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PHYSICS CRISIS LINKED TO LACK OF QUALIFIED TEACHERS



Professor Alan Smithers and Dr Pamela Robinson

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The steep decline in the numbers of students taking A-level physics can be directly linked to the shortage of expert teachers and decreasing opportunity to study the subject, according to the results of a national survey published today (21st November) by the Centre for Education and Employment Research (CEER) at the University of Buckingham.

The survey of 432 schools and colleges, shows that teachers' qualification in physics is the most important factor, after pupil ability, in explaining performance in both GCSE and A-level physics.

Professor Alan Smithers and Dr Pamela Robinson, who conducted the survey, point out that although overall A-level entries in all subjects have risen by 14.6 per cent since 1990, the number of physics entries has fallen by 38.0 per cent. Nearly ten per cent (9.6%) of maintained schools with sixth forms now do not offer A-level physics, and 39.5% had in 2005 five entries or fewer. Over the same period, the intake of new physics teachers has dropped from about a third of the science total to just 12.8%.

Smithers and Robinson conclude: "Physics in schools and colleges is at risk through redefinition and lack of teachers with expertise in the subject. As a nation, we seem to be sleepwalking into losing one of the great branches of knowledge from compulsory education."

Read the full report in [PDF](#) format: [physicsprint.pdf](#) (2,653 KB)

Report by Anne Matsuoka and the Web Team

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