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Modular A levels in mathematics.

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Summary: The 1990s and early years of the 2000s saw a worrying decline in the numbers of students studying mathematics at A level in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This led to the closure of several Departments of Mathematics in Universities, greatly reduced numbers of students in others and linked to this a threat to the supply of well-qualified teachers of mathematics for our schools. From this doom and gloom scenario we are now seeing a boom in mathematics students and in 2010 numbers are back to those of the late 1980s. It is often argued that modularization of the mathematics curriculum and assessment has been one of the major driving forces behind the recovery. The author has been, for the past twenty years, at the forefront and a leading figure in the modularization story. In his article, he describes how MEI (Mathematics in Education and Industry) started the ball rolling and the challenges that were faced over the twenty years since the idea originated.

Classification: D34 B24 B74

Keywords: modular syllabus; history of mathematics education; research; modular assessment; educational diagnosis; achievement measurement; goals of mathematics education; learning objectives; content selection; statistics; fragmentation and synopticity; course selection; validity and reliability; use of mathematics; educational planning; further education