



Department  
for Education

# **Study Programmes for 16- to 19-year- olds**

**Equality Impact Assessment**

**July 2012**

## Introduction

This document contains the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for policy on Study programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds. It assesses the impact of the policy on equality issues in relation to the target audience of 16- to 19-year-olds across the country. The summary judgement is that the overall impact of the policy is unlikely to have an adverse impact on equality groups and there is potential to reduce barriers and inequalities that currently exist.

This EIA for Study Programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds assesses the impact of policy on the following equality groups: gender, socio-economic, disability and ethnicity. It is important to note that a separate Equality Impact Assessment has been published on the new funding and performance measures that will be introduced at various stages to support implementation of 16-19 Study Programmes which covers gender, ethnicity and age. Analysis has been conducted as to the potential impact of changes to the funding methodology on students in 2010/11 (academic year). Together they provide a comprehensive assessment of linked but separate initiatives to raise participation and attainment and in doing so create opportunity for young people.

# Study Programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds

## Description of the policy

In her review of vocational education, Professor Wolf found that at least 350,000 out of approximately 1.6 million students in any given 16-19 cohort are on programmes that fail to promote progression to either employment or higher education and training. In addition, around a quarter of young people who achieve level 2 at the age of 16 do not progress to level 3 post-16; too many students on level 1 and 2 vocational programmes take very small qualifications that do not have clear progression value; and some 282,000 (47%) of 19 year olds start adult life without GCSE A\*-C English and maths. This is despite her finding that good attainment in English and maths and work experience is vital for successful progression to higher education or employment.

Study Programmes will ensure that all 16- to 19-year-olds are engaged on programmes that offer them breadth, depth and progression onto higher education, further study or skilled employment without unduly limiting their options. Study Programmes should include: at least one qualification of substantial size and challenge; non-qualifications activity such as tutorial time; work experience where appropriate; and English and maths for those who do not have a GCSE at grade C or above. The aim is to maximise the potential of young people to progress onto higher education and/or skilled employment by ensuring that vocational routes to higher education and employment are seen as high quality and a genuine alternative to academic routes. This will be achieved through three objectives:

- Improving the value of post-16 qualifications so that higher numbers of students achieve high-quality and valuable vocational qualifications which enable progression to higher levels of study and skilled employment;
- Raising standards in post-16 English and mathematics so that higher numbers of students study English and mathematics (level 2) and work towards achieving GCSE A\*-C in these subjects;
- Improving young people's employability skills by increasing the number of students who experience the workplace and participate in other activity of value which does not necessarily lead to qualifications but enables progression into employment.

## Background

Professor Wolf's Review of Vocational Education<sup>1</sup>, published in March 2011, championed vocational education as vital for the economy and providing many young people with a route into employment and further education. However she also found that a significant minority of young people were being offered only low-level qualifications that did not provide any real progression either into education or

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Education Review of Vocational Education - The Wolf Report, March 2011

employment. To address this issue, Professor Wolf recommended that Study Programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds should be governed by a set of general principles, namely that courses taken by 16- to 19-year-olds 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;
- include both qualification and non-qualification activity including, as and where appropriate, tutorial time and high quality work experience or internships;
- include the study of English and mathematics and work towards the achievement of GCSE A\*-C for all students who do not already have these qualifications.

Provided these principles are met, institutions should be free to offer any qualifications they please from a recognised awarding body.

Study Programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds will be implemented from September 2013 at the same time as the introduction of a new 16-19 funding formula which will replace existing funding per qualification with programme funding. A public consultation on Study Programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds was undertaken between 6 October 2011 and 4 January 2012, based on the general principles outlined above. This consultation took place alongside a public consultation 16-19 Funding Formula Review. The Government response to consultation sets out Government proposals on 16-19 Study Programmes and addresses feedback received from consultation.

## The Evidence Base and Key Facts

The proposals apply to all students in post-16 further education who are on academic or vocational programmes. In practice, the greatest impact of the proposals is likely to apply to students who are studying low-level vocational programmes. This reflects the finding of the Wolf Review of Vocational Education that this group of students are more likely to be on courses that are not coherent and do not lead to successful progression to higher levels of education or skilled employment. This assessment will therefore focus mainly on students studying low-level vocational programmes but will include students on all programmes in cases where particular aspects of the proposals, such as English and maths, equally affect students on post-16 academic and vocational programmes.

The potential impact of implementing the reforms is outlined below, based on a number of qualitative and quantitative data sources. Data relates to the cohort who took their GCSEs in 2007/8 in maintained schools in England and looks at their participation over the following three years. Information is held on the characteristics of this cohort by gender, disability (Special Educational Needs), ethnicity and socio-economic<sup>2</sup> (Free School Meals eligibility) as recorded by the Pupil Level School Census in 2007/8. No

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<sup>2</sup> For information please note that socio-economic data provides added value context but it is not a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010.

data are available for religion or belief, Lesbian Gay and Bisexual (LGB) and transgender groups. Characteristics by age will not be explored; the proposals only apply to 16- to 19-year-olds in further education which can be treated as one age group.

It is important to note that this data does not represent a full reflection of how the proposals will impact on post-16 participation and attainment in 2013/14; the flexibilities of the proposals and the funding and performance measures that will be introduced at various stages to support implementation of 16-19 Study Programmes are likely to drive a significant change in post-16 behaviour. The full impact of the reforms cannot be predicted ahead of implementation from September 2013. Further data on post-16 participation, attainment and progression will need to be collected and analysed as it becomes available following implementation in order to work out the full impact of the reforms.

### **Quantitative Data**

DfE matched administrative data for the cohort who took their GCSEs in 2007/8 in maintained schools has been used to analyse highest type of study aged 16-18 by prior English and maths attainment and characteristics (FSM, SEN gender, ethnicity as recorded in the spring 2008 Pupil Level Census) in order to identify those groups who are over/under-represented in the types of study most likely to be impacted by the reforms.

### **Qualitative Data**

The Wolf Review of Vocational Education has been used to provide evidence of the benefits of good attainment in English and maths and work experience to analyse the impact of English and maths and work experience proposals. Reference to literature is also provided on English and maths wage returns by authors De Coulon et al., 2007 and McIntosh and Vignoles, 2000. Data does not currently exist on the number of post-16 students undertaking work experience or the number of students who undertake work experience and then successfully progress to higher education or skilled employment. Views gathered through consultation on Study Programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds has been used to illustrate the likely impact of the work experience proposals. A recent publication 'Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility', published in April 2012, was used to provide additional valued-added context on participation and attainment from a socio-economic perspective.

## Gender

### Context

Females are more likely than males to have achieved level 2, level 2 with English and maths and level 3 by 19. At 19 the gap is 6.3 ppts at level 2 or higher (84.7% for females v 78.4% for males), 4.8 ppts for level 2 with maths and English and maths (62.2% v 57.4%) and 9.8ppts for level 3 (58.4% v 48.6%).

In the cohort as a whole, males account for a slightly higher proportion than females (51% v 49%).

More male students are studying vocational programmes compared to female students: in total 55% of students on vocational programmes were male compared to 45% female. The over-representation of males is higher the lower the level of study. Males account for 51% of those students with level 3 vocational as their highest study aim (in line with the overall cohort). This rises to 59% for level 2 and 63 for below level 2.

**Below level 2** - 37% female and 63% male

**Level 2** - 41% female and 59% male

**Level 3** - 49% female and 51% male

### *English*

Overall females were over-represented among those achieving GCSE A\*-C in English by the age of 16 (accounting for 55% of this group).

Most of those who had not gained A\*-C in English by age 16 on post-16 vocational programmes were male (60%, leaving 40% female).

Males were similarly over-represented (with the same 60:40 split) among those on AS/A levels without having achieved GCSE A\*-C in English at 16. Of those without GCSE A\*-C English at 16 who do not study any English up to GCSE post-16, 62% were male of and of those who studied English, but below GCSE, 60% were male.

### *Maths*

When we look at vocational study with no GCSE A\*-C maths held by 16 we see that males are over-represented with 54% of the total. When we break this down by level we again see that the lower the level of vocational study the higher the over-representation of males. For example, 60% of those of level 2 vocational courses who do not have GCSE A\*-C at 16 but study maths below GCSE post-16 are male.

For the much smaller AS/A level group with no GCSE A\*-C maths held by 16 we see that females are over-represented, accounting for 60% of this group.

## **Impact**

The data shows that higher numbers of male students are studying low-level vocational programmes at level 2 and below compared to their female counter-parts. Males are over-represented in the number of students who do not achieve GCSE A\*-C English at 16 and do not continue to study English post-16. We also see that males are over-represented in the number of students studying vocational programmes who do not hold GCSE A\*-C in maths by academic age 16. The data shows that male students are less likely than their female counterparts to achieve GCSE A\*-C English at 16, however male students are less likely to continue to study English post-16.

The reforms are expected to have a positive impact on the gender gap and the higher number of male students who currently study low-level vocational programmes at level 2 and below. This is because schools, colleges and training providers will be expected to offer coherent vocational programmes, particularly at level 2 and below, to ensure that students are offered real value in terms of progression to skilled employment or education. Inclusion of English and maths for students who have not already achieved good attainment in English and maths at 16 is also expected to offer a positive opportunity to address the gender gap and ensure that male students who are on low-level vocational programmes and have not already achieved English GCSE A\*-C at 16 are encouraged to continue to study English post-16.

## Disability

### Context

There are currently three intervention levels for students with Special Educational Needs in England: School Action (SA), School Action Plus (SAP) and Statement of SEN (St).

The higher the level of SEN, the lower the attainment. For example for the cohort concerned, 88.5% of those with no SEN had reached level 2 by 19 compared with 66.6% for SA, 51.0% for SAP and 33.2% for St.

In the cohort as a whole 78% had no identified SEN, 12% were SA, 6% SAP and 4% St. Students with an identified form of SEN are significantly over-represented at lower levels (level 2 or below) post-16, compared to students without any identified form of SEN and they are also over-represented among those who do not gain English or maths GCSE A\*-C.

**Vocational below level 2** – 21% SA, 18% SAP, 28% St, 34% with no identified SEN

**Vocational level 2** - 22% SA, 12% SAP, 6% St, 60% with no identified SEN

**Vocational level 3** - 13% SA, 5% SAP, 2% St, 79% with no identified SEN

### *English*

Of those who are on vocational programmes and do not achieve English GCSE A\*-C by 16, 44% have some form of identified SEN compared to 56% who do not. By comparison of those on A level programmes who do not achieve English GCSE A\*-C by 16, 24% have some form of identified SEN while 76% do not.

**Below level 2 and no post-16 English** – 19% SA, 17% SAP, 32% SEN, compared to 32% with no identified SEN

**Vocational level 2 and no post-16 English** – 23% SA, 14% SAP, 7% SEN, compared to 56% with no identified SEN

**Vocational level 3 and no post-16 English** – 19% SA, 8% SAP, 3% SEN, compared to 70% with no identified SEN

### *Maths*

Of those who are on vocational programmes and do not achieve maths GCSE A\*-C, 42% have some form of identified SEN compared to 58% who do not. By comparison of those on A level programmes who do not achieve maths GCSE A\*-C by 16, 19% have some form of identified SEN while 81% do not. In addition of those students who do not achieve GCSE A\*-C by 16 and do not study any form of maths post-16, 44% have some form of identified SEN compared to 56% who do not.

**Below level 2 and no post-16 maths** – 20% SA, 17% SAP, 30% SEN, compared to 33% with no identified SEN

**Vocational level 2 and no post-16 maths** – 23% SA, 14% SAP, 6% SEN, compared to 57% with no identified SEN



**Vocational level 3 and no post-16 maths** – 18% SA, 8% SAP, 3% SEN, compared to 71% with no identified SEN

## **Impact**

Students studying at level 2 or below are significantly more likely to have been identified with a form of SEN post-16. A disproportionately high number of students on low-level vocational programmes with a history of SEN have not achieved English and maths GCSE A\*-C by 16 compared to students who do not have no identified SEN. In addition, they are significantly under-represented among those students who have achieved GCSE A\*-C English and maths by 16.

The reforms are expected to have a positive impact on the high numbers of students on vocational programmes at level 2 and below who have a history of SEN. This is because schools, colleges and training providers will be expected to offer coherent vocational programmes, particularly at level 2 and below, to ensure that students are on programmes that allow progression to skilled employment or education. Similarly, the requirement for all institutions to include English and maths as part of a student's Study Programme if they have not already achieved good attainment in these subjects at 16 is expected to have a positive impact on the disproportionately high number of students on low-level vocational programmes with a history of SEN who are currently less likely to achieve good attainment in English and maths by 16, and are more likely not to study English post-16, compared to their counter-parts with no identified SEN.

## Socio-economic group

### Context

Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to not be in employment, education or training and are more likely to study vocational or work-based training that does not lead to good progression to employment. Here we use eligibility for Free School Meals (FSMs) in 2007/8 as a proxy for deprivation.

Young people who are eligible for FSMs are more likely to have lower levels of achievement compared to their non-FSM counterparts. In 2010/11 there was a 24.7% gap in all level 3 attainment by age 19 between students who had been eligible for FSMs and all others who had been in the maintained sector at age 16.

Across the cohort as a whole 13% were eligible for FSMs in 2007/8. Students who had been eligible for FSMs are over-represented on vocational courses as a whole, accounting for 17% of such students. Students eligible for FSMs are not over-represented on vocational programmes at level 3, accounting for 13% (same as the cohort as a whole), but the picture changes the lower the level.

**Vocational below level 2** – 29% are eligible for FSMs, compared to 71% who are not  
**Vocational level 2** – 19% are eligible for FSMs, compared to 81% who are not  
**Vocational level 3** – 13% are eligible for FSMs, compared to 87% who are not

### *English*

Of those who are on vocational programmes and do not achieve English GCSE A\*-C by 16, 21% are eligible for FSMs compared to 79% who are not. By comparison of those on AS/A level programmes who do not achieve GCSE A\*-C by 16, 16% are eligible for FSMs compared to 84% who are not. Of these students who do not achieve GCSE A\*-C by 16 and do not study any form of English post-16, 21% had been eligible for FSM while 79% had not been eligible for FSM.

**Below level 2 and no post-16 English** – 28% are eligible for FSMs, compared to 72% who are not eligible

**Vocational level 2 and no post-16 English** – 20% are eligible for FSMs, compared to 80% who are not eligible

**Vocational level 3 and no post-16 English** – 16% are eligible for FSMs, compared to 84% who are not eligible

### *Maths*

Of those students who are on vocational programmes and do not achieve maths GCSE A\*-C by 16, 20% are eligible for FSMs compared to 80% who are not. By comparison of those on A level programmes who do not achieve GCSE A\*-C by 16, 14% are eligible for FSMs compared to 86% who are not. Of these students who do not achieve GCSE A\*-C by 16 and do not study any form of English post-16, 20% are eligible for FSMs while 80% are not eligible for FSMs.

**Below level 2 and no post-16 English** – 28% are eligible for FSMs, compared to 72% who are not eligible

**Vocational level 2 and no post-16 English** – 21% are eligible for FSMs, compared to 79% who are not eligible

**Vocational level 3 and no post-16 English** – 16% are eligible for FSMs, compared to 84% who are not eligible

## **Impact**

The gap between students from different socio-economic backgrounds is wide. A higher proportion of students on low-level vocational programmes are eligible for FSMs compared to those who are studying at higher levels. Students who are on low-level vocational programmes and do not already have GCSE A\*-C English and maths are also more likely to be eligible for FSMs. In addition, these students are less likely to continue to study English and maths post-16.

The reforms are expected to have a positive impact on the comparatively high numbers of students on vocational programmes at level 2 and below who have are eligible for FSMs compared to those students studying at higher levels. This is because schools, colleges and training providers will be expected to offer coherent vocational programmes, particularly at level 2 and below, to ensure that students are on programmes that allow progression to skilled employment or education. They will also be expected to include English and maths as part of a student's Study Programme if they have not already achieved good attainment in these subjects by 16.

## Ethnicity

### Context

Patterns of participation vary between ethnic groups. Students from White British background are significantly over-represented on vocational programmes as a whole, accounting for 84.3% (compared with 80.9% of the cohort as a whole) and particularly at level 2 where 87.1% were White British. Most other ethnic groups were under-represented compared to the national average (they tend to be over-represented on A/AS level routes). Other over-represented groups on vocational programmes include White and Black Caribbean at all levels of vocational study, and Caribbean at level 3 only.

**Vocational below level 2** – White British (82.7% compared to 80.9%), White and Black Caribbean (1.3% compared to 1%)

**Vocational level 2** – White British (87.1% compared to 80.9%), White and Black Caribbean (1.2% compared to 1%)

**Vocational level 3** – White British (84.3% compared to 80.9%), White and Black Caribbean (1.2% compared to 1%), Caribbean (1.8% compared to 1.3%)

### *English*

Of those students on vocational programmes who have not yet achieved English GCSE A\*-C by 16, students of White British background are slightly over-represented compared to the national average (81.5% compared to 80.9%). Other over-represented groups include White and Black Caribbean (1.2% compared to 1%), Caribbean (1.5% compared to 1.3%). By contrast, of those students on AS/A level programmes who have not achieved English GCSE A\*-C by 16, students of White British background are significantly under-represented compared to the national average (63.9%, compared to 80.9%). Other significantly over-represented groups include Any Other White background (5.3% compared to 2.6%), Indian (4.1% compared to 2.3%), Pakistani (5.4% compared to 2.6%), Chinese (1.3% compared to 0.4%) and African (5.1% compared to 2%).

Overall, students from White British background are over-represented among those students who do not achieve English GCSE A\*-C by 16 and do not study this post-16 (accounting for 83.5% of this group compared with 80.9% of the cohort as a whole being White British).

### *Maths*

Of those students on vocational programmes who have not achieved maths GCSE A\*-C by 16, students of White British background are slightly over-represented compared to the national average (81.9% compared to 80.9%). Other examples of over-represented groups include White and Black Caribbean (1.3% compared to 1.0%) and Pakistani (2.8% compared to 2.6%). By contrast, of those students on A/AS level programmes who have not achieved maths GCSE A\*-C by 16, White British backgrounds are significantly under-represented compared to the national average (71.3% compared to 80.9%). Other significantly over-represented groups compared to

the national average include Pakistani (4.4% compared to 2.6%), and African (4.2% compared to 2.0%).

Overall, students from White British background are over-represented among those students who do not achieve maths GCSE A\*-C by 16 and do not study this post-16 (accounting for 83.3% of this group compared with 80.9% of the cohort as a whole being White British).

### **Impact**

The reforms are most likely to impact positively on students on vocational programmes at level 2 and below (among whom White British, White and Black Caribbean tend to be over-represented). Schools, colleges and training providers will be expected to offer coherent Study Programmes to all students, particularly at level 2 and below, to ensure they are on programmes that allow progression to skilled employment or education. English and maths reforms are also expected to have a particularly positive impact on students from White British backgrounds who are more likely than students from other ethnic minority backgrounds to not have achieved English and maths GCSE A\*-C by 16 and to not have studied these subjects post-16.

## Other relevant data

The benefits of good attainment in English and maths are well documented. De Coulon et al. (2007) looked at the value of basic skills in the British labour market using data from the British Cohort Study (BCS) collected in 2004, including an assessment of respondents' literacy and numeracy. They use rich data to control for prior ability as well as other factors that may influence earnings. They find that an additional standard deviation in literacy results in around 14% higher earnings, while an additional standard deviation in numeracy results in 12% higher earnings. Previous research by McIntosh and Vignoles (2000) also looked at the impact of basic literacy and numeracy on labour market outcomes. They found a largely positive effect on earnings and employment rates from having better numeracy skills, at least to level 1.

On the basis of this research and the wider 'call for evidence', Professor Wolf found in her review of vocational education that "English and mathematics skills are extremely important for labour market entry, and continue to have a significant impact on career progression and pay. Individuals with very low literacy and numeracy are severely disadvantaged in the labour market. English and maths GCSE (A\*-C) are of critical importance for employment. Employers use them as a signal and sifting device and they are also of critical importance for entry into selective programmes post-16, and higher education."<sup>3</sup>

Professor Wolf's research also outlines the benefits of work experience. According to Professor Wolf, "...there is a wealth of evidence indicating that they [employers] value work experience, and that the best way to obtain a job is to have one – and failing that, to at least have had one recently."<sup>4</sup> Around 11% of all full-time students across all post-16 education institutions are currently studying programmes at level 2 and below. The figure is higher in Further Education Colleges alone where around 20% are on programmes at level 2 and below. Work experience is thought to be particularly beneficial for this cohort.

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<sup>3</sup> Department for Education Review of Vocational Education - The Wolf Report, March 2011, pg. 32

<sup>4</sup> Ibid:33

# Engagement and involvement

## Key Stakeholders involved in the process

Local Authority (LAs)  
General FE Colleges (GFEs)  
Sixth Form Colleges (SFCs)  
Awarding Organisations  
Provider or Stakeholder Organisations  
Teacher Association  
Schools with Sixth Forms (SSFs)  
Academies  
Independent Private Providers (IPPs)  
Independent Specialist Providers (ISPs)  
Other (learned bodies and societies, trade unions and associations, voluntary and charitable organisations, representatives of awarding organisations, university and education research centres, training providers, tertiary colleges)

## Stakeholder responses received to the consultation

Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education (ACME)  
Advisory Council for the Education of Romany and other Travellers  
Afasic  
Ambitious About Autism  
Association of Schools and College Leaders (ASCL)  
Awarding Organisations  
Barnardos  
British Association for Supported Employment  
Centrepont  
Chambers of Commerce  
Consultancy Organisations  
Eaves Housing  
Education Providers  
English Speaking Board Ltd.  
Green Lantern Training Company  
GTL  
Institute of Education  
Institute of Mathematics and its Applications (IMA)  
Learndirect  
Linkage Community Trust  
Linking London  
Local Authorities  
Local Enterprise Partnerships  
London Mathematical Society  
Mathematics in Education and Industry (MEI)  
Mencap  
National Association for Numeracy and Mathematics in Colleges (NANAMIC)  
National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM)

National Deaf Children's Society  
National Foundation for Educational Research  
NCG  
PM Training  
SCORE  
The Mathematical Association  
The Nuffield Foundation  
The Prince's Trust  
The Royal Academy of Engineering  
UKCES  
Workforce Unions  
Working Rite  
Zodiac Training



## Challenges and opportunities

The policy aims to ensure that all 16- to 19-year-olds, particularly on vocational programmes at level 2 and below, study coherent, well thought out programmes which offer them breadth and depth and do not limit their options for future study or work. In addition, the reforms allow schools, colleges and work-based providers the flexibility to design individually tailored programmes to meet the needs of students and provide better outcomes for young people. This is particularly relevant to 16- to 19-year-olds who are a diverse group of individuals with very different circumstances and interests. The reforms therefore offer a positive opportunity for post-16 institutions to address equality and diversity issues for those students on small, low-value vocational programmes that do not lead to progression and are not supported by work experience; and students who currently do not study English and maths post-16 if they did not already achieved GCSE A\*-C in these subjects at 16.

### English and maths

Good attainment in English and maths (level 2) has been shown to be associated with higher wage returns and successful progression opportunities. It is therefore anticipated that the English and maths reforms will offer long-term individual benefits to students across all academic and vocational programmes who will be required to study English and maths (ideally to GCSE A\*-C) if they have not already achieved good attainment in these subjects. It is also a positive opportunity to reduce inequalities for groups of post-16 students at all levels who are less likely to study post-16 English and maths if they did not already achieve GCSE A\*-C by 16.

Yet good attainment post-16 is dependent on high quality post-16 English and maths teaching which is likely to pose a significant challenge to the post-16 English and maths workforce, particularly for Further Education colleges and work-based providers. Around 30% of students currently do not study any form of English and maths post-16 if they have not yet achieved GCSE A\*-C in these subjects by 16. The reforms will therefore result in a significant increase in the number of students who will be required to continue to study post-16 English and maths. As a result, workforce capacity issues are likely to lead, at least initially, to poor quality teaching of English and particularly maths. This in turn is likely to have a negative impact on English and maths attainment by 19 for students who have not yet achieved A\*-C GCSE in these subjects by 16. It is anticipated that this issue will become less significant over time as schools, colleges and work-based providers continue to adapt their provision and teaching to meet the Study Programme principles.

It is recognised that some students, particularly those students with learning difficulties or disabilities, will not immediately be able to achieve English and maths GCSE A\*-C or level 2 post-16 if they did not achieve this by 16. For this reason, the proposals allow for a range of English and maths qualifications to be included as part of a student's Study Programme. This includes Functional Skills in English and maths at entry level, level 1 and level 2 and Free Standing Maths Qualifications (FSMQs) in maths at levels 1 and 2.

The proposals also allow some students with profound and/or complex learning difficulties or disabilities (who have a learning difficulty assessment or Educational and Health Care Plan) to be exempt from studying English and/or maths qualifications. In these cases, the Study Programme should still include some form of English and/or maths teaching at an appropriate level that supports progression to higher levels in these subjects and prepares them for employment, but this does not necessarily need to be in the form of a qualification.

## **Work Experience**

Work experience proposals are likely to benefit students studying at level 2 and below due to the positive association between work experience and improving young people's employability skills for successful progression to employment. The reforms particularly encourage this cohort to include work experience as part of their Study Programme.

The consultation on Study Programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds highlighted opportunities and challenges to address equality and diversity issues regarding delivery of the work experience proposals. For instance, the proposals offer an opportunity to improve social mobility for students from disadvantaged backgrounds by ensuring equality of access to work experience placements.

Yet ensuring that post-16 students participate in relevant and meaningful work experience placements will be a significant challenge. The supply of suitable work experience placements by employers will be particularly challenging due to a difficult labour market and the challenge of encouraging innovative forms of work experience. It is expected that this issue will become less significant over time and more employers will offer meaningful work experience placements as bureaucracy is reduced and the findings from innovative work experience pilots in 25 Further Education colleges are shared by and across the sector.

It is recognised that some students with a history of SEN will need additional support to fully participate on work experience placements. There will need to be a close relationship between providers, employers and local authorities to ensure successful provision of 'supported internships'. The Special Education Green Paper sets out additional reforms to improve Further Education workforce capability teaching for students with learning difficulties.

## **Provision**

The consultation on Study Programmes for 16- to 19-year-olds also highlighted that smaller institutions and institutions in rural locations are more likely to struggle to deliver the breadth of the Study Programme principles, particularly regarding delivery of the English and maths and work experience proposals. There is therefore a risk that students studying in these institutions will receive low quality provision compared to students studying in other institutions or locations. Partnership working with larger organisations was suggested in the consultation as a way to overcome this particular challenge. Where this is likely to be an issue, for example, where providers might not immediately be able to teach English and maths up to GCSE level, appropriately skilled staff should be recruited or, where this is not possible, providers should collaborate with

other institutions in the local or regional area, to achieve the breadth of the Study Programme principles.

## Equality analysis

An adverse impact is unlikely. On the contrary, there is potential to reduce barriers and inequalities that currently exist. There is insufficient evidence, however, for this analysis to be made with as much confidence as is desirable.

The reforms are likely to have the greatest impact on the cohort studying vocational programmes at level 2 and below. Data shows that students on post-16 vocational programmes at level 2 and below are significantly more likely to be male, identified with a form of SEN and eligible for FSMs. Students from White British and White and Black Caribbean backgrounds are also more likely to be over-represented at this level of study compared to the national average. Moreover, students studying at this level are significantly less likely to have achieved GCSE A\*-C in English and maths by 16 and are less likely to study any form of English or maths post-16.

We anticipate that this policy will have a positive impact on the outcomes of 16- to 19-year-olds studying in post-16 education, particularly for those students on vocational programmes at level 2 and below. The reforms are designed to ensure that post-16 schools, colleges and training providers offer coherent vocational programmes that allow progression to skilled employment or education. Students will also be required to include English and maths as part of their Study Programme if they have not already achieved good attainment in these subjects by 16. Where relevant, students will also be encouraged to undertake work experience or other non-qualification activity to increase their employability skills.

The proposals therefore present a positive opportunity for post-16 schools, colleges and training providers to address equality and diversity issues for those students who study small, low-value vocational qualifications which are not supported by work experience and do not allow them to progress. It also offers a real opportunity to improve English and maths attainment for students who are currently over-represented in the group who do not achieve GCSE A\*-C by 16 and do not study English and maths post-16. In addition, the work experience proposals offer a positive opportunity to improve social mobility for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are significantly more likely to be studying at lower levels of study due to the positive association between work experience and successful progression to employment.

It is not possible to quantify the real impact of these reforms on rates of progression or attainment and quality of education outcomes. Data on post-16 participation, attainment and progression will need to be collected and analysed as it becomes available following implementation from September 2013 in order to work out the full impact of the reforms.

## Next steps

We will monitor and review the impact of the reforms on equality issues annually from 2013/14. The review will assess whether the Study Programme principles or any other related measures intended to support implementation should be amended in light of any new evidence on equality issues.

The review will take into account anticipated changes in the rates of post-16 participation, attainment and progression as schools, colleges and training providers start to adapt their post-16 provision to meet the Study Programme principles from September 2013. It will also review the effectiveness of additional measures, for example supported internships that will be introduced to enable students with a history of SEN to be fully supported during their Study Programme. In addition, the consistency and quality of provision of the Study Programme principles will be monitored across all institutions. This is to ensure that students are offered the full breadth of the Study Programme principles and are not disadvantaged by geographic factors or any other factors that might affect quality and consistency of provision.

As part of this process, this Equality Impact Assessment will be updated to assess the impact of the proposals on each of the identified equality groups. This will ensure that future decisions on Study Programme principles are fully informed by the impact on equalities.



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