

Overview

- Introduction to England's education system and current reforms
- How standards are maintained in England
- Methodology
- Findings
- Summary and implications

England's education system

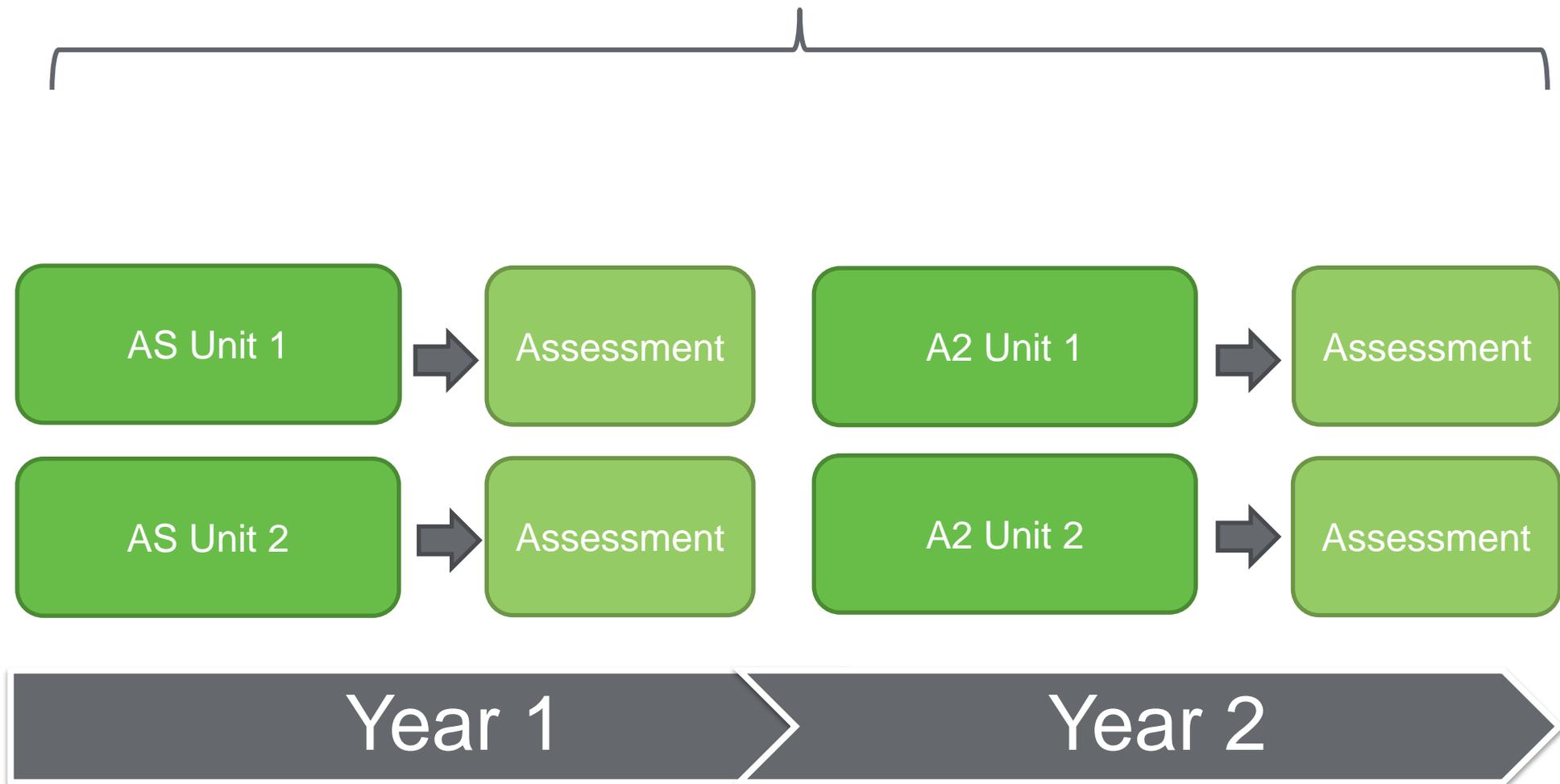
- Age 14-16: General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)
 - Each year around 550,000 16 year olds take, on average, 8 GCSEs each
- Age 16-18: General Certificate of Education Advanced Levels (A levels)
 - Each year around 250,000 18 year olds take, on average, 3 A levels each
- Age 18: University
 - Each year around 240,000 18 year olds in the UK are accepted to university

Ofqual

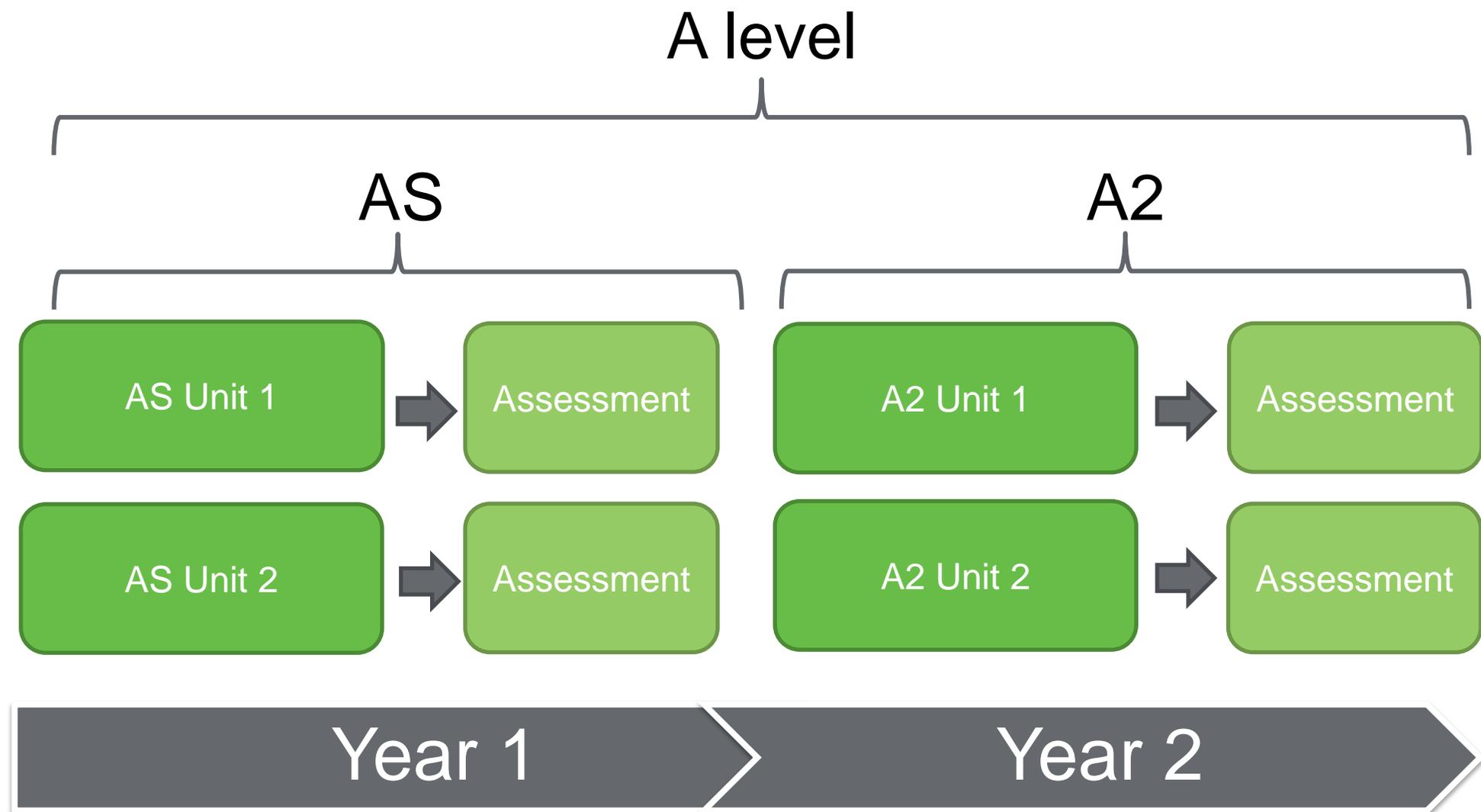
- The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England
- We are responsible for making sure that:
 - regulated qualifications reliably indicate the knowledge, skills and understanding students have demonstrated
 - assessments and exams show what a student has achieved
 - people have confidence in the qualifications that we regulate
 - students and teachers have information on the full range of qualifications that we regulate

Pre-reform

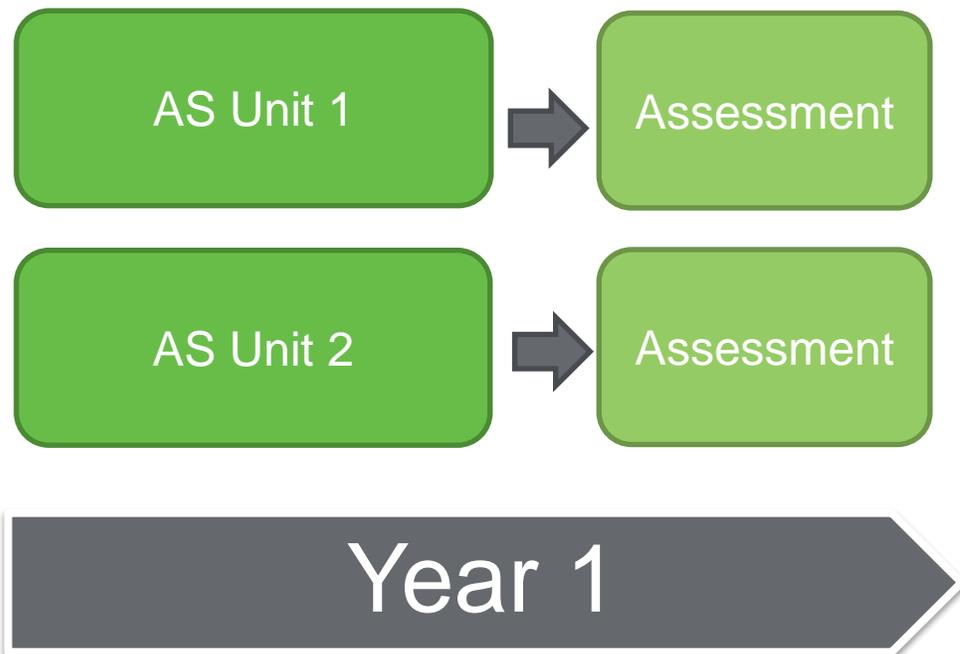
A level



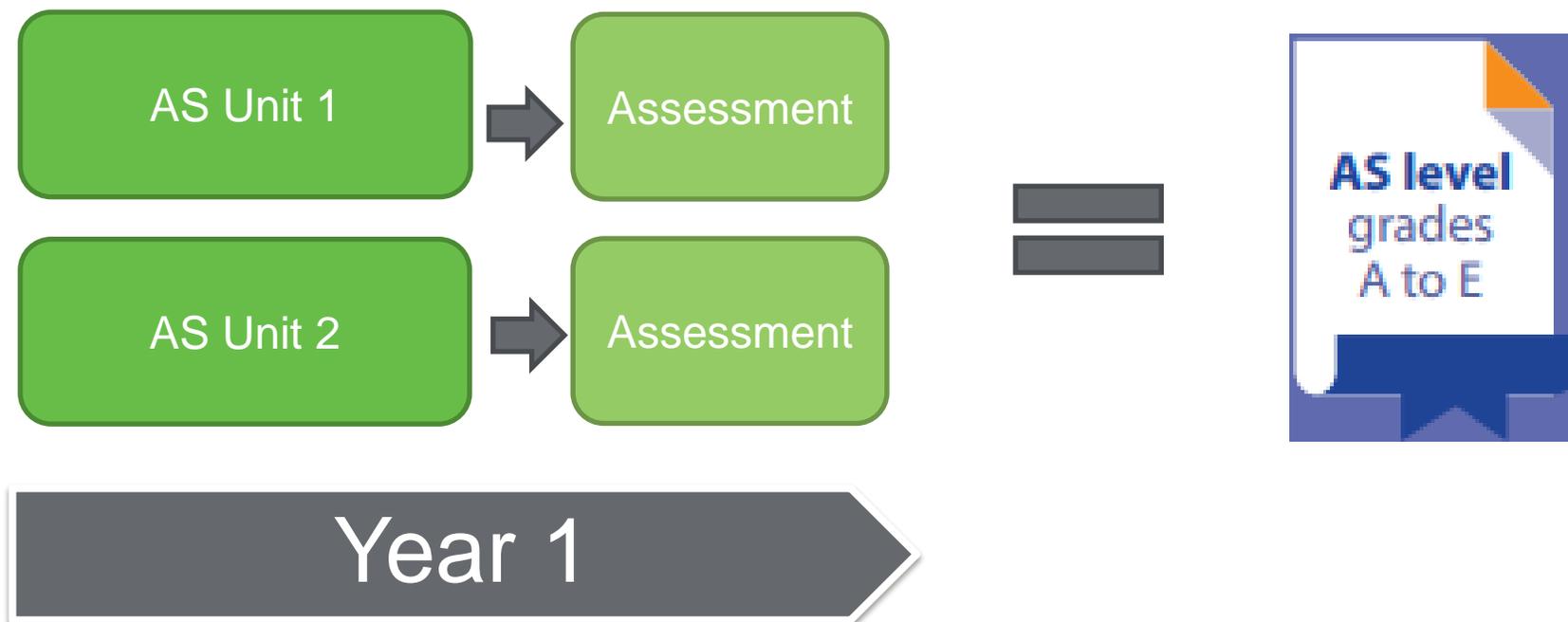
Pre-reform



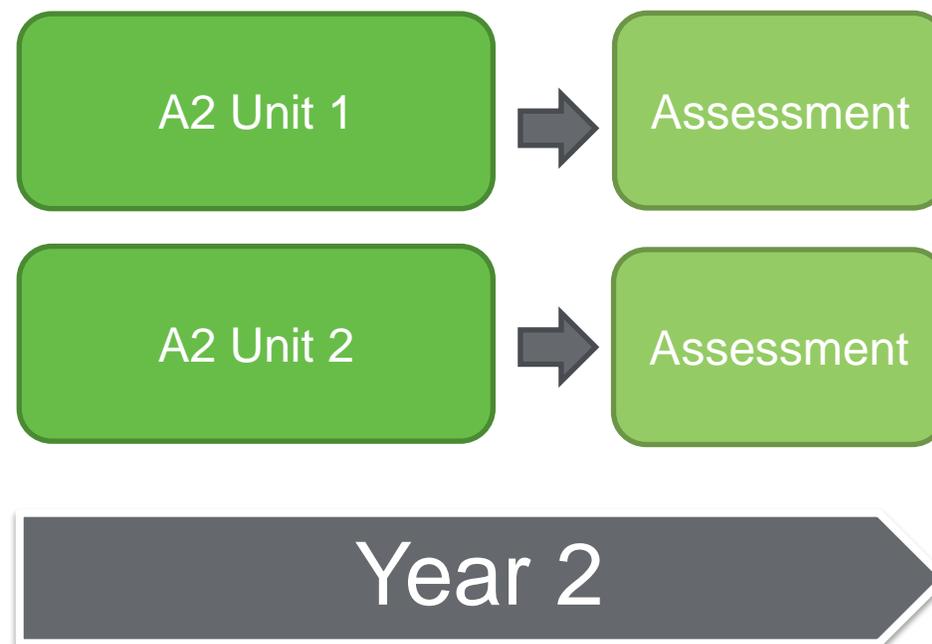
Pre-reform



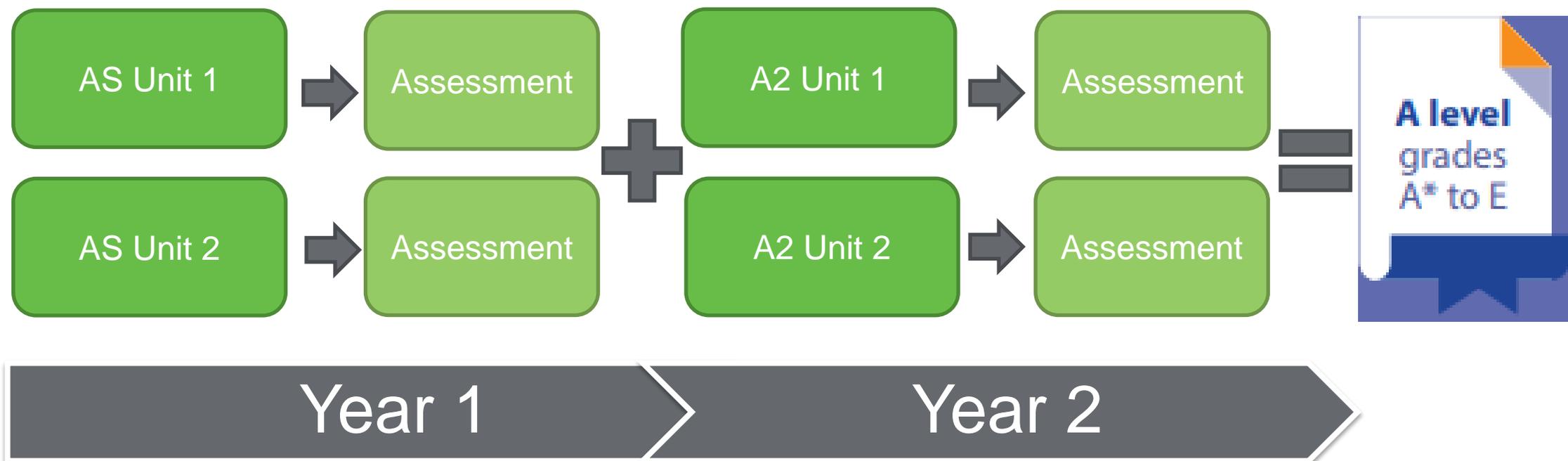
Pre-reform



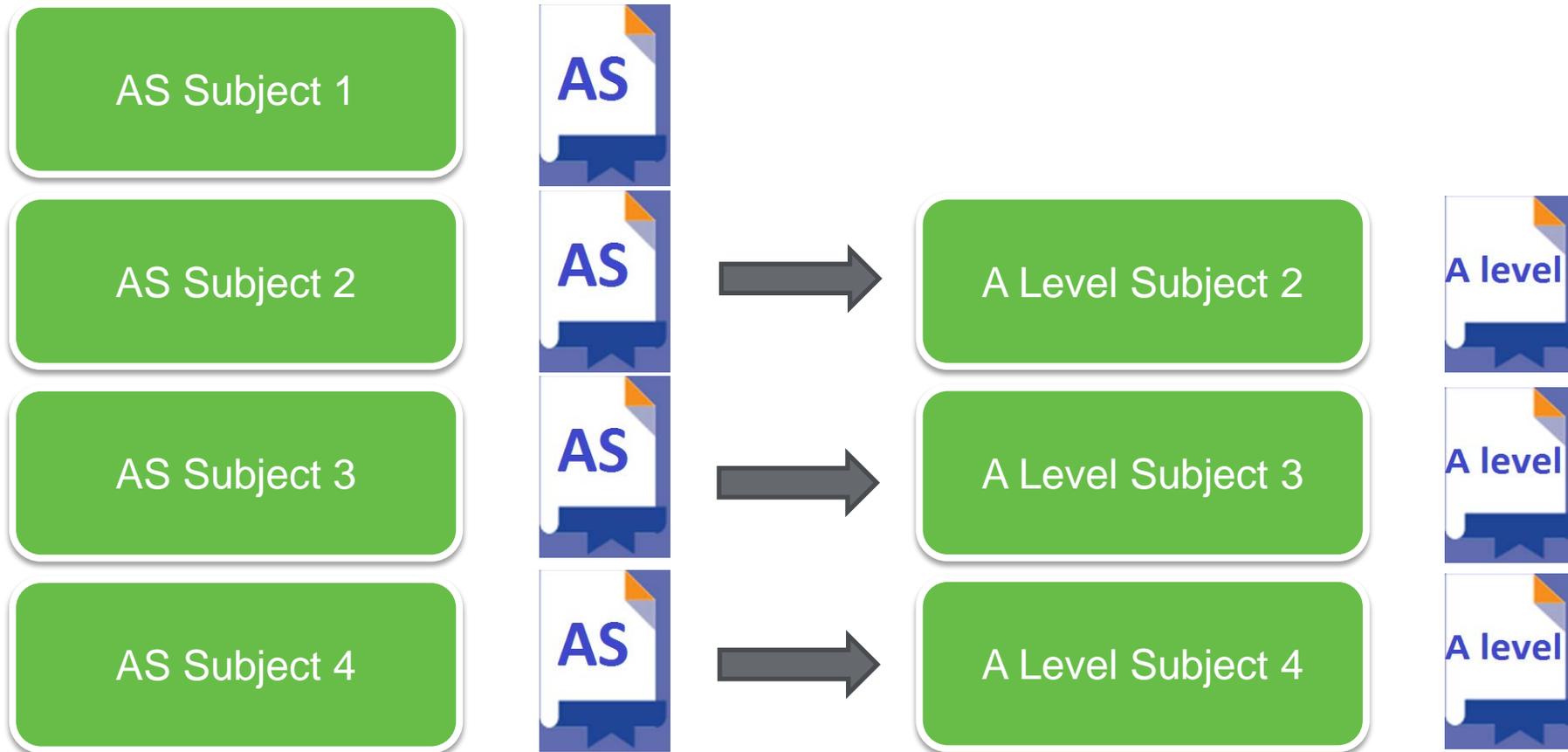
Pre-reform



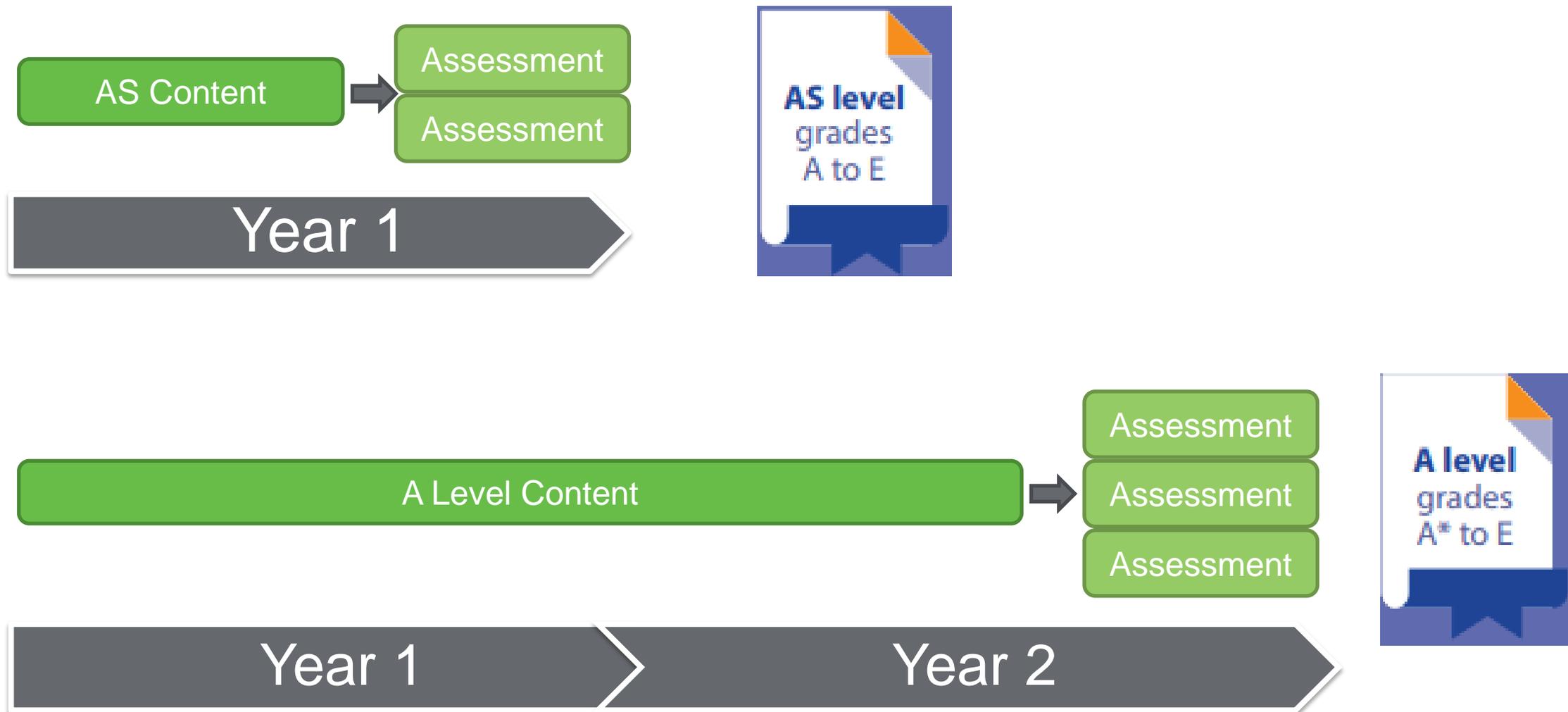
Pre-reform



Typical entry pre-reform

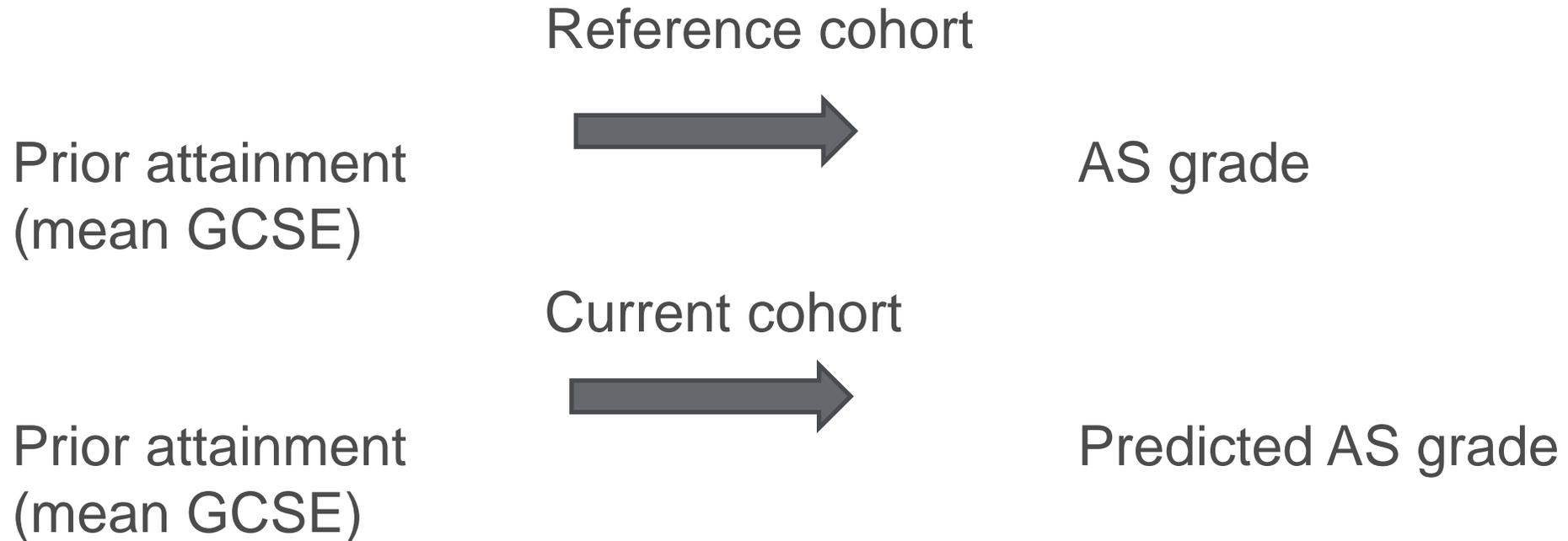


Reformed AS and A levels

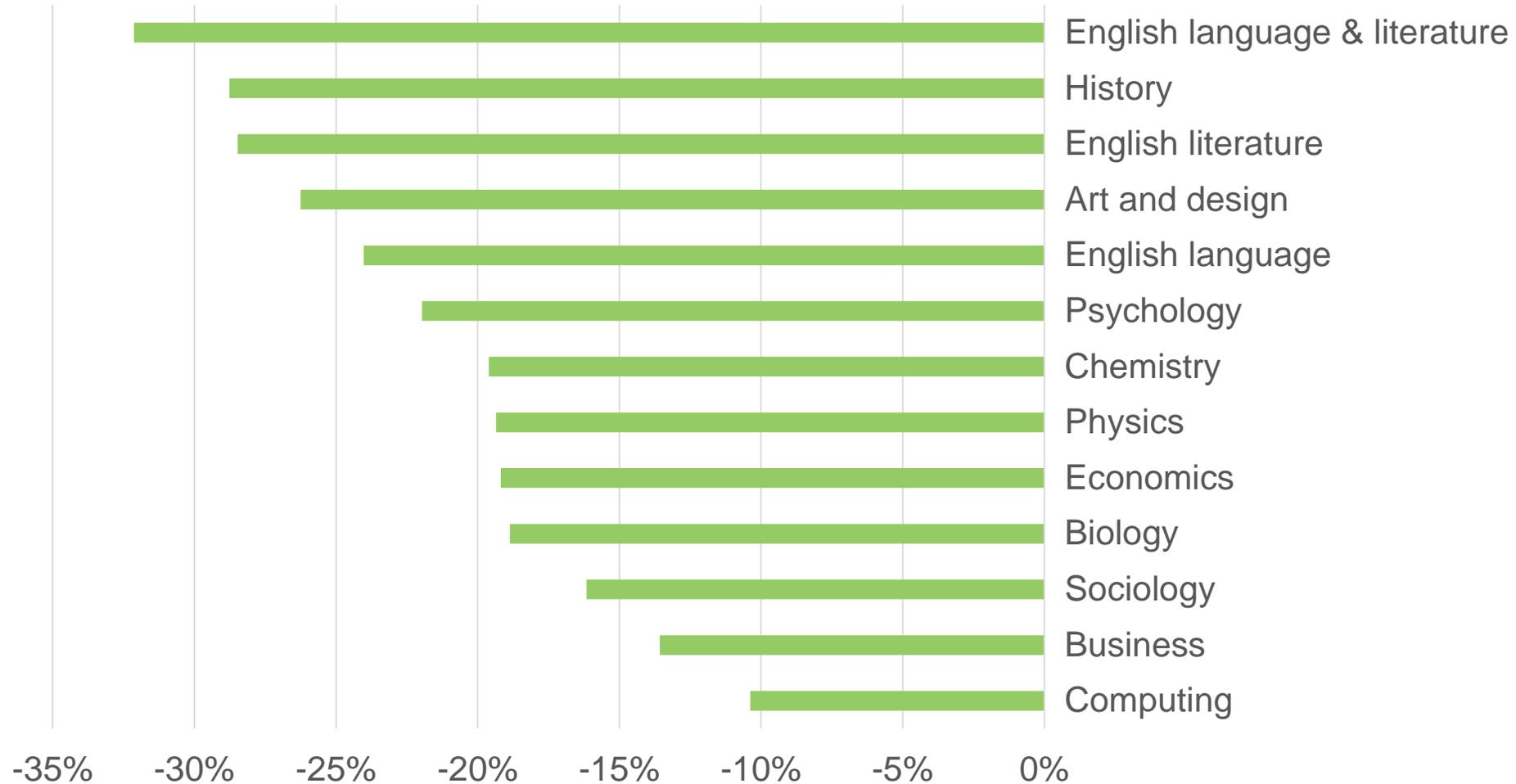


Maintenance of AS standards

- Maintaining standards at AS (and A level) uses a combination of statistical and judgemental evidence.

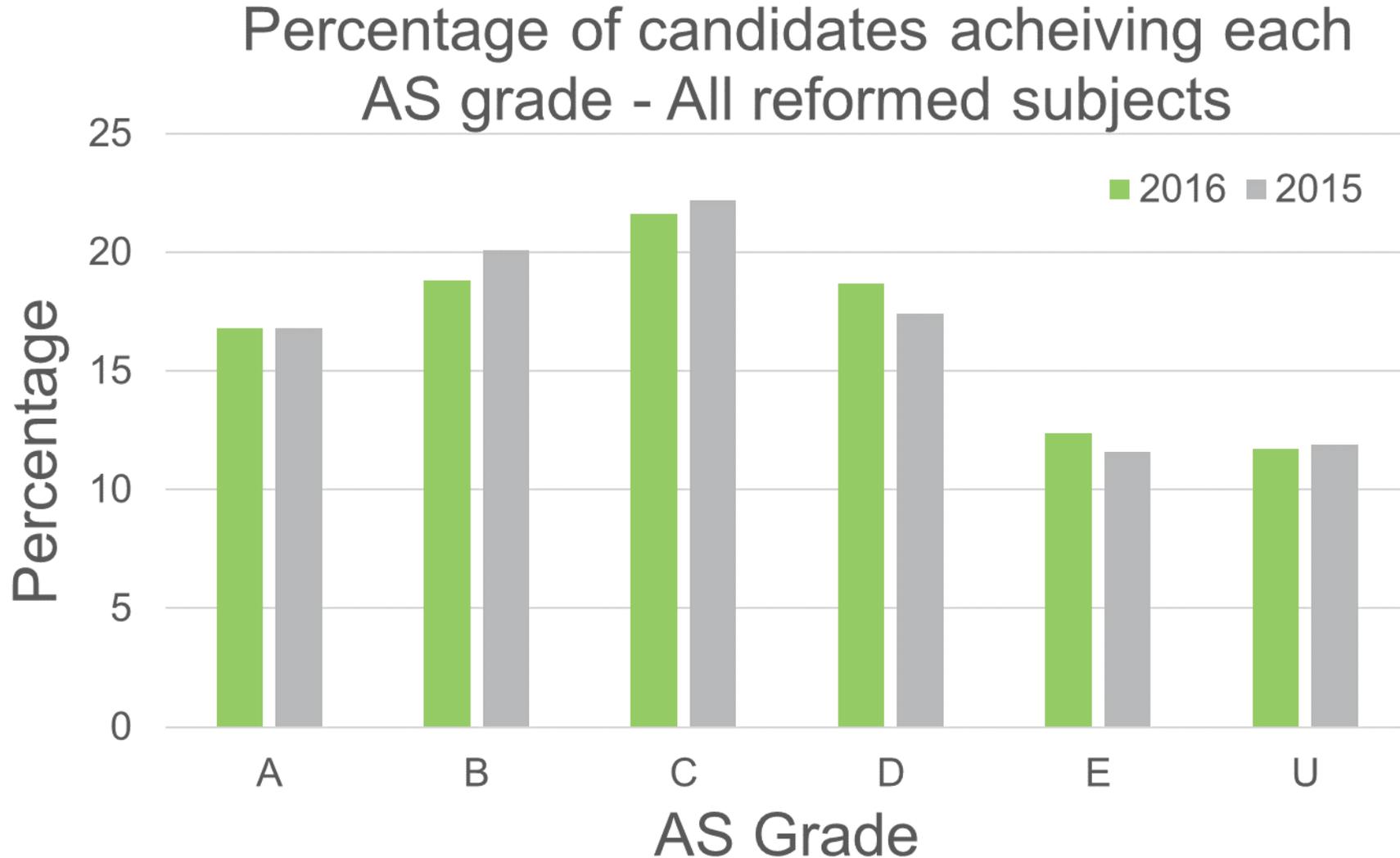


AS entries – summer 2016



Percentage change in 17 year old AS entries, summer 2015 to summer 2016

AS outcomes – summer 2016



Methodology

- Qualitative study: Semi-structured interviews with senior management from 17 centres (schools and colleges) in autumn 2016
- Stratified sample based on average A level point score and number of students

	Large Size	Medium Size	Small Size
High Attainment	2 schools	1 school 1 independent school	2 independent schools
Medium Attainment	1 school 2 colleges	2 schools	1 independent school
Low Attainment	1 school 1 college	2 schools	1 school

Questions

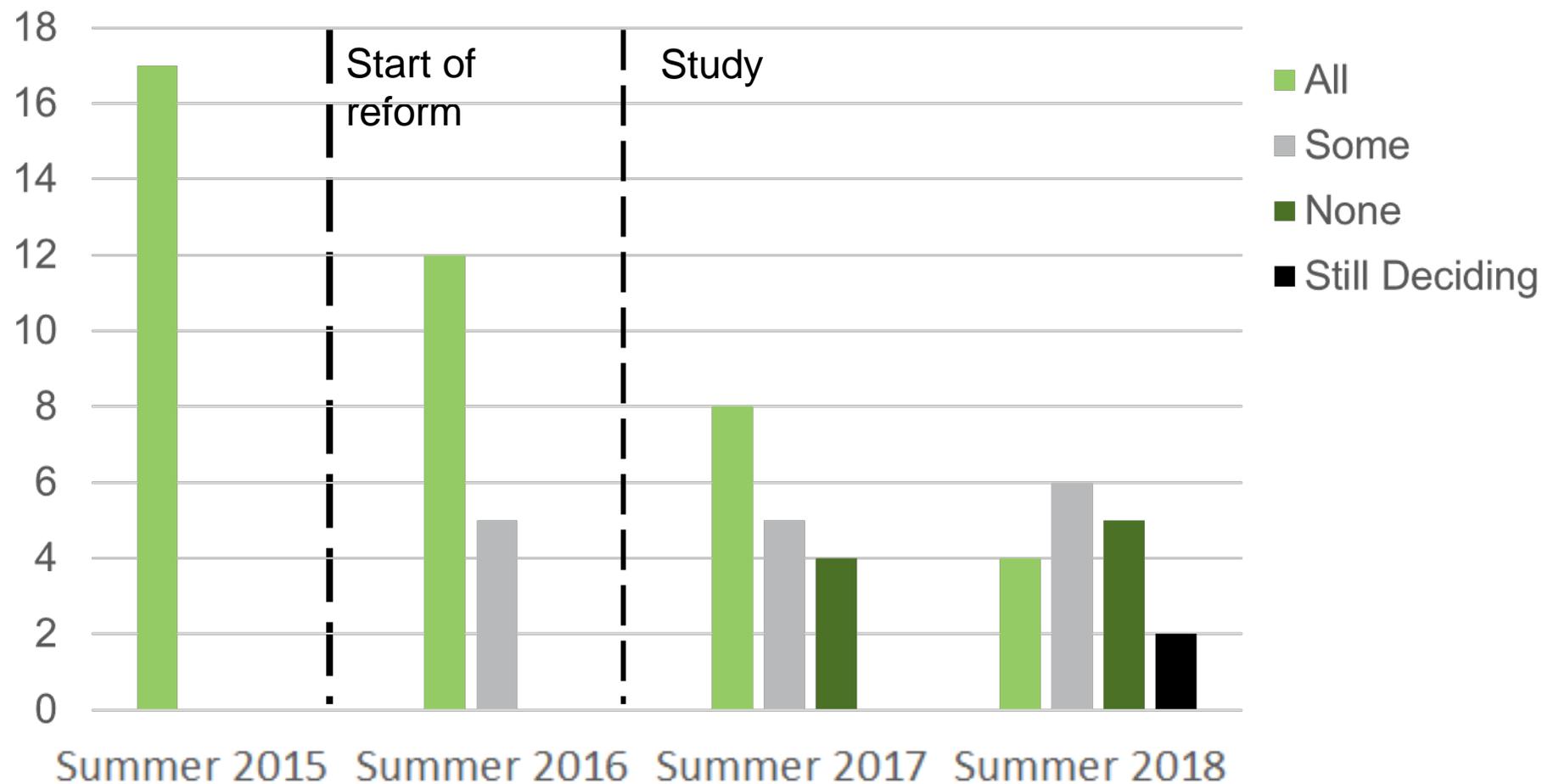
- AS entry approaches pre-reform, 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18
- Student motivation and work ethic
- Student subject choice
- Subject provision
- AS/A level entry requirements
- Reasons behind any changes

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Entry approaches

Number of centres entering all, some or none of their candidates to AS in reformed subjects



Reasons for dropping AS

*“A lot of it to be honest to do with **cost**, because otherwise you're paying for an AS and then you're paying for a full A-level, and that would have cost us about £25,000.”*

~medium sized, low attaining school

Reasons for dropping AS

*“The majority of staff want to get on with **teaching that second year content** if you like way before the end of year 12 [first year]. And if you're having a big break for exam leave for formal exams it impacts massively.”*

~small sized, high attaining independent school

Reasons for dropping AS

- Perception that students don't need AS for university entrance
- Perception that students may be disadvantaged by taking AS
- Difficulties co-teaching AS and A level
- Students not motivated
- Impact of AS results on learners
- To protect AS results

Different AS entry approaches between subjects

*“In the **first year** what we have said, so that our staff more than our students can actually get to know the course, we have said that we will enter. So for this year, currently, physics for example are entering all their students for AS”*

~medium sized, medium attaining school

Different AS entry approaches between subjects

*“Because we got a **new head of science** and we had some other new science teachers what he wanted to do was kind of **scope out the capabilities of his department** and obviously **get to understand the A-levels a bit better**. So he stuck with an AS because he wanted to ensure that the tracking was right, the monitoring was right and that the teaching was right”*

~medium sized, medium attaining school

Different AS entry approaches between subjects

“Psychology we changed from last year because of what we think the requirements are and what the students are ready for...

*...So we had learners last year who did extremely well on two of their AS subjects but did **crushingly badly** in their psychology paper. Now the **impact on that learner** emotionally and also practically is significant.”*

~large sized, low attaining college

Different AS entry approaches within subjects

*“So we’re going to run it that all students will do four. They will get to the very latest point at which we can make a decision on entry at AS level. The school will pay for **one AS entry**, and we will then give them an **internal entrance exam in the other three**. The idea being that you see it rather perversely in AS level in your weakest subject.”*

~large sized, high attaining school

Different AS entry approaches within subjects

*“So if a student were to make a decision that they were definitely going to **leave**, which some do, then we would **enter them for the ASs**. I mean we've got a student who's looking to apply for the RAF for example. He knows the process starts in April so he'll see out this year, but he will go to the RAF. So for him we could put him in.”*

~middle sized, low attaining school

Different AS entry approaches within subjects

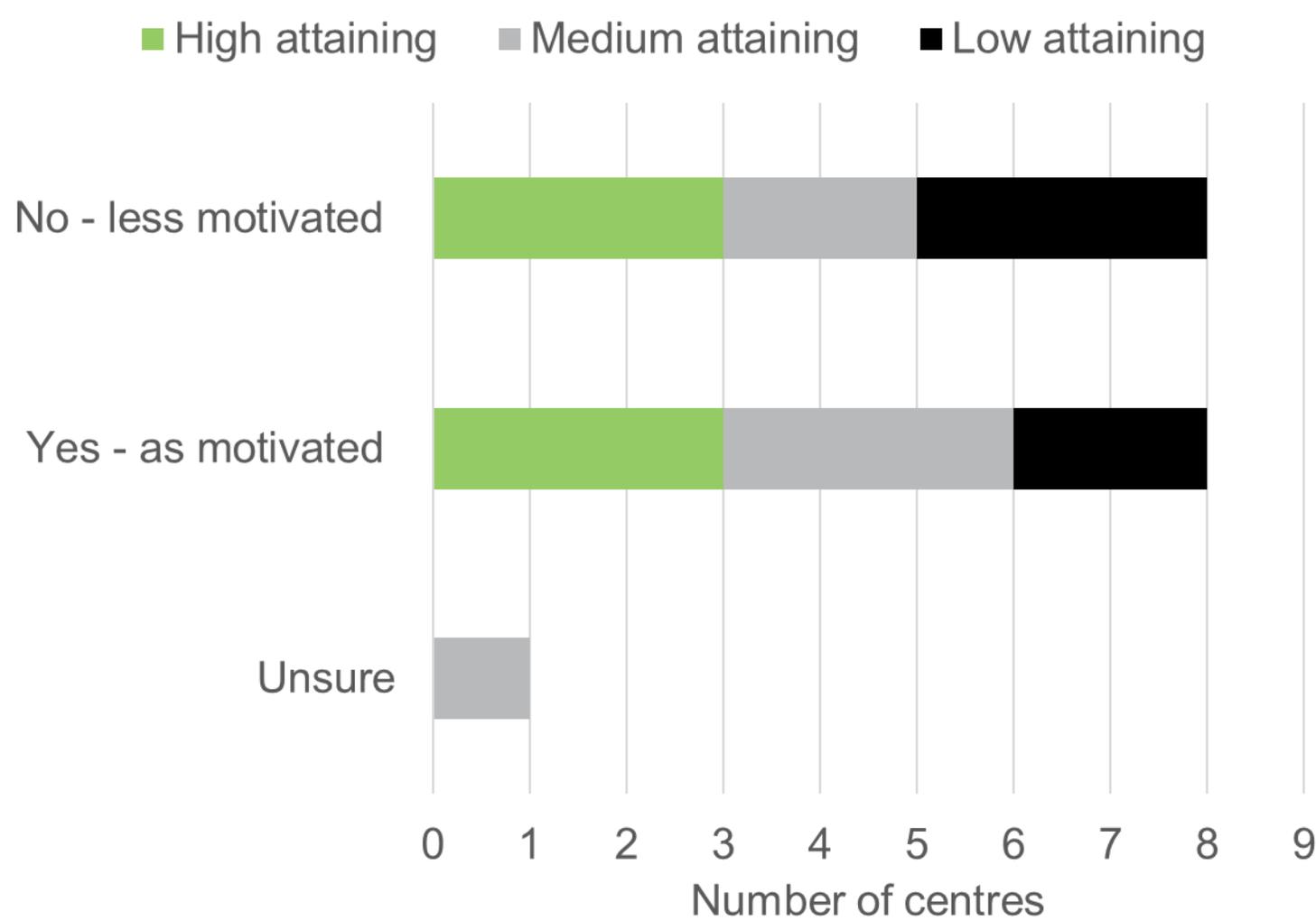
*“what we're looking at doing next year is offering what essentially will be an **AS route**...*

...we will offer a suite of subjects and tell a student you are effectively an academic access student. We are only entering you for the first year. If you are successful then at AS, then we would allow you to continue onto A2.

~middle sized, middle attaining school

Student motivation

Were students taking reformed AS as motivated to do well in their AS assessment as previous cohorts?



Summary and implications

- Many different entry approaches
- Smaller and possibly less able cohorts
- Possible issues with motivation and other characteristics which may affect performance

BUT

- Predictions met in summer 2016 and 2017
- Examiners judged the grade boundaries suggested by the predictions to be acceptable

Thank you

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