

Better Access to A level Further Mathematics

Contrary to what many believe, that Further Mathematics A level is the preserve of the elite students at independent schools, now the majority of state schools and colleges offer this valuable and prestigious qualification. Data released in January 2015 by the DFE shows that two thirds of all state-funded schools and colleges in England, which offer A levels, had students taking A level Further Mathematics last year. This is a great improvement in the access to Further Mathematics teaching. Students now have much better opportunities to study AS/A Further Mathematics than their predecessors 10 years ago, when the proportion was only 40%.

The data shows that the number of state-funded institutions offering A level Further Mathematics has steadily risen from 762 in 2004/05 to the highest ever number, 1371 in 2013/14, a rise of 80%.

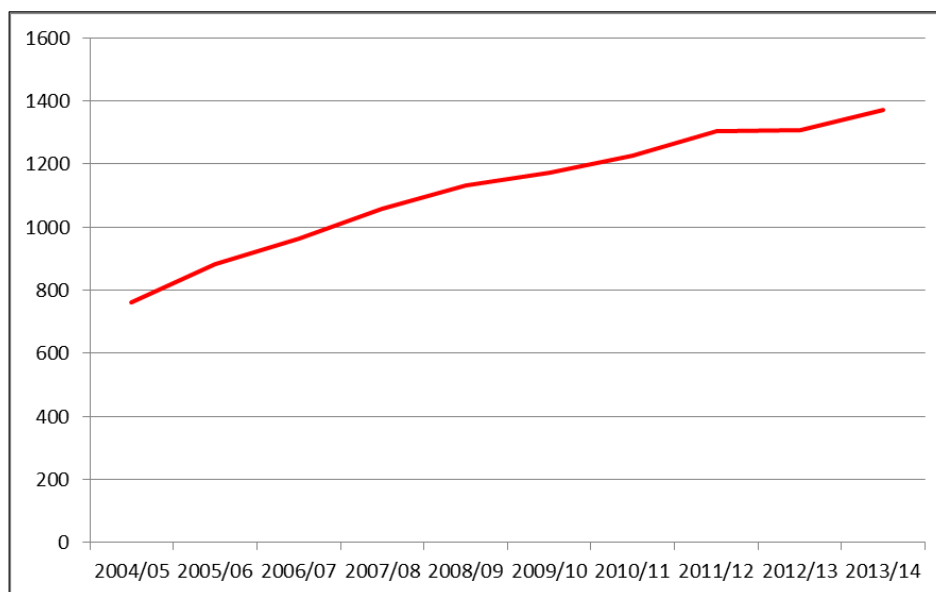


Chart shows the number of state-funded schools and colleges offering A level Further Mathematics since 2004

The Further Mathematics Support Programme, FMSP, has been working to improve provision for Further Mathematics since 2005. Through a programme of support to schools and colleges, professional development for teachers and promotion of the benefits of studying Further Mathematics to thousands of students each year, the FMSP has helped many institutions to set up courses and sustain the teaching of Further Mathematics. Teachers are more aware of the need to provide Further Mathematics for students who aspire to study mathematics and other STEM subjects at leading universities.

In their article in Mathematics Today (see: <http://bit.ly/IMAapril15>) Kevin Lord and Charlie Stripp, from MEI, describe in more detail the improvement in access to Further Mathematics teaching for students in state-funded schools and colleges. More and more students from the state-sector have the opportunity to take Further Mathematics and are choosing to do so in order to fulfil their ambitions. There is still more work to be done so that any student who would benefit from studying A level Further Mathematics has the opportunity to do so, but it is encouraging that progress is being made.

Notes for editors:

1. The Further Mathematics Support Programme, FMSP (www.furthermaths.org.uk) is a government-funded initiative, supported by the Department for Education and is managed by MEI. It follows on from the very successful 'Further Mathematics Network' initiative, which was set up following a successful 5 year pilot project that was developed by MEI and funded by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation.
2. The Further Mathematics Support Programme involves schools, colleges and universities working together collaboratively to widen opportunities for students to study post-16 mathematics. The FMSP tuition support uses a blended learning strategy that employs intensive tutorial input alongside independent study, supported by extensive, purpose-written, online resources. This model is proving very successful and, suitably adapted, could be used by other high-value shortage subjects such as physics and modern languages.
3. Mathematics in Education and Industry (MEI) (www.mei.org.uk) is an independent charity that is committed to improving mathematics education for all.
4. MEI is a major provider of professional development for mathematics teachers and leads the secondary strand of the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM).
5. AS/A level Further Mathematics reinforces the content of the standard AS/A level Mathematics and introduces students to important topics such as complex numbers and matrices, which are vital for many mathematics-related degrees.
6. Mathematics Today is published by the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications (IMA), which is the UK's learned and professional society for mathematics and its applications. The IMA exists to support the advancement of mathematical knowledge and its applications and to promote and enhance mathematical culture in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, for the public good.
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8. For detailed background information on the Further Mathematics Support Programme and Mathematics in Education and Industry (MEI), please see www.furthermaths.org.uk and www.mei.org.uk