



Department
for Education

Chairs of Governors, Clerks and Principals of English Further
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Our ref:

REFORM OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

As the academic year draws to a close, I would like to thank you for all the valuable work that you have been doing to provide young people and adults with knowledge and skills to progress to further study, into employment or within employment. This year I have seen many excellent examples of well-delivered, cutting-edge college courses with enthusiastic students and supportive and closely involved employers. I hope that the changes we are introducing will help you to make this kind of practice universal. I recognise we are pursuing reforms on several different fronts, so I thought it might be helpful to set out the details in one place. All these reforms follow the crucial principles of rigour and responsiveness to the need of employers and learners.

As you will be aware, all young people are now required to continue in education or training until at least the end of the academic year in which they turn 17. This raising of the participation age is an historic change which will give young people the opportunity to develop the skills that they need for adult life and help this country meet the shortages in skilled workers. The funding and curriculum reforms we are introducing alongside these changes will give colleges much greater flexibility to design education which meets the needs of each student. From September, study programmes will be funded on a 'per student' basis. This will enable all young people to follow courses which include challenging qualifications leading to further technical or academic study, an Apprenticeship, employment or practical, employment-based training. New Traineeships, which for 16-19 year olds will be part of study programmes, and Supported Internships for young people with a Learning Difficulty Assessment, will also start to be available to young people from August.

The introduction of study programmes also paved the way for the introduction of Tech Levels which I announced on 4 July. From September 2014, 16-19 year olds will be able to start their courses in the secure knowledge that their qualifications will be recognised by employers and by higher education. Those students that complete Tech Level qualifications take a Level 3 Core Maths qualification and carry out an Extended Project will be recognised as completing the requirements of the Technical Baccalaureate measure. For the first time these students will be recognised as having achieved a

standard of excellence of equal stature to the best of those pursuing academic study. Reforms are planned to vocational qualifications offered to 16-19 year olds at Level 2.

In the autumn we plan to consult on improvements to 16-19 education and training accountability arrangements, including the way in which Tech Levels and other qualifications will be reported in performance tables and used to set minimum standards. As we have set out, we will take a tough approach to inadequate provision that fails learners. Your views will be vital to this so please do respond when the consultation is published.

Also from September, students who fail to achieve a GCSE A*-C in either English or maths at age 16 will be expected to continue to study these subjects. This is another historic change, urgently sought by employers and badly needed if the UK is to compete internationally. I fully appreciate that this, and the expected increases in the number of students taking maths at level 2, will be an enormous challenge for some colleges. A new bursary scheme is being introduced, which from September will pay graduates up to £20,000 to train and take up a maths teaching post within a Further Education College and up to £9,000 to study and teach English. At the same time a maths conversion course has been developed to help existing teachers to retrain to teach this subject in a college.

I am also aware of the need to link these reforms with provision at adult level, and to make the adult qualifications system easier to understand and use. For example, we will be funding learners aged 19-24 to take the new Tech Level qualifications where they are considered to be more appropriate to their needs than qualifications on the Qualification and Credit Framework, following enthusiastic endorsement for this approach in our consultation on the 16-19 reforms. (More details on Tech Levels is detailed in Annex A under the 'Post-16 Work Experience' section.)

To streamline the publicly-funded qualification offer for adults, we are removing qualifications with little or no take-up from 1 August. Following a thorough review, we have removed 1,884 qualifications, 70% of which had no publicly-funded enrolments in the last two years, while acting to protect niche qualifications which are never likely to attract large numbers of people. I have also asked the Skills Funding Agency to develop clear business rules for the funding of new qualifications. During this year an average of 500 new qualifications a month have been coming on to the Register. We need to develop clear criteria to identify which of these should fall within the scope of Government funding. Otherwise we risk using scarce resources to fund qualifications which have little traction with employers or value to learners. The Agency will be working with the sector during the coming months to put these rules in place.

Finally, I want to see the Post-19 qualifications system as a whole become more responsive to the needs of learners and employers, to achieve greater recognition by them and to be easier for them to use. I have asked Nigel Whitehead, group managing director for programmes and support in BAE Systems and a UK Commissioner for Employment and Skills, to lead work looking at the characteristics of a more effective qualifications system and the roles of all the participants in it. He will be building on the system as it stands, but will be looking at ways of streamlining the development process for qualifications and for criteria which will indicate more clearly to users what they are intended to deliver and how that delivery can be measured. Nigel and his team will be

reporting to me in September, and we will then be engaging with you and with other people in the system on how we can bring the reforms he proposes into practice.

The attached Annex sets out each of these changes in more detail, including where further information can be found.

I know that none of these reforms will be easy to implement. Each one depends on the other to succeed. However, I know that you, like me, are absolutely committed to ensuring that young people, adults and our economy, can meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. I look forward to continuing to work alongside you to achieve this goal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom" on the top line and "Matthew" on the bottom line.

MATTHEW HANCOCK

FUNDING AND CURRICULUM REFORMS – from September 2013

- Major post-16 curriculum and funding reforms will be introduced from September 2013.
- All students aged 16-19, whether doing academic study, vocational study or a mixture of both should be offered a study programme which is based on their prior attainment with clear educational and/or employment outcomes. In particular students should:
 - spend most of their study programme time taking one or more substantial academic or vocational qualifications (equivalent to in size to two A levels of 300 hours taken over two years);
 - undertake a traineeship or extended work experience;
 - take part in non-qualification activity such as tutorials, work experience or other work-related learning;
 - continue to study English and maths if they did not achieve a GCSE grade C in these subjects by the age of 16.
- To support the introduction of study programmes, funding will be allocated per student rather than per qualification. New funding rates are based on an average of 600 hours per year of planned activities per student.
- The following link provides full details of the 16-19 study programme:
<http://tinyurl.com/o4mg9ab>
- All 16-19 funding information is available on the DfE website at:
<http://tinyurl.com/pbvkbmo>
- The Education Funding Agency's funding guidance is here:
<http://tinyurl.com/pwbgpjw>
- And you can find details of the Participation of young people – statutory guidance at
<http://tinyurl.com/dx2qjgh>

POST-16 WORK EXPERIENCE – from September 2013

- All students that would benefit should be given the opportunity to take part in work experience as a part of their study programme. To count for funding purposes, work experience must be timetabled, organised and/or supervised by the institution and within that institution's normal working pattern and offered by an external employer.
- Students that are not studying for a substantial Level 2 or Level 3 qualification should be offered a substantial work experience placement or traineeship focused on supporting their transition into employment or an apprenticeship. Further details are at:
<http://tinyurl.com/o9sgdqs>
- In future work experience is likely to form a part of Tech Level qualifications. From 2016 these qualifications will need to involve local employers in their delivery such as through work experience. Further details are at: <http://tinyurl.com/pa6jtcb>
- Revised and significantly simplified guidance on the health and safety requirements has been published by the Health and Safety Executive at the request of the Department and can be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/qz6wsfj>

TRAINEESHIPS AND SUPPORTED INTERNSHIPS – from September 2013

- Traineeships will be introduced from August 2013 for 16- to 24-year-olds (and young people with learning difficulty assessments up to academic age 25). Traineeships will fit within broader study programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds. Further details are at: <http://tinyurl.com/acrr9gm>
- Supported Internships will be available for 16-25 year olds with Learning Difficulty Assessments. Delivered within the study programme framework, these will be available to provide a supported route into employment for these young people. Further details are at: <http://tinyurl.com/k2xycdx>

MATHEMATICS AND ENGLISH – from September 2013 (Condition of funding from September 2014)

- Where a student does not have a GCSE A*-C English and Maths they must take either:
 - English and mathematics GCSEs or iGCSEs that count towards the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) measure in KS4 performance tables; or
 - Functional Skills and Free Standing Mathematics qualifications registered with Ofqual, as a stepping stone to GCSE study.
 - English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) qualifications registered with Ofqual, as a stepping stone to GCSE study (in relation to English only).
- This will become a condition of student funding from September 2014. For further information, see the EFA's June 2013 publication 'Overview of the 16 to 19 funding formula', available on the DfE website here: <http://tinyurl.com/lfn2v9b>
- Bursaries will be paid to graduates to train and take up a maths and English teaching posts within a Further Education College.
- Existing teachers will be able to undertake a maths conversion course to retrain to teach this subject in a college.

ADVANCED/LEVEL 3 VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION REFORM – from September 2014

- In future only high value vocational qualifications which meet pre-defined characteristics will be recognised in schools and colleges performance tables. Two new categories of level 3 vocational qualification will be recognised - Applied General qualifications, and Technical Level qualifications, or Tech Level for short.
- A list of the qualifications which fall into each of these two categories will be published in November 2013 for teaching from September 2014. Until this list is published please exercise caution in making changes to your curriculum and timetable.
- Examination awarding bodies will be given two years to introduce more extensive reforms to qualifications in time for teaching in September 2016.
- Technical guidance setting out the characteristics that Level 3 vocational qualifications will need to feature in future performance tables is at: <http://tinyurl.com/p6a9obr> . The outcome of the consultation on these reforms is at: <http://tinyurl.com/nrbdfg7>

- In April, we announced the Technical Baccalaureate measure which will recognise the achievement of students taking advanced (Level 3) technical study programmes. This requires the achievement of an advanced Tech Level qualification, a core maths qualification and an extended project qualification. Details of the announcement are available at: <http://tinyurl.com/bn7tzmy>
- First teaching of courses towards the TechBacc measure will start in September 2014. The criteria Core Maths qualifications will be published in the autumn term.

REFORMS TO THE SYSTEM OF SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ENTERING FURTHER EDUCATION – from September 2014

- The Children and Families Bill currently before Parliament will create a new system of support for children and young people with special educational needs from birth to 25, including young people up to 25 in the FE Sector.
- Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans will replace existing Learning Difficulty Assessments, and Statements of special education needs. EHC plans will be progressively introduced from September 2014. More details are available at: <http://tinyurl.com/m8tm3cg>
- The new system will ensure that, for example, colleges are involved in the assessment process and that they will receive the EHC Plan as part of the young person's transition to further education. FE colleges will also have the right to ask local authorities to carry out an assessment for an EHC Plan for a young person a college considers to have previously unidentified needs.

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS BURSARIES AND GRANTS

- Bursaries will be available to graduates who wish to specialise in teaching young people with Special Education Needs within a Further Education College.
- Grants will also be available to build high level specialist skills for those already in the FE Sector, to support SEN teachers and inclusion coordinators to take continuing professional development (CPD) specialist SEN modules.
- This new package of support will help to increase the numbers of teachers in the FE Sector equipped with specialist skills, and encourage improved teaching and learning practice, to help young people with special education needs get the most from their Further Education study programme.

A LEVEL REFORM – from September 2015

- The first new linear A levels, with exams at the end of two years, are planned to be introduced for teaching in September 2015 and reported in performance tables from 2017.
- Universities will be involved in reviewing the content of new A level qualifications.
- The AS will become a standalone qualification and will no longer count towards the A level result.
- For more information see: <http://tinyurl.com/m6slxzy>

16-19 ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Financial Monitoring** – Revision to the Individualised Learner Record will allow the collection of information relating to the delivery of different element of 16-19 study programmes. The Education Funding Agency’s Guidance can be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/phmvqsr>
- **Inspection** – information about the relationship between 16-19 Study programmes, qualification choice and inspections under the Common Inspection Framework can be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/nns4cyl>
- **Performance** – we have already announced that academic and vocational qualifications will be reported separately in school and college performance tables beginning with the 2013 results and that the same performance measures will be applied to all post-16 providers. Our intention is to report Applied General and Technical Levels and A levels separately from 2016 and to use these as a basis for reporting headline measures, information to inform student choice and to set minimum standards. A consultation on this will be carried out in the autumn term.

Other important reform for 14-16 year olds

- Additionally, although aimed at young people engaged on KS4, you may want to be aware of reform enabling recruitment of 14-16 year olds in FE colleges: <http://tinyurl.com/a7mcjv6>

See over the page for information on adult vocational education.

ADULT VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Removal of under-used adult qualifications from funding

- Almost 2,000 adult vocational qualifications that are not responsive to learner and employer needs will no longer be government funded. A press notice announcing the removal of low value qualifications from the scope of funding is available here: <http://tinyurl.com/mkg3cu9>

Review of Adult Vocational Skills

- The aim of the review is to create a vision and strategy for having high quality, rigorous vocational qualifications for adults that will be valued by employers and individuals, regardless of state funding policy. It is engaging employers more actively in the design and delivery of the qualifications. The review opened in March and will report in September 2013. A brief description of the review, including links to other related reviews is on the UKCES website: <http://tinyurl.com/mwt5hat>