

UCAS LEVEL 4 AND 5 BRIEFING



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UVAC - January 2025

WHAT I'LL COVER

1

How UCAS is approaching HTQs

2

Research on Level 4 and 5 applications

3

What next and how can we work together?

HOW IS UCAS APPROACHING HTQS?

1

Collection tool for course listings, Search display (including HTQ flag) and Apply

2

Information, advice and guidance

3

DfE email campaigns

1

UCAS COLLECTION TOOL

UCAS' provider facing collection tool for HE courses. Covers UG (including HTQs), PG and Conservatoires.

Full time and part time and a range of delivery modes.

Feeds our Search and Apply products ensuring that providers can showcase courses to students researching and comparing their options.

LISTING HTQS

Add outcome qualification

Higher National Certificate - HNC

Save Cancel

Qualification level

RQF Level 4

Business rules * ⓘ

Standard rules

Equal consideration deadline ⓘ

31 January

Subject to validation ⓘ

Yes No

Higher Technical Qualification ⓘ

Yes No

HTQS IN SEARCH

The image shows a screenshot of the UCAS search interface on the left and a map of the United Kingdom on the right. The search filters include:

- Course type and year:** Undergraduate, Postgraduate, 2023-2024, 2024-2025, 2025-2026.
- Start month:** Aug 2024, Sep 2024, Oct 2024, Nov 2024, Dec 2024, Jan 2025, Feb 2025, Mar 2025, Apr 2025, May 2025, Jun 2025, Jul 2025.
- Study mode:** Full-time, Accelerated, Part-time/flexible, Distance learning.
- Qualification type:** Degree Apprenticeship, HNC or Cert HE, HND or Dip HE, Bachelor's, Masters, PG Certificate or Diploma, Higher Technical Qualifications, Other qualifications.

The map on the right shows the United Kingdom with numerous red location pins indicating the presence of Higher Technical Qualifications across various regions, including London, the Midlands, the South East, and Wales.

This Higher Technical Qualification is approved against occupational standards decided by employers. [Learn more about Higher Technical Qualifications.](#)

2 INFORMATION, ADVICE & GUIDANCE

Home / Undergraduate / What and where to study / Study options

HIGHER TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS

Explore this section ▾

Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) are now available in Digital, Construction and Health & Science with more sectors coming in September 2024. Find out what they are, who they're for, and what and where you can study.

Who are Higher Technical Qualifications for?

- They're for students over 18 who want to study a subject to prepare them for skilled jobs, and also for adults looking to retrain or upskill
- They would suit you if you want a more practical, employer-led programme
- Although Higher Technical Qualifications are primarily designed for entry into skilled employment or those looking to retrain or upskill, you could also progress to further study and/or training.

What's on this page?

- What are Higher Technical Qualifications? (HTQs)
- Who are Higher Technical Qualifications for?
- Where can I study a Higher Technical Qualification?
- Why take a Higher Technical Qualification?
- What subjects are available?
- How do I find a course?

Higher Technical Qualifications

Copy link

high-skilled, highly paid jobs in a wide range of sectors

Watch on YouTube

DFE EMAIL CAMPAIGN

3 phase approach

Split into
different subjects
based on
preferred choice

Each phase
broken down to
relevant time and
message

Dear Declan,

This email comes from UCAS. We're sending you this on behalf of the Department for Education, because – based on what you told us about yourself – we think you might find it useful.



The next few months are really important, and concentrating on your studies is a priority, but you can still think about what's next. HTQs are new approved qualifications in many key sectors including Digital, Construction, Education, Healthcare and many others. HTQs are approved against employers' standards, so you can have confidence that you're getting the skills that employers want for jobs such as Nursing Associate, Cybersecurity or Early Years Lead Practitioner – great jobs with great prospects for your career.

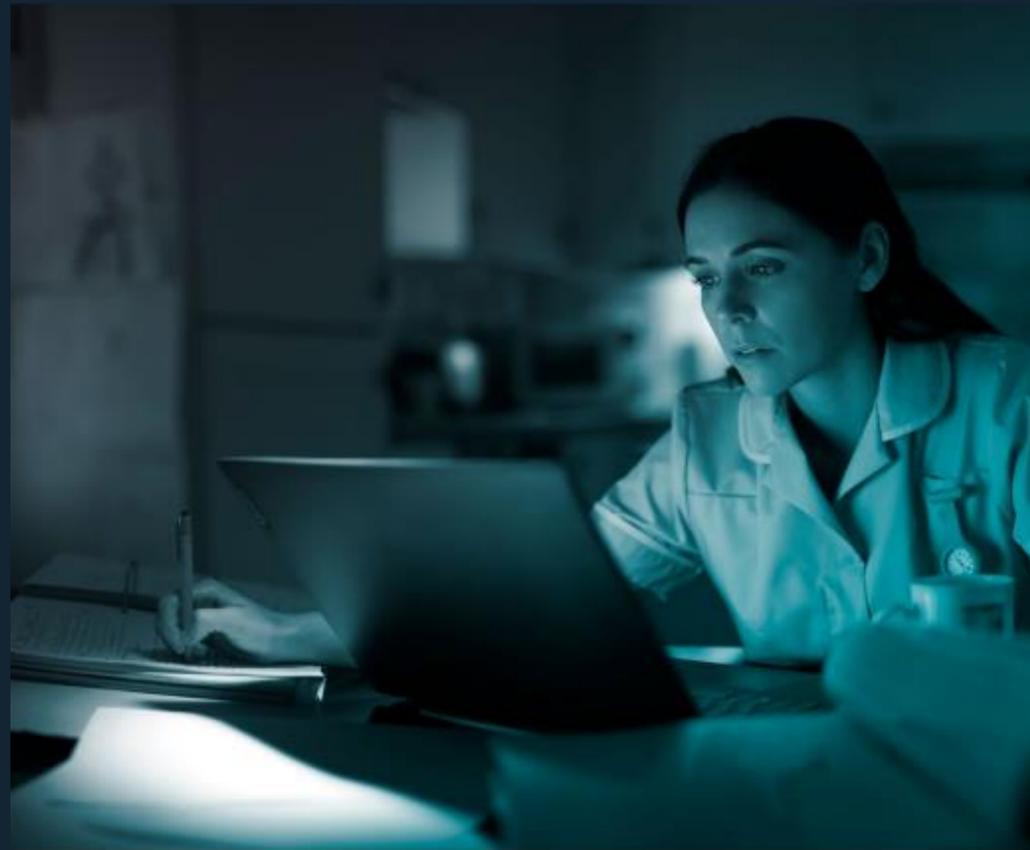
Owen Wardle, studying an HTQ in Computing for England (HTQ) says, "I wanted to learn more and gain the qualifications I need with the aim to become a video games designer. I am hoping to learn and develop my programming skills more while on this course. I decided to do the HTQ here as I didn't want to go to a big university and I liked the environment of the university centre and the smaller class sizes."

Preeya, who is studying a Level 5 qualification, said, "This qualification had a natural progression from the BTEC Level 3 and interested me because the syllabus incorporated more strategic topics that would help me in my career. I also had my eyes set on completing a degree in the future, and Higher National qualifications are widely recognised by university admissions. The syllabus included topics that were valuable to me as an engineering professional and perfectly complemented the technical side of the role I experienced at work."

HTQs can be a great alternative a university degree, giving a quicker and cheaper route to getting the skills you need. They are taught in Universities, FE Colleges,

WHERE NEXT?

WHO APPLIES TO **LEVEL 4 AND 5** QUALIFICATIONS?



KEY TRENDS IN LEVEL 4 AND 5 (2023 CYCLE)

1

The number of **applications to Level 4 and 5 courses** has decreased by 12% from 46,725 in 2019 to 40,920 in 2023.

2

The decline is **driven by Level 5**, where applications decreased by 21% (from 37,195 in 2019 to 29,250 in 2023).

3

The most popular choice were **subjects allied to medicine**, particularly among mature applicants.

4

Proportions of applications were highest in **regions where progression to HE overall is lowest**.

5

The majority (79%) of applicants to Level 4 or 5 courses **also applied to a Level 6+ course**.

6

One **third (33%)** picked the **Level 4 or 5 course** over Level 6+ when they received an offer from both.

WHO ARE THE UCAS APPLICANTS FOR LEVEL 4 AND 5?

Mature applicants were more likely to apply than younger applicants

Similar proportions of males and females applied

Ethnic group trends are changing, with the White and Black ethnic groups equally likely to apply

Applicants who shared **certain disabilities** were more likely to apply than those who did not share a disability

Care-experienced applicants were more likely to apply than those without care experience



Applicants from **disadvantaged areas** were more likely to apply than those from the least disadvantaged areas

Applicants whose **parent/guardian did not attend HE** were more likely to apply than those whose parent/guardian did

Applicants were more likely to **stay in the region they live** in than Level 6+ applicants

Those with **VTQs and from FE colleges** were more likely to apply than applicants with other qualifications and schools/colleges

Applicants of all ages **were more likely to apply independently**, compared to Level 6+

WHAT IS THE EXPERIENCE OF APPLICANTS?



Discovery

Awareness in last 12 months



Application

Asking for clearer explanations of different types of quals and support in navigating student finance (notably for mature)



Exploration

Considering other options including apprenticeships (over a third) and full-time work (almost half)



Future

Half work focused

1 in 5 wanting to progress in HE

LOW AWARENESS OF HTQs?

Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents were unfamiliar with the term Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs).

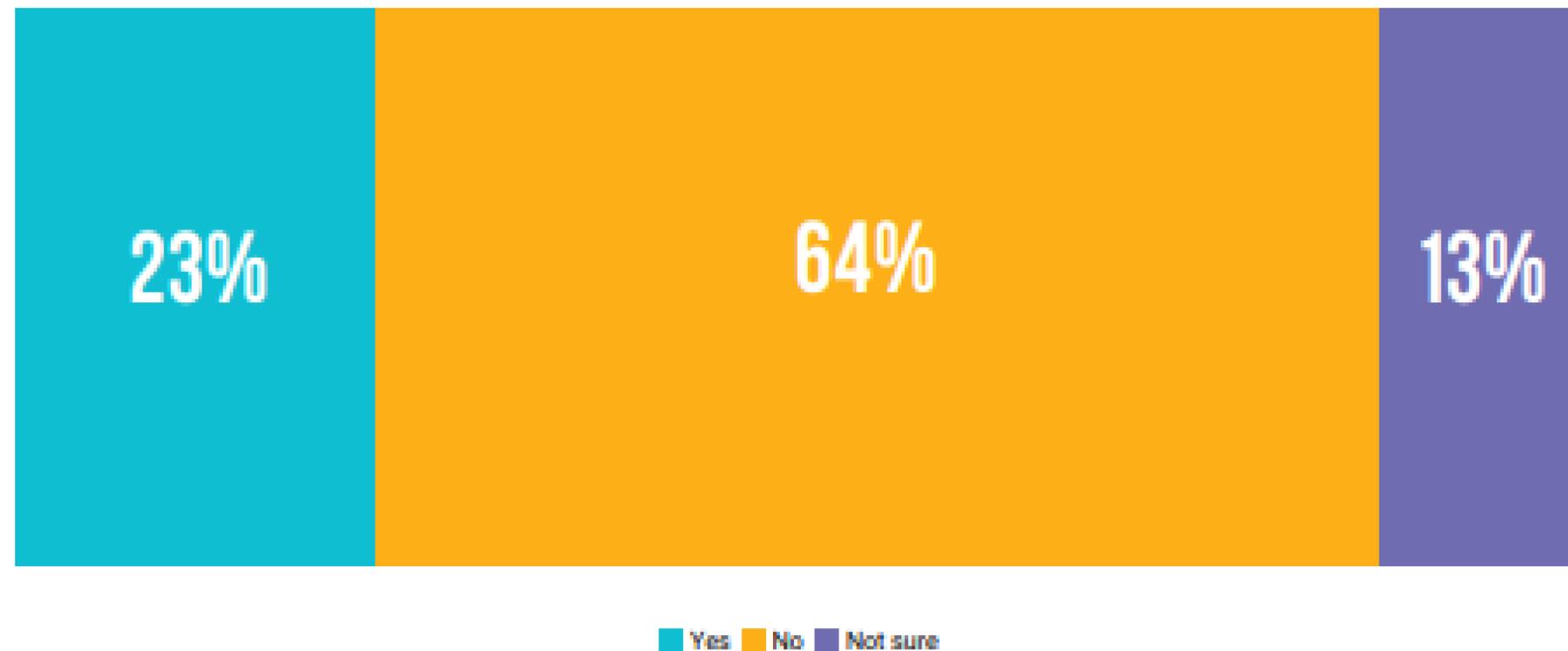


Figure 18: Q. Have you heard of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs)? (935 respondents, weighted)

WHAT DO THEY KNOW ABOUT HTQS?

27% understood that they had been developed in conjunction with employers

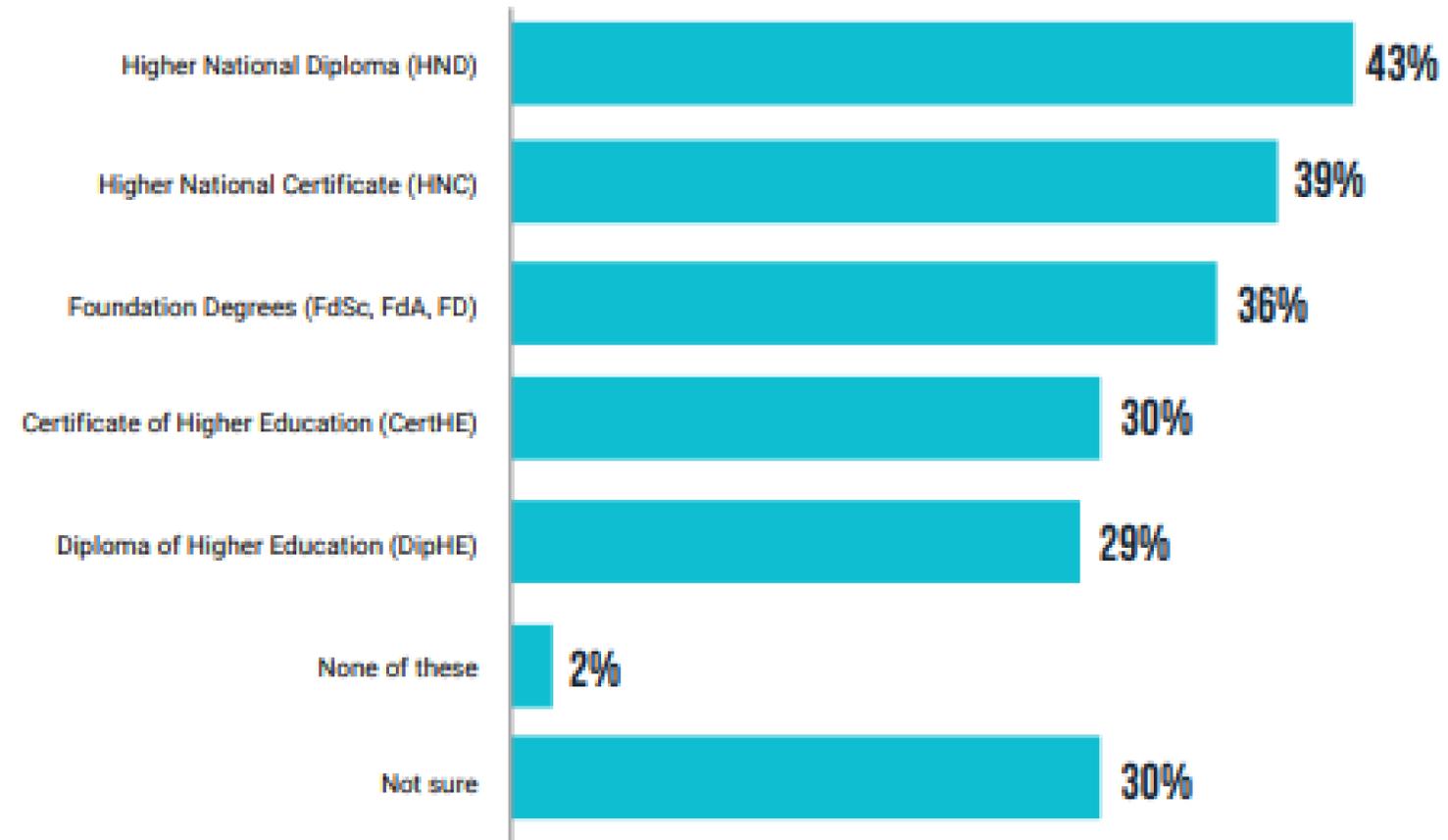
50% correctly identifying that they had been approved by IfATE

25% correctly said they thought HTQs were currently only available in a limited number of subjects

25% of this group didn't know any features of an HTQ

WHICH QUALS CAN BE HTQS?

Respondents were most likely to think that HTQs could be HNDs (43%), HNCs (39%) or foundation degrees (36%). Almost a third of respondents were unsure which types of courses could be approved as HTQs



UCAS COMMITMENTS



Build on existing content (both digitally and at events) to offer enhanced information, advice and guidance



Continue to **support HE providers** currently using UCAS for admissions, and new providers looking to use UCAS in the future, to reach potential applicants



Support teachers and advisers, charity partners and influencers (e.g. parents/ carers), with insights on Level 4 and 5 applicants



Share relevant data insight and explore how insights can be used in collaborative work with key sectors and employers

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Universities and colleges

- Ensure Level 4 and 5 courses are displayed on ucas.com in line with good practice
- Include Level 4 and 5 opportunities within marketing, recruitment and outreach strategies
- Specifically highlight those courses that have been designated as HTQs
- Set out available student finance, as well as work experience opportunities

Schools and colleges

- Explore forthcoming UCAS content and training on Level 4 and 5
- Ensure Level 4 and 5 courses (including HTQs in England) are presented alongside undergraduate degrees and apprenticeships
- Contact local Careers Hubs to support engagement with regional employers