

Qualifications for 14-16 year olds and Performance Tables

Consultation Response Form

The closing date is: 30 September 2011
Your comments must reach us by that date.

THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online response facility available on the Department for Education e-consultation website www.education.gov.uk/consultations.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

Reason for confidentiality:

Name	Dr Rita Gardner
Organisation (if applicable)	Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)
Address:	RGS-IBG 1 Kensington Gore London SW7 2AR

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the PCU National helpline on:

Telephone: 0370 000 2288

or email: 14-16VQandPT.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the Consultation Unit on:

Telephone: 0370 000 2288

email: consultationunit@education.gsi.gov.uk

Please mark an X in one box below that best describes you as a respondent.

<input type="checkbox"/> Headteacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Governor
<input type="checkbox"/> Awarding Body	<input type="checkbox"/> Representative Body	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent
<input type="checkbox"/> Student	<input type="checkbox"/> FE Lecturer	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning Provider
<input type="checkbox"/> Employer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other	

Please Specify:

Director of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

The learned and professional society for geography.

1 Please let us have your comments on how we could improve the proposals in this document.

Comments:

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) is the learned and professional society for geography. The Society maintains a strong overview of the discipline, its position and its practice in schools, higher education, and the workplace, including professional accreditation. We advise on and support its advancement, dissemination and practice in these realms and within wider public engagement and policy. We have 15,000 members and Fellows and our work reached more than five million people in 2010. Each year the Society works, on a face-to-face basis with teachers and pupils from over 50% of English secondary schools and our online educational resources receive 400,000+ 'user sessions' annually.

The Society welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation about Qualification for 14-16 year olds and Performance tables.

1. We welcome and agree with the proposal that it is in the interests of the majority of students to study an academic core (approximately 80% of the timetable) with up to 20% comprising courses leading to high quality vocational qualifications.
2. The Society believes that it is right for the majority of pupils to continue to study academic subjects until age 16 and that these studies should represent the majority of their studies. The Society believes that pupils can benefit from the robust knowledge, skills and understanding gained through the study of academic GCSEs, such as geography and other E-Bacc subjects. This helps prepare them for further study and the world of work. We particularly welcome the development of the English Baccalaureate, with its requirement for study in a core of academic subjects. We also note the identification of further study at A Level in English, mathematics, the sciences, languages, geography and history as being desirable if pupils wish to study at the best universities (Russell Group of Universities, Informed Choices, 2011).
3. We welcome proposals that, alongside GCSEs, there is a narrower range of high quality vocational courses. The Society also agrees with the need to address the issues of equivalence between GCSE and vocational courses.
4. The Society supports the proposal to only allow up to two non-GCSE qualifications to be counted in future performance tables and also for a single vocational qualification to count as 'one' in the performance tables. The Society believes a situation where one vocational qualification was judged to be equivalent to four GCSE is wrong. This devalues the proper achievement of pupils sitting academic GCSE examinations, casts doubt on the rigour of vocational qualifications and encourages schools to 'play

the game' with their performance tables.

5. The Society welcomes the proposal of new criteria which will help assess whether existing (or new) vocational qualifications should be included in a preferred list. The Society agrees that these criteria should include consideration of whether a qualification provides broad progression; is GCSE sized or bigger; has a substantial proportion of external assessment and a proven track record.
6. However, the Society is concerned about the inclusion of 'high uptake' within the new criteria. This has the potential to create inertia in the system where there may be pressure for existing vocational qualifications, due to their established popularity, to continue. For example, in 2010 the OCR National Level 2 in ICT was the fourth most popular 14-19 course in English schools. This is despite Ofsted identifying it as being of 'doubtful value' (TES 15.1.2010). The Society does not believe existing popularity, when established in an environment riddled with perverse incentives, should be part of decision making about the future validity of a qualification.

Qualifications should be assessed on their merits, not on how well they have been marketed to young people.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply X

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

XYes

 No

All DfE public consultations are required to conform to the following criteria within the Government Code of Practice on Consultation:

Criterion 1: Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

Criterion 2: Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.

Criterion 3: Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

Criterion 4: Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

Criterion 5: Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

Criterion 6: Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

Criterion 7: Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Carole Edge, DfE Consultation Co-ordinator, tel: 01928 438060 / email: carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 30 September 2011

Send by post to:

Department for Education
Qualifications and Policy Division
Level 2
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Send by e-mail to: 14-16VQandPT.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk