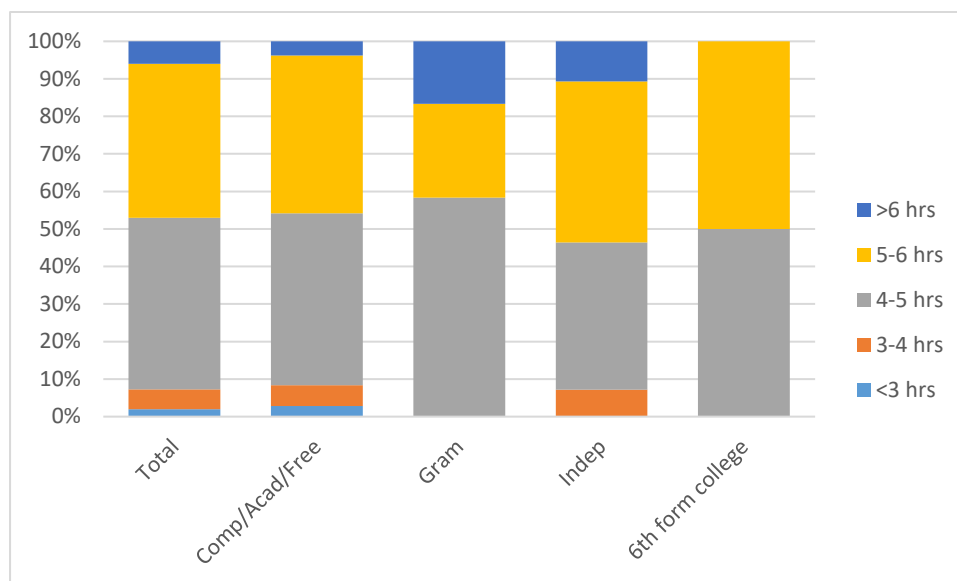


Table 13: Time allocation in hours for students in Year 12 taking history in 2018

Hours allocated	0	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
All schools	0.6%	1.8%	6.0%	30.5%	44.3%	7.8%	3.6%	1.2%	1.8%	2.4%
Comp/Acad/Free	0.9%	2.6%	6.8%	34.2%	41.0%	5.1%	3.4%	0.9%	2.6%	2.6%
Grammar	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%	63.6%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Independent	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%	18.2%	48.5%	18.2%	6.1%	3.0%	0.0%	3.0%
Sixth form	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

5.3 Concerns expressed about particular units

Respondents were given the opportunity to highlight any specific concerns about teaching any of the A-level units. In total, 54 teachers identified particular issues. The most common concern related to the quality and consistency of marking, which was often linked to non-exam assessments. Twenty-three teachers commented on this. The following comments highlight the type of concerns raised:

Coursework (NEA) – I have been teaching this my full career. With the change of A-level I went on a coursework training course. [I have] done online training each year for marking the coursework and been lead moderator for the three schools in the consortium for three years. Never before had an issue with our marking, it's always been praised and is VERY thorough (done separately in each school and then a full moderation process between the schools) but this year ALL students were moderated down and the reasons given were not

even relevant to our marking (e.g. we were told we shouldn't give students a top level on AO3 without them including limitations, yet I didn't give any students a top level on AO3 and specifically gave their lack of limitations as the reason for this). Additionally, they criticised our questions despite these being the same questions we've previously used on the same course and having to complete a question proposal form for each student and AQA themselves signing this off. It seems like a massive issue that they themselves have signed off our questions but then criticised them; surely if there was an issue this should have been noted at that time, not signed off like it was acceptable. We will be bringing this up with the exam board.

[Teacher 122, comprehensive/academy/free, AQA specification]

OCR Coursework moderation seems very subjective and inconsistent. In 2018, received a glowing report. Marked down in 2019, with same questions, teachers and moderators. Very disappointed.

[Teacher 101, comprehensive/academy/free, OCR specification]

We have ongoing concerns about the coursework unit Y100. We think our students are meeting the set criteria, but moderators have disagreed.

[Teacher 44, comprehensive/academy/free, OCR specification]

The next most common concern, raised by 12 teachers, was about the amount of detailed knowledge that students were expected to deal with. Some teachers felt that the weighting of the exams did not reflect the amount of material that students were having to work with, while others were concerned that the exam questions focused on very narrow aspects of a topic, so did not allow students to work with their full range of knowledge:

OCR 15% unit on Russia is a huge topic and the exam board have a tendency to ask very 'niche' questions. I understand a desire to check that students have learnt it all, but some questions really are quite restricted. Not surprisingly it was the lowest scoring paper nationally this year.

[Teacher 239, comprehensive/academy/free, OCR specification]

Paper 2 – paper consistently has a low grade boundary because it is so poor at testing the knowledge pupils have. It seems to home in on obscure elements which have one paragraph designated to it – the key historical issues of debate that historians tend to write about are ignored.

[Teacher 175, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel specification]

We have just deliberately changed our topics starting this September 2019 because of this. We were teaching the Breadth Study – USA: The Making of a Superpower 1865–1975 but have swapped to Russia 1865–1965 instead. This is because the USA topic is absolutely vast, there is little coherent narrative and the questions seem to be completely 'off the wall' with hundreds of different varieties. Russia has a much easier narrative and fewer question possibilities as a result. I remain unconvinced that the examination really tests their abilities. The nature of the Breadth Study in AQA is that they are meant to cover 100 years and notice large patterns, but the sources questions require incredible in-depth knowledge. This simply doesn't work. The three-paper system might make more sense from other exam boards, but I don't know how we would cover the content and prepare them for three separate exam papers too!

[Teacher 113, independent, AQA specification]

These two issues in particular reflect similar concerns to those raised in previous surveys.

Other issues highlighted by teachers were the inauthentic nature of some aspects of the courses, such as the way in which historical interpretations and source work are expected to be taught and examined, and the challenging nature of the subject (compared to other A-level subjects), with some periods, such as the Angevins and Tudors, appearing to be topics where students tended to score less well in the examinations.

6. School history and diversity

For a number of years, there has been a growing concern about the extent to which the school history curriculum offers a predominantly ‘white’, Anglo-centric view of the past. This was most recently highlighted by the Royal Historical Society’s (RHS) 2018 *Race, Ethnicity and Equality Report*, which drew attention to both the narrowness of the school curriculum and the under-representation of BAME students studying history.

Respondents to the survey were asked to identify the extent to which the student take-up of GCSE and A-level history reflected the ethnic diversity or heritage of the school. As can be seen in Figures 18 and 19, most schools report a close match between the proportion of students from different backgrounds who opt to study history and the proportion of students from such backgrounds within their school population. Overall, only around one-fifth of respondents suggest that students from certain ethnic backgrounds are either somewhat or significantly under-represented or do not tend to take history at GCSE. The figure is around a third at A-level. In both cases, independent schools are more likely to report that students from certain backgrounds are under-represented. The reasons for this are not evident from the survey, but other research would suggest that the choice of curriculum topics may be a factor.

Figure 18: The extent to which respondents felt that the uptake of history in their school reflects the ethnic background or heritage of the school population at GCSE

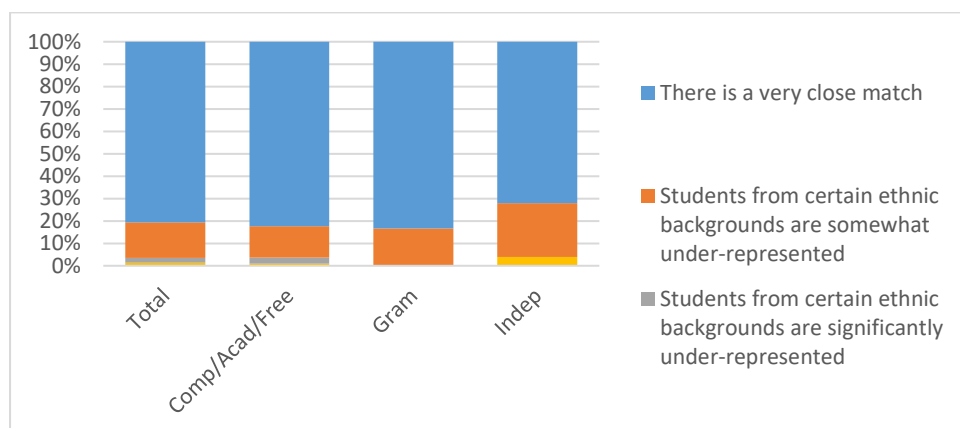
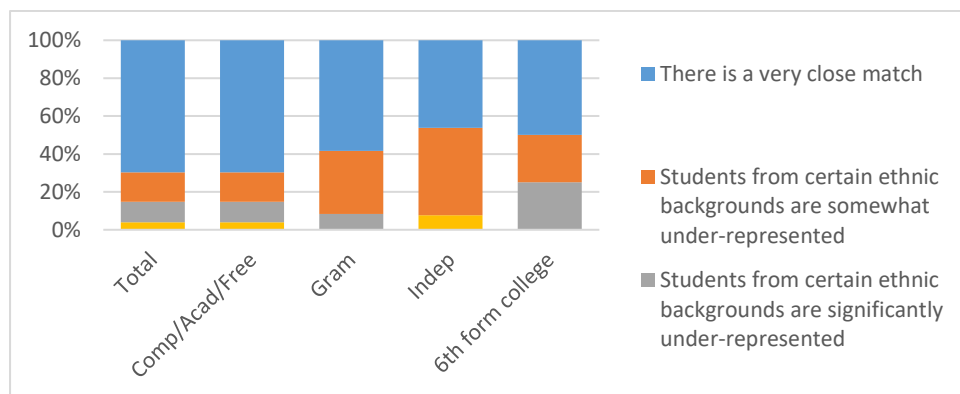


Figure 19: The extent to which respondents felt that the uptake of history in their school reflects the ethnic background or heritage of the school population at A-level



To see how schools have been reacting to issues associated with the representativeness of their curriculum, respondents were asked whether their department had made any recent changes to the curriculum that might help to address the kinds of concern raised by the RHS report.

Figure 20 shows that while most schools have not made changes to the curriculum in response to the kinds of concern raised by the RHS report, around one-third have. Figure 21 presents responses to a broader question about any changes made to include more diverse representation of people in the past or to engage a wider pool of students. It reveals a similar pattern, indicating that about one-third of schools claim to have made some change to their curriculum in an attempt to include a more diverse range of people from the past, with comprehensive, academy and free schools collectively showing more intent than others in introducing such changes.

Figure 20: Have you made any specific changes to your curriculum (at any key stage) in the past two years that might help to address the concerns raised by the RHS?

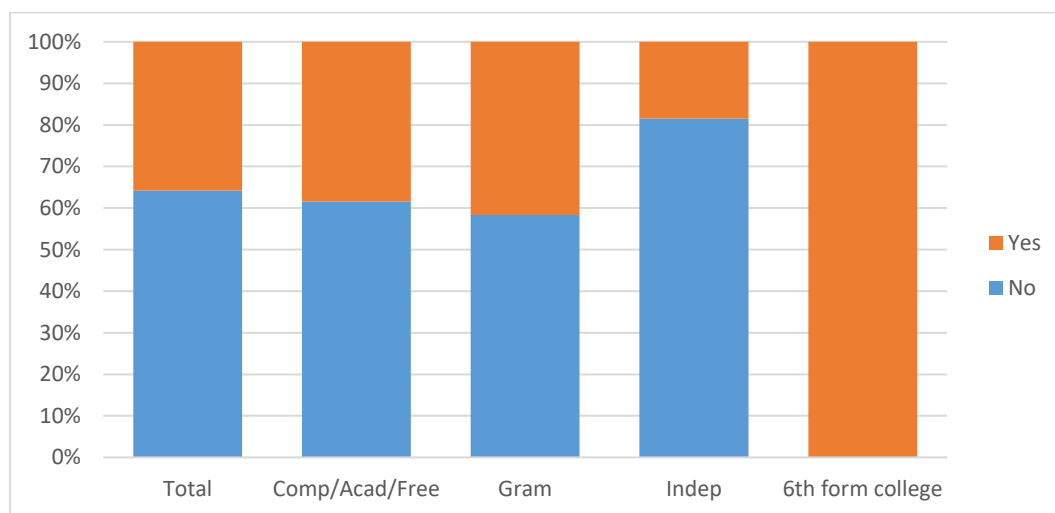
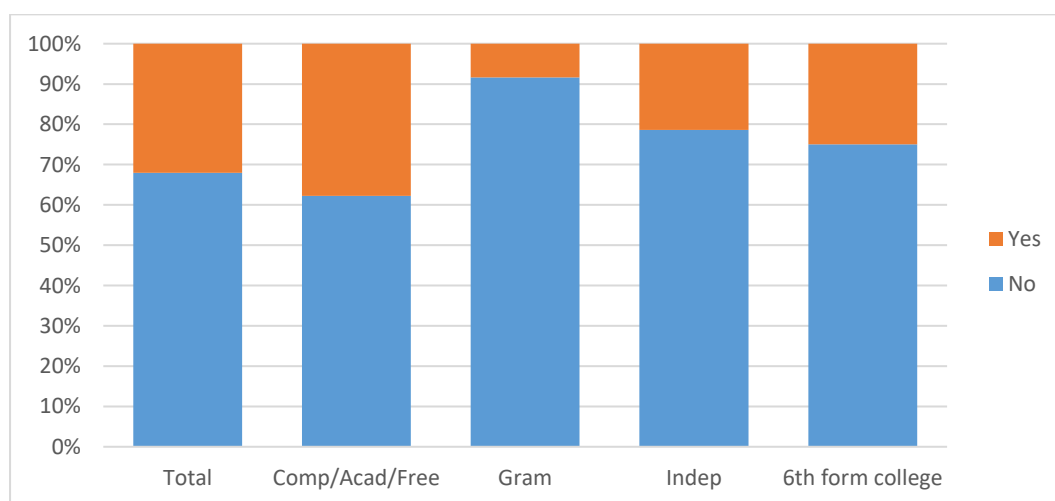


Figure 21: Have you made any other specific changes to your history curriculum (at any key stage) to include a more diverse representation of people in the past or to engage a wider pool of students?



When asked to identify which groups tend to be under-represented in terms of history take-up, teachers identified Chinese, Asian, Black and Roma students as being less likely to take history. Few gave any reasons for this but those that did mentioned that Chinese and Asian students were more

likely to take STEM subjects at A-level. Where schools claimed to have been successful in attracting large numbers of minority ethnic students, teachers were asked to suggest what they thought were the reasons for this success. Fifteen relevant responses were given to this question, which tended to focus on one of three elements: the quality of teaching, which resulted in students securing high grades; making history relevant to the lives of students; and selection of topics that reflected a more inclusive curriculum.

Where teachers claimed to have made changes to the curriculum, we asked about the nature of those changes. Fifty-five teachers responded and the majority of answers highlighted changes to topics included in the curriculum:

Although we have not necessarily included diversity for the sake of diversity in our Key Stage 3 curriculum, we have tried to be more conscious of 'good history' being that which gives voice to many. In that spirit we have tried to include a great diversity of 'voices' in our existing curriculum, as well as trying to make use of resources such as 'Meanwhile Elsewhere' to pursue this further.

[Teacher 10, comprehensive/academy/free]

I have redesigned the whole Key Stage 3 curriculum so that it is much more diverse and representative of gender, race, sexuality and disability; this has been the focus of the curriculum redesign. For example, including units on women and power in medieval England; Black Tudors; British Empire's impact on Britain.

[Teacher 66, comprehensive/academy/free]

Especially at Key Stage 3 we are consciously creating enquiries around topics that go beyond British history. This has focused for now on Islamic Empires, India prior to the British Empire, and a topic on Mansa Musa – we think that this has helped many of our students feel more positive about the curriculum because it is more representative.

[Teacher 88, comprehensive/academy/free]

We have made changes to our Key Stage 3 curriculum to include more on immigration, women, the black Tudors. We are attempting to make our curriculum at Key Stage 3 more global and European.

[Teacher 220, independent]

We have consciously tried to consider what life was like for ordinary people in the past – during the reigns of the monarchs studied. We have also tried to consider missing voices – of the poor and women.

[Teacher 45, comprehensive/academy/free]

We always try to include a focus on women in each unit (especially as a girls' school from Years 7–11). We plan this year to try to incorporate some activities looking at other groups in society (e.g. those with disabilities, LGBT).

[Teacher 212, grammar]

As can be seen, there are a range of changes that are possible, and a number of teachers are taking opportunities to reconsider the nature of their history curriculum. The departments that were making changes tended to focus on the scope available to them at Key Stage 3, although some of the references to teaching about migration and/or the British Empire applied to their choice of GCSE units

and one school pointed to their decision to teach an A-level unit on the Middle East. Inclusion of Africa was mentioned most frequently – usually to ensure that the continent did not simply feature in relation to the transatlantic slave trade – but specific mention was also made of India and China. As the reference to ‘Black Tudors’ illustrates, several schools were also making a deliberate effort to teach Black British history and/or to ensure that their teaching of the First and Second World Wars properly acknowledged the diversity of the forces involved and their global reach.

The theme of doing justice to women’s experience was as prominent as concerns about ethnic diversity. A few departments, as illustrated in the comments above, made specific reference to inclusion of LGBT experience in the past. Occasionally it was clear that history departments were consulting their students and/or responding to concerns that they had raised:

Feedback from students indicated that they did not want our celebration of Black History Month to revolve around negative aspects of slavery, celebration of the achievements of a small group of individuals in the face of discrimination, etc. and felt our curriculum was similarly limited. Discussion in the media regarding the need for explorations of empire and imperialism also coloured curriculum planning within the department. As a result, we have looked for opportunities to study pre- and post-colonial Africa, India and the Americas, as well as the experience of BME communities in modern British history.

[Teacher 119, comprehensive/academy/free]

The students’ LGBT society have asked for more representation in the curriculum. This will be considered in the following school year.

[Teacher 119, comprehensive/academy/free]

7. Teachers' concerns

7.1 The nature of teachers' concerns

The data reported below, in Figures 22 and 23, reflects the views of all the teachers who responded to the survey, rather than presenting a single view from each school. Teachers were given a list of possible concerns and asked to identify whether, and if so, how seriously, each of them was affecting their own experiences of teaching history. (In 2019, teachers were not asked here to consider funding for resources, as the issue of funding was addressed in a separate question.)

Figure 22: The extent to which survey respondents in 2019 regarded a number of specific issues as a matter of concern

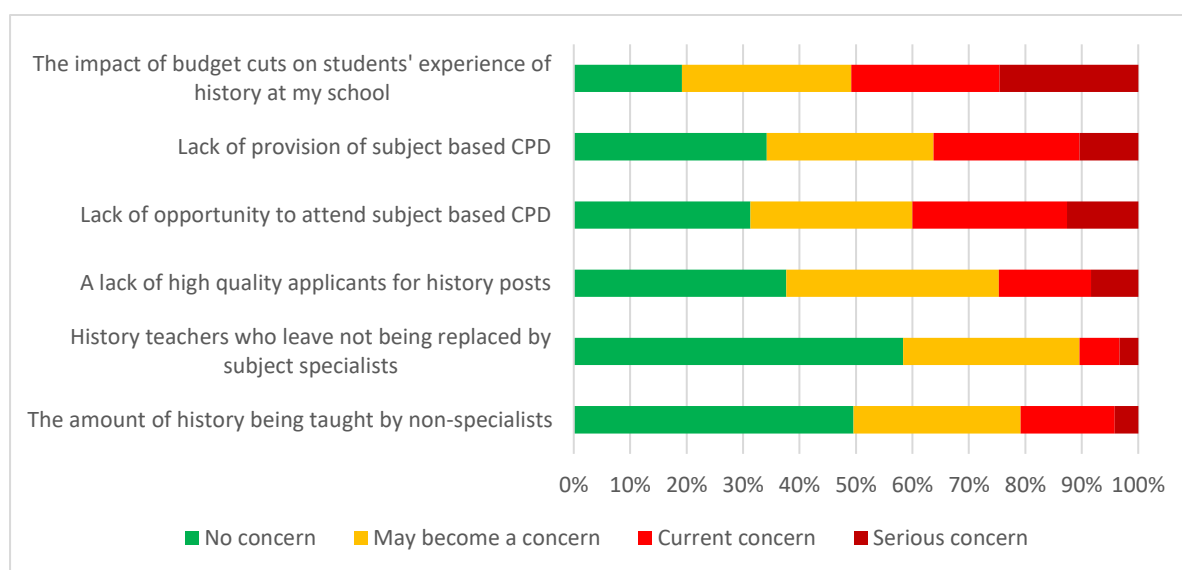
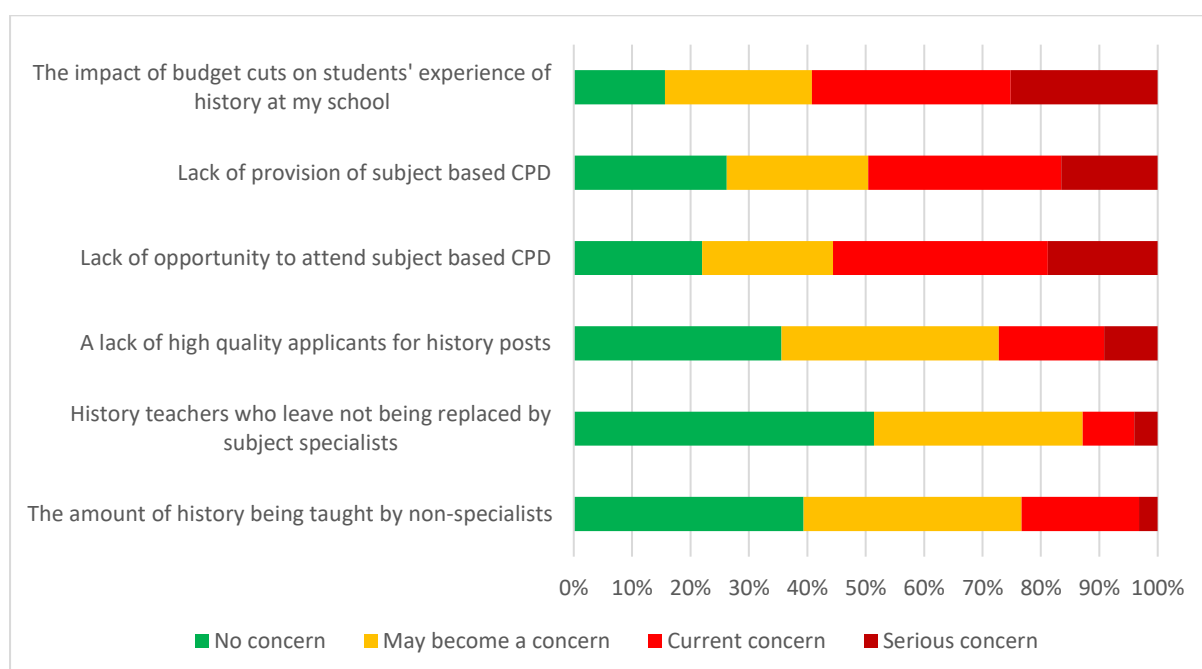


Figure 23: The extent to which survey respondents in 2018 regarded a number of specific issues as a matter of concern



The predominant concerns are the impact of budget cuts on their students' experience of history (identified as a current or serious concern by 51% of respondents); the lack of opportunity to attend subject-specific CPD (a current or serious concern for 40% of respondents); and the lack of provision of history-specific CPD (a current or serious concern for 36% of respondents.) More than a quarter of respondents regard the lack of high-quality applicants for history posts as a current or serious concern. Almost a quarter are also concerned about the amount of history being taught by non-specialist teachers.

7.2 The impact of budget cuts

Teachers were asked to identify the impact, if any, of budget cuts on provision of a range of aspects of school provision.¹⁰ One of the most notable impacts of budget cuts is on class size. Overall, as shown in Table 14, nearly a third of schools report increasing class sizes at Key Stage 3 and GCSE. This is most evident in comprehensive, academy and free schools, where the respective figures are 43.6% and 38.5%. Five schools (all state-funded non-selective schools), as shown in Table 15, report that they have had to remove history from the subjects offered at A-level, while another seven respondents suggest that this might happen at their schools. A lesser issue, but nonetheless worrying, is schools reporting having to reduce teaching time. Although the figures, shown in Table 16, are not large, 10% of comprehensives, academies and free schools have cut teaching time at Key Stage 3, with 5% having to do the same at GCSE. Tables 17, 18 and 19 also reveal impacts on teachers' ability to purchase textbooks and photocopy resources, with over a quarter of teachers in non-selective state schools buying essential classroom resources from their own money due to financial constraints in school. A deeply worrying issue is the reduction in support from teaching assistants (TAs). As Table 20 shows, nearly two-thirds of comprehensive, academy and free schools report reducing this provision at Key Stage 3 and half are doing the same at GCSE. Given the important role that such staff can play in a student's success and the knock-on demands that this places on teachers, this move has potentially profound implications for students' attainment.

Table 14: Increase in class size¹¹ as a result of budget cuts

Year	Type of school	This has happened in Key Stage 3	This has happened in relation to GCSE	This has happened at AS/A-level	This has not happened yet but seems likely	Budget cuts have not had any impact on history teaching in my school
2019	Comprehensives, academies & free	95 (43.6%)	84 (38.5%)	22 (10.1%)	21 (9.6%)	39 (17.9%)
	Grammar	3 (21.4%)	4 (28.6%)	4 (28.6%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (42.9%)
	Independent	6 (18.8%)	3 (9.4%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (12.5%)	19 (59.4%)
	All	104 (33.5%)	91 (29.4%)	26 (8.4%)	25 (8.1%)	64 (20.6%)

¹⁰ The data in this section reflects issues as reported by school (rather than by individual teacher) to ensure that the report does not overemphasise a concern simply because it is identified by two or more teachers in the same school.

¹¹ In these tables, percentages do not add up to 100, as respondents could tick a range of responses. All percentages have been calculated from the number of schools who responded overall to the survey, i.e. 218 comprehensives, academies or free schools, 14 grammar schools and 32 independent schools.

Table 15: Withdrawal of history from the subjects offered as a result of budget cuts

Year	Type of school	This has happened in Key Stage 3	This has happened in relation to GCSE	This has happened at AS/A-level	This has not happened yet but seems likely	Budget cuts have not had any impact on history teaching in my school
2019	Comprehensives, academies & free	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (2.3%)	7 (3.2%)	148 (67.9%)
	Grammar	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	12 (100%)
	Independent	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	27 (84.4%)
	All	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (2.5%)	7 (3.5%)	190 (94%)

Table 16: Reduction in teaching time as a result of budget cuts

Year	Type of school	This has happened in Key Stage 3	This has happened in relation to GCSE	This has happened at AS/A-level	This has not happened yet but seems likely	Budget cuts have not had any impact on history teaching in my school
2019	Comprehensives, academies & free	23 (10.6%)	11 (5.0%)	12 (5.5%)	16 (7.3%)	121 (55.5%)
	Grammar	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (21.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
	Independent	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.1%)	26 (81.3%)
	All	23 (10.3%)	11 (4.9%)	15 (6.7%)	17 (7.6%)	150 (70.4%)

Table 17: Inability to purchase textbooks as a result of budget cuts

Year	Type of school	This has happened in Key Stage 3	This has happened in relation to GCSE	This has happened at AS/A-level	This has not happened yet but seems likely	Budget cuts have not had any impact on history teaching in my school
2019	Comprehensives, academies & free	61 (28%)	67 (30.7%)	32 (14.7%)	47 (21.6%)	47 (21.6%)
	Grammar	4 (28.6%)	1 (7.1%)	3 (21.4%)	3 (21.4%)	4 (28.6%)
	Independent	1 (3.1%)	2 (6.3%)	1 (3.1%)	2 (6.3%)	24 (75.0%)
	All	66 (22.1%)	70 (23.4%)	36 (12.0%)	52 (17.4%)	75 (25.1%)

Table 18: Inability to photocopy resources as a result of budget cuts

Year	Type of school	This has happened in Key Stage 3	This has happened in relation to GCSE	This has happened at AS/A-level	This has not happened yet but seems likely	Budget cuts have not had any impact on history teaching in my school
2019	Comprehensives, academies & free	33 (15.1%)	31 (14.2%)	13 (6.0%)	61 (28.0%)	75 (34.4%)
	Grammar	1 (7.1%)	1 (7.1%)	1 (7.1%)	4 (28.6%)	7 (50%)
	Independent	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (12.5%)	23 (71.9%)
	All	34 (13.4%)	32 (12.6%)	14 (5.5%)	69 (27.2%)	105 (41.3%)

Table 19: History teachers having to buy essential teaching resources from their own money as a result of budget cuts

Year	Type of school	This has happened in Key Stage 3	This has happened in relation to GCSE	This has happened at AS/A-level	This has not happened yet but seems likely	Budget cuts have not had any impact on history teaching in my school
2019	Comprehensives, academies & free	57 (26.1%)	63 (28.9%)	37 (17.0%)	42 (19.3%)	63 (28.9%)
	Grammar	1 (7.1%)	1 (7.1%)	1 (7.1%)	4 (28.6%)	7 (50%)
	Independent	1 (3.1%)	1 (3.1%)	1 (3.1%)	3 (9.4%)	24 (75.0%)
	All	59 (19.3%)	65 (21.2%)	39 (12.7%)	49 (16.0%)	94 (30.7%)

Table 20: Reduction in TA support as a result of budget cuts

Year	Type of school	This has happened in Key Stage 3	This has happened in relation to GCSE	This has happened at AS/A-level	This has not happened yet but seems likely	Budget cuts have not had any impact on history teaching in my school
2019	Comprehensives, academies & free	139 (63.8%)	109 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	18 (8.3%)	22 (10.1%)
	Grammar	2 (14.3%)	3 (21.4%)	1 (7.1%)	1 (7.1%)	8 (57.1%)
	Independent	1 (3.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.3%)	23 (71.9%)
	All	142 (43.2%)	112 (34.0%)	1 (0.3%)	21 (6.4%)	53 (16.1%)

7.3 The provision of teaching assistant support

Concerns about reductions in the number of TAs reported in the 2018 survey prompted a repeat of the questions asked about that issue in order to discern any clear trends in school provision of support for students with a range of additional needs. For those students who have a formal statement of special educational needs – an Education and Health Care plan (EHCP) – Figures 24 and 25 show little

change between 2018 and 2019, especially in state-funded non-selective schools. In 2019, just under 60% of schools claim to be unable to provide regular TA support in Key Stage 3 for students with an EHCP. The situation in the independent school sector seems to have deteriorated – although these schools offer more occasional support than in 2018, their ability to offer support every lesson or regularly appears restricted.

Figure 24: The frequency with which schools provide TA support in history at Key Stage 3 for students with a formal statement of special educational needs (EHCP) in 2019

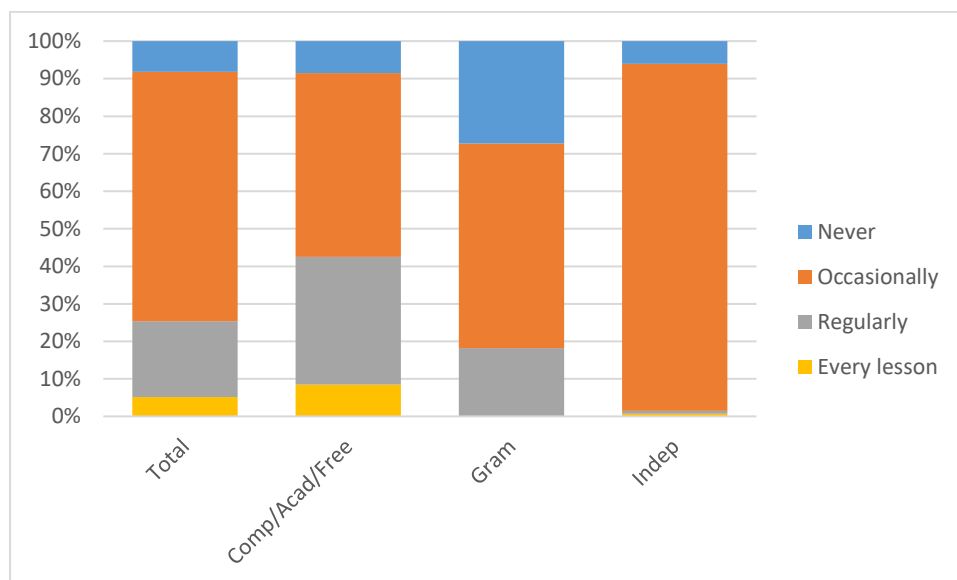
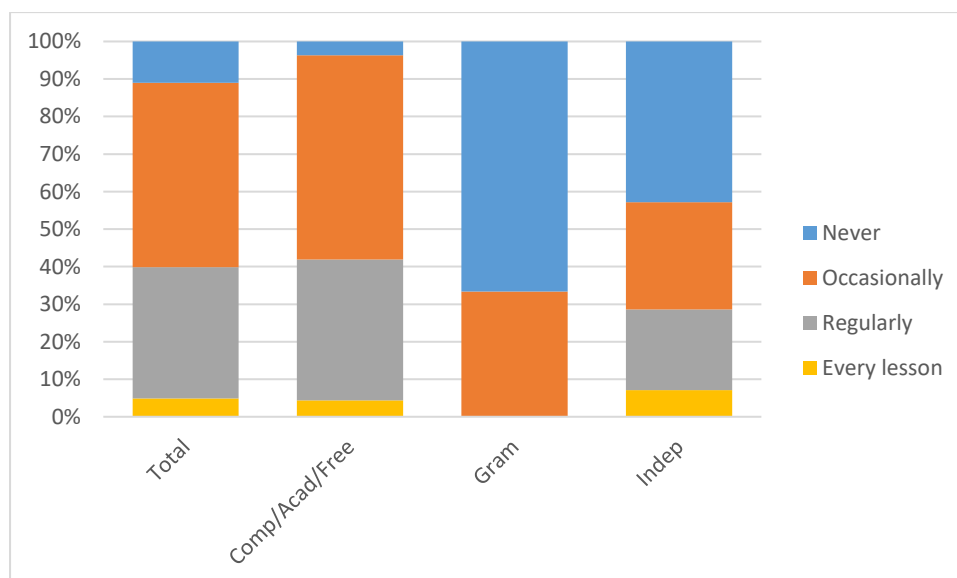


Figure 25: The frequency with which schools provide TA support in history at Key Stage 3 for students with a formal statement of special educational needs (EHCP) in 2018



Where students in Key Stage 3 do not have a formal statement of the support required to meet their needs (an EHCP), very few schools are able to offer regular support from a TA. Figures 26 and 27 show that overall the situation in 2019 is slightly worse in this respect than in 2018.

Figure 26: The frequency with which schools provide TA support in history at **Key Stage 3** for students identified as having some kind of special educational need but **without** an EHCP in 2019

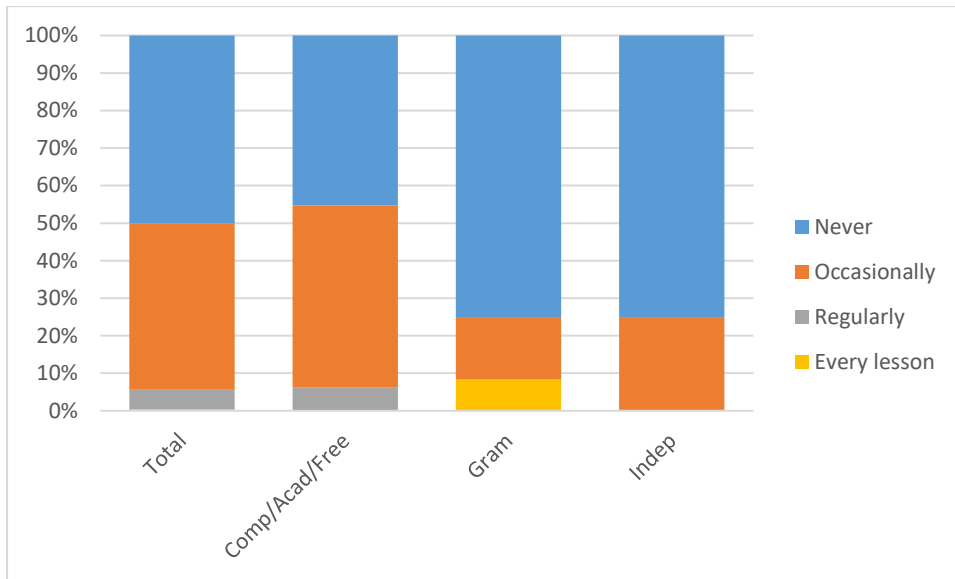
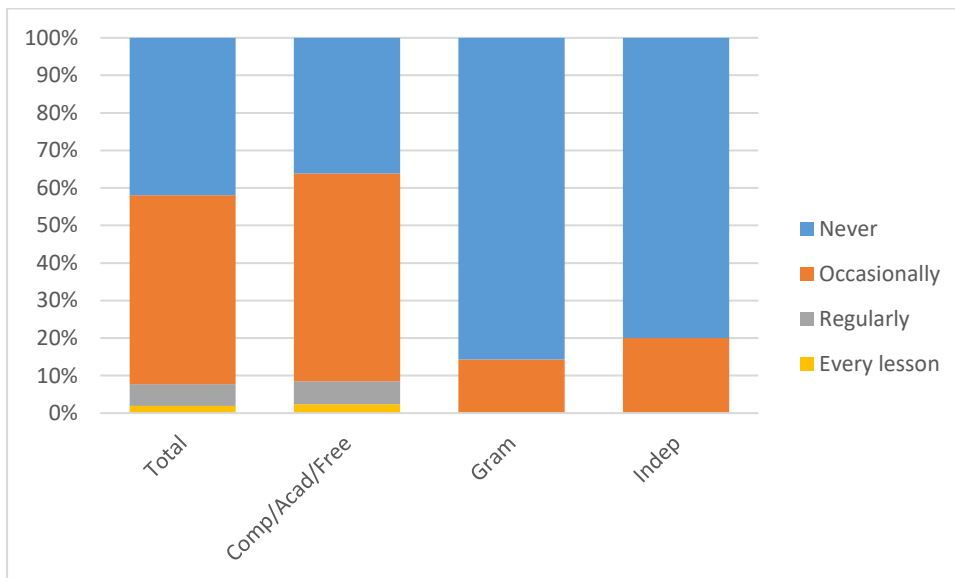


Figure 27: The frequency with which schools provide TA support in history at **Key Stage 3** for students identified as having some kind of special educational need but **without** an EHCP in 2018



Respondents were also asked to identify the level of support provided for students with special educational needs or disabilities at GCSE. Figures 28 and 29 reveal similar patterns, with less than 40% of schools able to provide support on at least a regular basis. The situation in grammar and independent schools appears to be particularly poor, with no school reporting support being offered every lesson when needed.

Figure 28: The frequency with which schools provide TA support in **GCSE history** (or other Key Stage 4 history course) for students **with a formal statement** of special educational needs (EHCP) in 2019

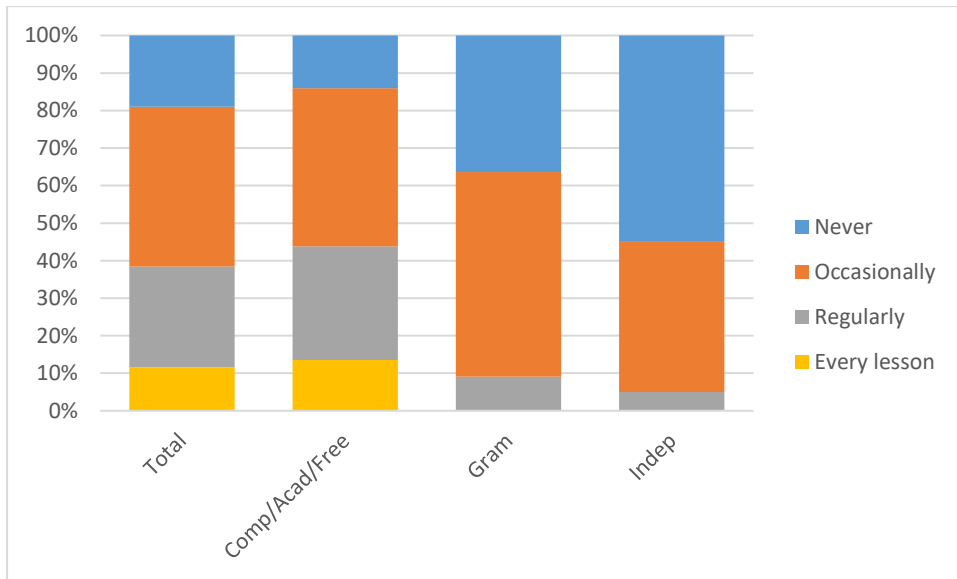
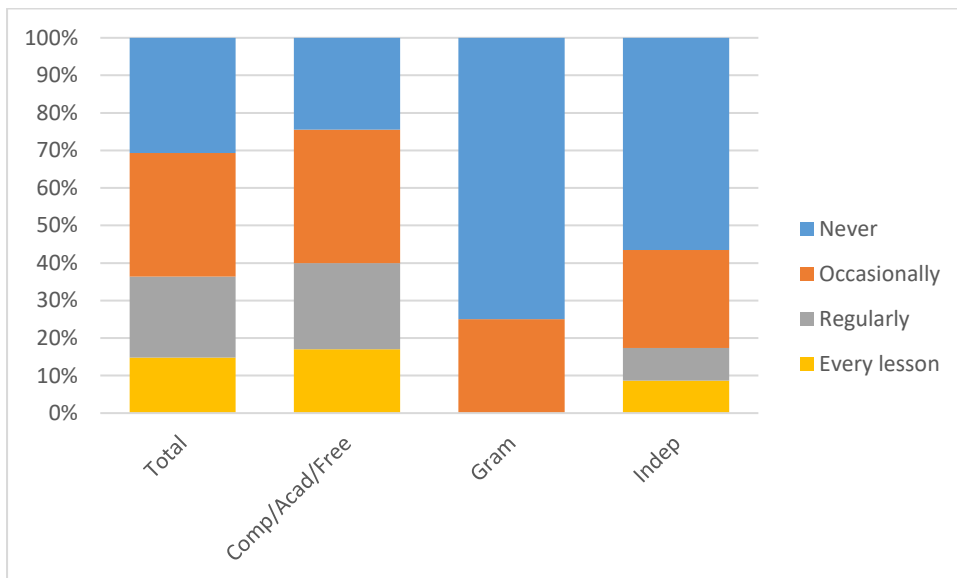


Figure 29: The frequency with which schools provide TA support in **GCSE history** (or other Key Stage 4 history course) for students **with a formal statement** of special educational needs (EHCP) in 2018



Where students have identified needs but no EHCP in place, very few schools report being able to provide TA support at GCSE. As Figures 30 and 31 reveal, overall only around 5% of non-selective state-funded schools in 2019 report being able to provide any regular form of TA support, whereas the figure in 2018 was closer to 10%.

Figure 30: The frequency with which schools provide TA support in **GCSE history** (or any other Key Stage 4 history course) for students identified as having some kind of special educational need but **without** an EHC Plan in 2019

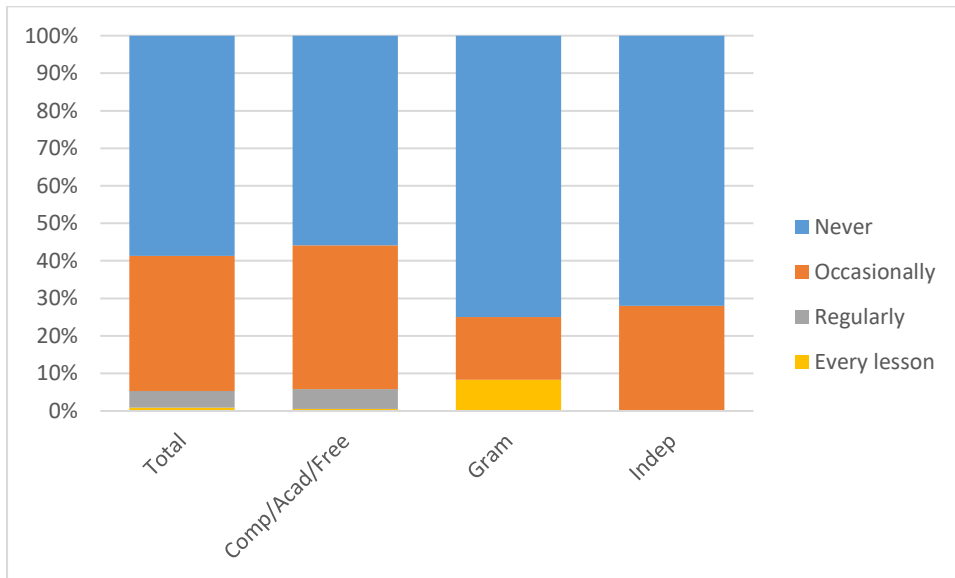
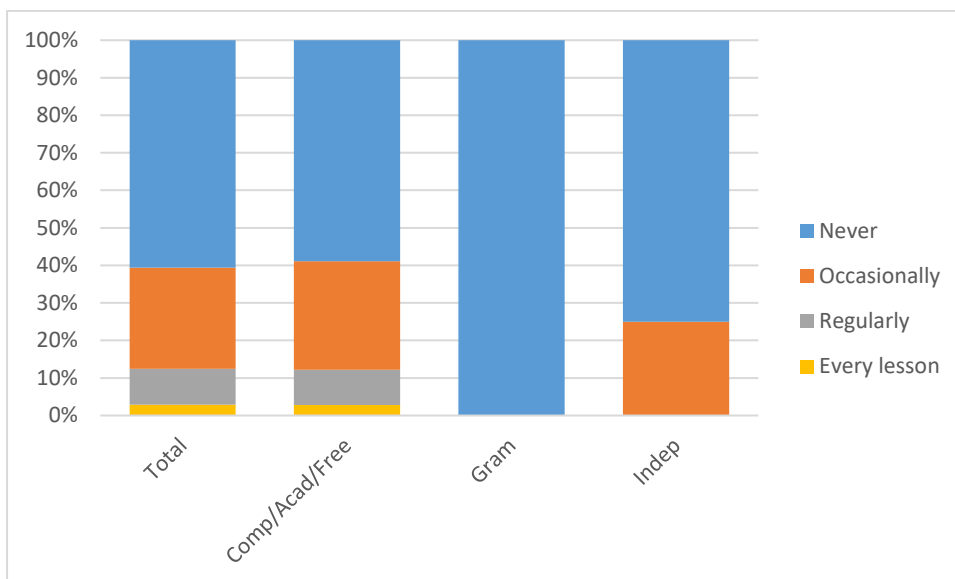


Figure 31: The frequency with which schools provide TA support in **GCSE history** (or any other Key Stage 4 history course) for students identified as having some kind of special educational need but **without** an EHC Plan in 2018

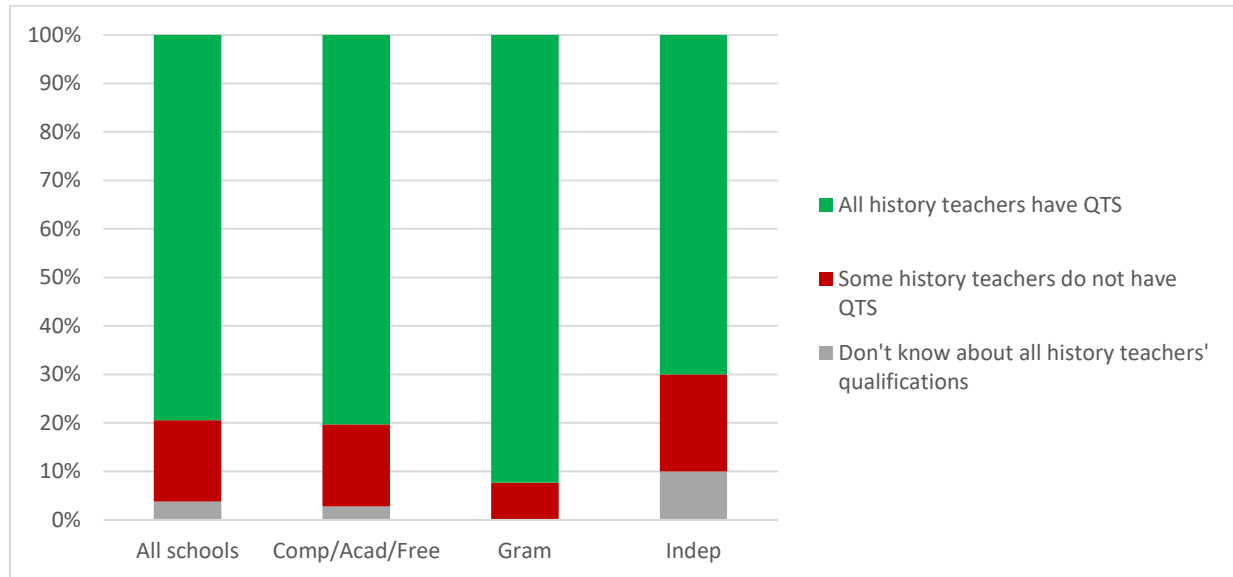


7.4 History teacher qualifications and recruitment

As in previous years, the survey asked whether schools employed teachers who did not have qualified teacher status (QTS). The figures for 2019 show a marked difference from those reported in 2018, when only around 7% of comprehensive, academy and free schools reported employing such teachers. As Figure 32 shows, in 2019 nearly 17% of state-funded non-selective schools reported that they employed history teachers without QTS. This proportion is much closer than in previous years to the proportion of independent schools (20%) that report employing history teachers without a formal

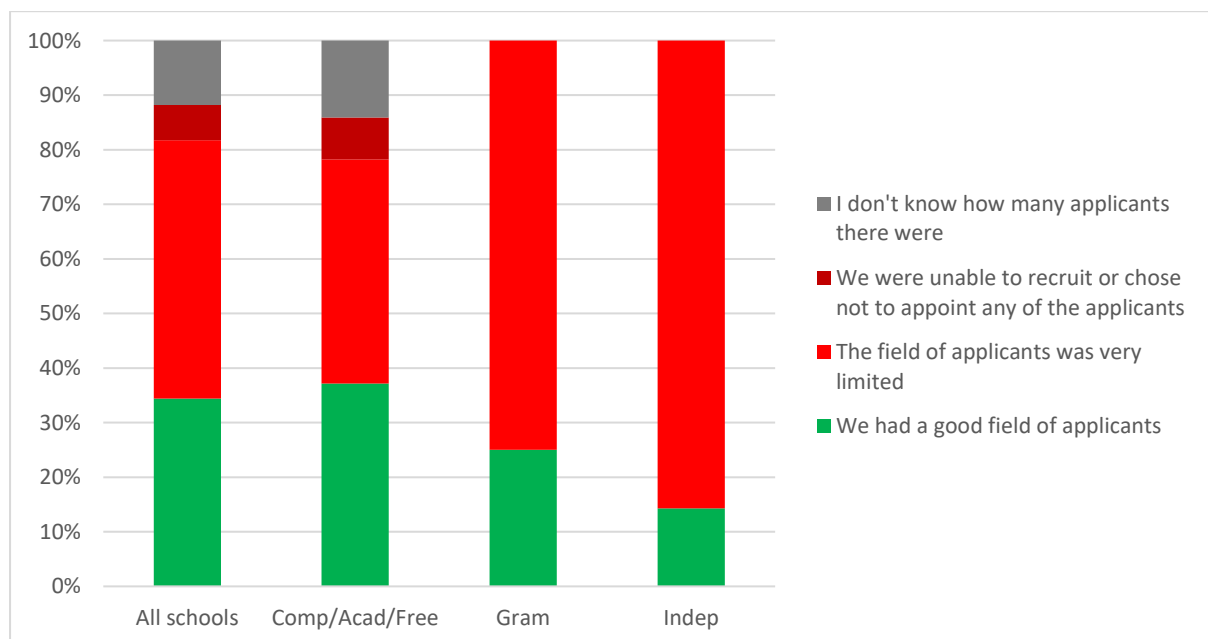
teaching qualification. The proportion of unqualified teachers in the state sector may well include a significant number who are undertaking employment-based, salaried training programmes such as Teach First or School Direct Salaried, but the fact that such teachers are not qualified when they assume full responsibility for classes obviously has an impact on their students' history education.

Figure 32: The proportion of schools that reported employing history teachers without qualified teacher status



We were also interested in finding out whether schools were able to choose from a good field of applicants during any recruitment process, given current concerns about the numbers of people coming into the teaching profession. Figure 33 shows the outcomes for those schools that advertised a vacancy during the academic year 2018–19 (in most cases, to start work in September 2019).

Figure 33: The size of the field reported in 2019 by those schools that had advertised a history vacancy



In total, 93 schools (78 of them comprehensive, academy or free schools) reported that they had advertised a history vacancy. Figure 33 shows that in only a third of cases (34%) did the respondents suggest that they had a good field of applicants. This figure was consistent with that reported last year. Almost 8% of the state-maintained non-selective schools reported that they had been unable to recruit or chose not to appoint any of the applicants. In contrast to previous years, where a higher proportion of grammar and independent schools had reported a good field of applicants, more schools in this sector reported finding only a very limited field (although the number reporting vacancies was limited in each case – eight grammar schools and seven independent schools).