

# Study Programmes for 16-19 year olds

Consultation

Launch Date 6 October 2011  
Respond by 4 January 2012  
Ref: Department for Education

# Study Programmes for 16-19 year olds

Professor Wolf's Review of Vocational Education published in March 2011 recommended that, in order to meet the needs of the modern labour market, the overall study programmes of all full time students following largely vocational programmes in state-funded provision should be governed by a set of general principles relating primarily to content, general structure, assessment arrangements and contact time. Provided these principles are met, institutions should be free to offer any qualifications they please from a recognised awarding body. In addition, all students, regardless of the course they are on, who are under 19 and do not have GCSE A\*- C in English and/or maths should be required as part of the programme to take a course which either leads directly to these qualifications, or which provide significant progress towards GCSE entry and success.

Professor Wolf also recommended that schools and colleges be encouraged to prioritise longer high quality internships or placements for 16-19 year olds, reflecting the fact that almost no young people move into full-time employment at 16.

The Government response, published in May 2011, accepted these recommendations in full. This consultation paper sets out our proposals to ensure that all 16-19 year olds study coherent, well thought out programmes which offer them breadth and depth and do not limit their options for future study or work. This new approach, planned to be introduced at the same time as a new funding formula in 2013, will give providers substantially more freedom in designing full time course provision for students between the age of 16 and 19.

# Study Programmes for 16-19 year olds

## A Consultation

- To** FE Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges, Academies, Schools with Sixth Forms, Independent Private Providers, Independent Specialist Providers, Local Authorities, Provider or Stakeholder Organisations and Awarding Organisations.
- Issued** 6 October 2011
- Enquiries To** If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the department on 0370 000 22 88 or by e-mail: [wolf.studyprogrammes@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:wolf.studyprogrammes@education.gsi.gov.uk)

## Contact Details

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation, you can contact the department on 0870 222 2288.

If your enquiry is related to the e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Consultation Unit by e-mail: [consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk) or by telephone: 0370 000 2288.

## 1 Foreword by Professor Alison Wolf

- 1.1 Full-time education is now the norm for English 16 and 17 year olds. But until quite recently, this was not the case. As recently as the 1990s, large numbers of 16 year olds and even larger numbers of 17 year olds left school directly for employment. Today, changing demand from employers led to a collapse in the youth labour market well in advance of the 2008 financial crisis and the following recession; while ever more young people aspire to higher levels of education.

Our 16-19 provision has not kept pace with this massive change. There are close to one and a quarter million 16 and 17 year olds in England today; and far too many of them are not following coherent programmes of study. I am delighted that the government accepted my recommendation that they should do so, and that 16-19 funding should be reformed accordingly. I am also delighted that the government agrees on the importance of maths and English, which are the most important vocational as well as the most important academic skills of all, and therefore need to be central to the design of post-16 education.

Young people in this age group are very different in their interests and ambitions. Unlike 14-16 year olds, it is appropriate that they should be offered a wide range of specialist options, and programmes which are highly diverse rather than dominated by a large common core. These cannot be designed and dictated centrally. They need to be developed by colleges, schools and providers, in response to the interests and ambitions of their clientele. The government's proposals, including, crucially, its proposed funding reforms, are designed to enable innovation and responsiveness to local needs and demand. I look forward to watching the post-16 sector develop high-quality and diverse programmes for this age group in the years ahead.

**Professor Alison Wolf October 2011**

## **2 Summary of key proposals**

- 2.1 We are consulting on how to implement key recommendations from Professor Wolf's Review of vocational education. In particular, how we ensure that all 16-19 year olds study coherent, well thought out programmes which offer them breadth and depth and do not limit their options for future study or work.
- 2.2 Professor Wolf's recommendations emerged from a concern that the existing approach to funding creates perverse incentives, encouraging providers to enter students for qualifications that they will easily pass rather than those that will stretch them and which are the best for progression to higher and further education and skilled employment.
- 2.3 This new approach, planned to be introduced at the same time as a new funding formula in 2013, will give providers substantially more freedom in designing full time course provision for students between the age of 16 and 19. Rather than fund on the basis of qualifications, we propose to fund on a per student basis, as we do for pupils pre-16. Providers will be free to use the funding to develop programmes of study that will stretch students and support them to progress. They will be accountable for their students' achievement and progression.
- 2.4 We expect that the majority of study programmes could be delivered in around 600 hours, a significant proportion of which should be contact time. This more flexible approach reflects Professor Wolf's vision for more stretching programmes including at least one qualification of substantial size offering progression into education or skilled employment. For those students up to 19, including A Level students, who do not have GCSE A\*-C in English and/or maths, the study programme should also lead to these qualifications or provide progress towards them.

- 2.5 High quality experience of the workplace will be an important component of these programmes for many 16-19 year olds. Under these proposals, providers will be free to offer experience of the workplace as part of a programme of study where that will help the student progress. We will work through the funding rules that need to change to enable this to happen whilst ensuring proper accountability for public money.

***This document needs to be read alongside the 16-19 funding formula review consultation available at <http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/>***

### 3 Introduction

- 3.1 We believe that increased flexibility and local solutions provide better outcomes for young people than further central prescription. This is particularly true for 16-19 year olds who are a diverse group of individuals with very different circumstances and interests.
- 3.2 We trust professionals to want to, and strive to, deliver what is best for their students; so our proposed approach is based on maximum flexibility and minimum bureaucracy. Education is a vital public service, of crucial importance to young people and for the future economic and social wellbeing of the country. Because the funding for education is significant, we need to ensure that the increased flexibility goes hand in hand with a rigorous and demanding accountability regime, to hold publicly-funded institutions to account for their performance. As part of this, we will be monitoring the extent to which institutions are using the new flexibilities we are providing to make the overall improvements in their offer to their students. We are confident that they will. However, we will review changes to provision and if improvements do not materialise, we will consider whether greater central direction is needed to secure better study programmes for all 16-19 year olds.
- 3.3 Vocational education is critical for both social mobility and for economic growth. The current vocational offer is failing too many students so we need to act now. These proposals respond to the feedback we have received from employers as part of the Growth Review consultations. Professor Wolf's in depth review of vocational education maps out a clear agenda for change. We have already set out our plans for reform in the Government's response to the Wolf review. The response can be found at: [www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00038-2011](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00038-2011). This document sets out our plans for reforming study programmes for 16-19 year olds.

# Section 1 Proposal for coherent study programmes for all 16-19 year olds

4.1 Professor Wolf's Review of Vocational Education published in March of this year examined the 16-17 cohort and found that:

- about two-fifths of the cohort are on A level programmes
- around one-fifth are on advanced craft or BTEC level 3 courses with clear progression value
- a small number are on apprenticeships
- the remainder are pursuing below level 1, level 1 or 2 qualifications with poor progression opportunities.

4.2 It is this last group, where Professor Wolf states that "severe problems are evident". She found that many young people in this group are churning between qualifications that provide little prospect of progression, periods of unemployment and short-term employment. Many of the level 2 qualifications taken by these young people bring no positive returns in the labour market. Overall, Professor Wolf estimated that at least one in five of each cohort is getting "very little benefit from the post-16 secondary education system".

4.3 To address this problem, Professor Wolf recommended that:

- programmes of study for 16-19 year olds in full time education should be governed by a set of principles relating to content, structure, assessment, and contact time (recommendation 5)
- programmes for full time students should not be wholly occupational and should include at least one qualification of substantial size which offers progression either into higher levels of education or into skilled employment (recommendation 6)
- students up to 19 who do not have GCSE A\*-C in English and/or maths should be required as part of this programme to pursue a course which either leads to these qualifications or which provide progress towards them (recommendation 9)
- funding for full time students aged 16-19 should be on a programme basis, with a given level of funding per student (rather

than on a qualification by qualification basis) (recommendation 11)

- 16-19 year olds should have access to high quality internships (recommendation 21).

- 4.4 The Government accepted all of the recommendations contained in Professor Wolf's report. This paper sets out how we intend to implement the above recommendations and seeks responses to some key questions.
- 4.5 Whilst the focus of Professor Wolf's review, and therefore of this policy document, is students following largely vocational programmes, the principles of good programmes of study set out here apply to all full time students in state funded provision (i.e. FE providers, third sector and private providers and schools). In particular, the recommendation for 16-19 year olds to continue to study English and/or maths applies to all. We expect A level students who have not yet achieved their grade C or above to continue to study towards these qualifications.
- 4.6 The focus of these proposals is on 16 and 17 year olds (who will be required to participate) but also covers 18/19 year olds who started their course when they were 16 or 17 and need longer to complete it. The implications of these proposals for those students who continue to study post-19 are being considered.
- 4.7 This policy document is linked to the proposals contained in the 16-19 funding formula review consultation <http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/>. The 16-19 funding consultation document proposes funding programmes on a per learner basis rather than per qualification. Whilst Professor Wolf's review focuses on vocational education, the proposal to move to funding per learner will apply across all programmes.
- 4.8 We believe that funding students on a programme basis will remove the perverse incentives that can result in young people amassing large numbers of qualifications which, together, do not necessarily provide the best employment or other progression options. Funding changes will also remove the incentive for providers to place young people on qualifications that are too easy for them. Moving to funding per student will give providers greater freedom to determine the learning programme that meets the needs of individual students. Their funding will no longer be linked to every separate element of a student's programme. Providers will receive a funding envelope for each student and it will be for them to design a programme within that though we would expect every student's programme to meet the principles set out in this paper.
- 4.9 Through the new funding system we will provide schools and colleges with an aggregated allocation based on the number of students they recruited in the preceding year which we will expect them to use to fund

coherent programmes. The post-16 sector is diverse and the proposed new flexibility in funding will allow decisions about the best programmes for individual students to be made based on their best interests and progression opportunities. We are seeking views through the funding formula consultation on the best way to manage that.

#### 4.10 **16-19 Study programme principles**

The broad principles of what a good programme looks like for a 16 and 17 year old in full time vocational study are described below. In summary, programmes should include: at least one qualification of substantial size and challenge; non-qualifications activity such as tutorial time; internships where appropriate; and English and maths for all those who do not have the GCSE at C or above. Within this framework colleges will be free to tailor programmes to meet the needs of their students. Some students, for example, will be ready to follow full level 3 qualifications, others may need to get a level 2 qualification before they can progress to level 3, for others, the focus will be on good internships or other forms of experience of the workplace together with English and maths tuition.

4.11 This flexible approach will allow colleges to offer full programmes without the need for new bureaucratic requirements. It should give colleges the freedom to make choices in the best interests of all students. We describe in more detail how these principles apply to low attaining students and those with learning difficulties in more detail at the end of this document.

4.12 Providers should offer their full-time students coherent educational programmes which offer breadth, depth and good progression opportunities. Programmes for students on full-time vocational provision can include both qualification-driven and non-qualification activity. Study programmes should not focus solely on one occupational area: they should not narrow a young person's options in terms of future learning or employment. Programmes should be designed for individual students, but in general we would expect them to include:

- One qualification of substantial size, with rigorous assessment and good progression opportunities. We will set out the characteristics of high quality qualifications to guide providers when considering which courses to offer. This is because it is right for 16-19 year olds to specialise to a greater degree than is the case for pupils under 16. We would expect a substantive qualification to be included in virtually all programmes of study for 16-19 year olds, although some low attaining students or those young people with a mild/moderate learning difficulty or disability may need to focus more on general literacy and numeracy and/or internships or experience of work, at least initially. Other students may need to do some further level 2 study before they can progress to a full level 3 qualification



- English and maths for those who have not achieved GCSE A\*-C at age 16 - this is described more fully in section 2 below
- High quality internships or other forms of experience of the workplace where appropriate: this can be particularly important for lower attaining students and young people with a learning difficulty or disability. The proximity to the labour market brought by doing an internship also benefits those who do not necessarily want to go into higher education, but want to get a job after college. More detail can be found in section 3 below
- Other support activity, e.g. tutorial time, study skills, extra-curricular enrichment and, particularly for low attaining students, personal and social development.

4.13 Providers will need to ensure that students are supported throughout their programme of study. It has become clear that some students have not had someone overseeing their courses and qualifications in the past - particularly those who move between a number of small training providers. In order to ensure that all students have a high quality study programme which enables them to progress it is important that this changes. We expect colleges and other providers to identify an individual with overall responsibility for putting together and overseeing a given student's study programme: too often no one has an overview of what a student is doing. Providers are best placed to decide how this should be done but we would expect each student to have someone overseeing and discussing with them their programme of study and understand how their programme will help them progress.

## **Ensuring the 16-19 Study programme principles are followed**

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- 5.1 The new principles will allow greater freedoms and a different way of monitoring the progress of institutions and their students. We have set out how we expect the new funding system to be implemented and this represents a significant departure from incentivising providers to enter their students for as many exams as possible. Rather than auditing inputs we are trusting providers to use their professional judgement and experience resulting in the best outcomes for their students. Where it is right to depart from the study programme framework for an individual learner, providers should do so.
- 5.2 Providers will be held to account but in a different way from in the past. We will keep track of how well they are meeting the needs and

aspirations of their students and if they are not moving towards a programme of study we will look at being more prescriptive.

- 5.3 Many providers already put on excellent programmes for their 16 and 17 year olds and we want to ensure that they continue to do so. However, where perverse incentives may have been encouraging the teaching of larger numbers of small qualifications without good progression routes, we expect to see change.
- 5.4 To ensure that the principles are followed, we will do a number of things to monitor the situation and introduce incentives to encourage providers to change their existing courses. First, we will make it an expectation of the new funding system that the 16-19 study programme principles are followed. We do not plan to make this a condition of funding that has to be audited.
- 5.5 Secondly, we will work with Ofsted to ensure that inspectors have a good understanding of the principles of a good study programme for inspection purposes. Where provision does not meet the principles, Ofsted will be able report on this in future. Thirdly, we will judge providers on their results as reported in performance tables. We are currently reviewing performance tables for key stage 5. These are likely to include measures of level 2 and 3 attainment (including in English and maths), progress and destinations measures supported by data on individual qualifications and subjects. By changing the current system we aim to place strong emphasis on progress and destinations and judge institutions on a range of indicators of their performance.
- 5.6 We would also expect providers to be able to explain to students and parents how they have grouped courses together to create coherent study programmes. It is important that students on post-16 vocational programmes understand what they are entitled to: this will help drive up demand for better study programmes.

*Q1) Will these measures be sufficient to ensure that the 16-19 study programmes principles are followed?*

*Q2) How will this programme of study need to be tailored for part-time students?*

*Q3) How will the proposals affect different providers?*

## 6 **Section 2 16-19 maths and English provision**

- 6.1 Professor Wolf's report stressed the importance of all young people studying English and maths, and particularly achieving A\*-C in GCSE

English and maths. As part of the implementation of Professor Wolf's recommendations, in the short term we will set out a clear expectation that English and maths must be part of a study programme for those students who have not achieved A\*-C in GCSE in these subjects. It is important that providers support as many of their students as possible to achieve at least a C at GCSE as it is the GCSE that offers the best employment prospects and opportunities for progression.

6.2 In addition, the Secretary of State has signalled his ambition for the vast majority of 16-19 year olds to be studying maths within 10 years.

*Q4) In line with this ambition for all to be studying maths post-16 in the next decade, we would be interested to know what you feel could be done to encourage more young people who have already achieved GCSE A\*-C to study maths. What would this provision look like?*

6.3 It is clear that providers will need to adapt their English and maths offer depending on the needs of students. For example:

- Some young people will need an immediate, focussed intervention to turn a near miss into a GCSE pass at the first opportunity
- Some may require more intensive help over a longer period (and possibly taking other qualifications en route to act as stepping stones to the GCSE)
- Some, for whom GCSE success is a long way off, might be better served by taking other qualifications or programmes.

6.4 For those who need more intensive support to move towards achieving a C grade GCSE providers are best placed to determine what will meet their needs and enable them to progress. Based on level of rigour, assessment arrangements, skills taught and views of employers, the qualifications that we recommend to providers are: functional skills and free standing maths qualifications.

## 7 **Section 3 Internships and experience of the work place**

7.1 Our aim is to ensure that gaining real experience of the workplace is a possibility for all students. We agree with Professor Wolf's assertion that high quality internships or placements for 16-19 year olds are often the best way to experience the work place for this age group. Genuine internships are often an important part of a student's study programme while in education and we need to consider how we can support schools and colleges to ensure that the experience students are offered is as

meaningful as possible.

- 7.2 We believe the key is to make arrangements for 16-19 year old internships as simple and flexible as possible, and that we should remove bureaucratic barriers faced by providers or employers wherever we can. We must make it as easy as possible for colleges to negotiate with employers at a local level to offer internship opportunities that suit their students and are a meaningful part of their overall study programme.

*Q5) What can we do to simplify areas where colleges/employers have particular concerns offering students opportunities in the workplace, e.g. insurance, health and safety?*

- 7.3 The key elements of a good internship or placement system:

- Objectives should be negotiated and agreed with the young person, school/college and employer/training provider.
- Internships or placements should be worthwhile, meaningful and clearly part of an overall study programme and related to its content.
- The system should allow for maximum flexibility, i.e. there should not be a "one size fits all" approach, the type and nature of internships needs to suit the individual and the employer.
- Supervision, i.e. the placement is overseen by a named individual (in addition to the individual overseeing a student's programme of study).

- 7.4 We will do further research to refine these principles in order to enable colleges and employers to offer good work placements. We will also ask Ofsted to use them to inform inspectors so that they have a clear and consistent understanding of what good quality internships look like.

- 7.5 We also want providers to be able to use their programme funding to compensate employers for supporting a placement where appropriate. While many employers may be happy to offer internships without being paid, there may be cases where some additional resource is needed, e.g. where a young person requires particular support, for example a coach or a mentor.

- 7.6 We will encourage providers to include in their course information whether internships are part of their programme of study and (once information is available) how this has influenced outcomes from the courses, and improved access to opportunities and other qualifications

*Q6) What more can we do to remove barriers to providing high quality internships?*

# Section 4 Study programmes for students studying below Level 2 (previously Foundation Learning) and for students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

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- 8.1 The principle of a coherent study programme should apply to all students, regardless of the level that they are studying at. All young people, whatever their starting point, should be on courses that support and stretch them, and help them to progress onto the next level of learning, or into a job.
- 8.2 Wherever possible, providers should help students who do not already have Level 2, especially in English and maths, to achieve that. But we recognise that some young people may need to study below Level 2.
- 8.3 At present, many of these students will be following Foundation Learning programmes, pursuing sets of small qualifications, with relatively poor progression opportunities. We would like to move away from this centrally defined programme, and enable greater flexibility within the system for providers to design their own programmes, which are more closely aligned with the specific needs of their low attaining students.
- 8.4 Features of such programmes might include:
- English and maths: Where possible, this should be aimed at enabling the young person to achieve a grade C or above in GCSE English and maths. Where that is not possible, another qualification should be considered at whatever level is appropriate, or, in a few cases, the programme of study may lead to improved English and/or maths without a qualification.
  - Experience of the workplace: Providers should consider whether high quality and substantive internships would benefit the student. For some young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, supported internships may be most appropriate and in such cases the internship and associated support could make up the majority of the programme of study.
  - Personal and social development. This is an important element of any programme of study, but particularly for vulnerable students. We do not believe that this should be driven by the accumulation of qualifications, as has been the case in Foundation Learning, but

should be integral to the provision so that young people receive the support they need.

- In most cases, the programme of study should include a qualification of substantial size, although that may not be appropriate for all students and other outcomes - e.g. a job, the ability to live independently, or progress in the ability to communicate - may be a more positive outcome.

## 9 How To Respond

- 9.1 Respond online at [www.education.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations) by emailing [wolf.studyprogrammes@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:wolf.studyprogrammes@education.gsi.gov.uk) or by downloading a response form which should be completed and sent to:

Helen O'Neill, Qualifications Policy Division, Level 2, Sanctuary Buildings,  
Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT

## 10 Additional Copies

- 10.1 Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from the Department for Education e-consultation website at:  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>

## 11 Plans for making results public

- 11.1 The results of the consultation and the Department's response will be published on the DfE e-consultation website in spring 2012.

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