

14–19: opportunity and excellence

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Foreword by Charles Clarke, Secretary of State for Education and Skills



14 to 19 marks a critical phase in young people's lives. It is the period when they build on their earlier learning and prepare for adult life and employment. Many young people make this transition well – but too many do not. The UK compares poorly with other countries on measures of participation and achievement.

Too many people drop out at 16, disengaged from learning and heading for low-skilled, low-paid employment. Our historic weaknesses are clear and have been strongly evident in our consultation – a weak offer for those who want a vocational orientation to their studies, and an insufficiently broad and demanding offer on the A Level track.


We have made major progress in recent years in the achievement of qualifications by young people, and in extending the range of vocational options available. But we now face a dual challenge. We must:

- give assurance to students and the wider community that the existing system is stable and effectively managed. In particular those taking A Levels or coming up to A Levels must be confident that their work will be properly set, marked, graded and valued;
- also address the question of reform for the longer term. The extensive consultation that followed the publication of our Green Paper in February last year confirmed our view that we need to create a clearer and more appropriate curriculum and qualifications framework for the 14–19 phase – one that develops and stretches all our young people to achieve their full potential, and prepares them for life and work in the 21st century.

The first half of this document sets out what we intend to do now to introduce more flexibility into the system. It builds on the momentum and commitment of schools and colleges that is already changing the learning experience for some 14–19 year-olds. In the second half of the document, we describe how we will set about building a consensus about the longer term structural reform that is needed.

Other reforms are creating a strong underpinning on which we can build. In primary schools the strategies to improve teaching mean that 11 year-olds begin their secondary education with a sound understanding of the basics in English and mathematics. Ambitious targets for 14 year-olds are focusing attention on the early part of secondary education. We are seeking major changes in secondary schools, supported by sustained investment and driven by powerful and effective leadership, reform of teaching and learning and new partnerships beyond the classroom. We have recently announced plans for improving the quality of further education and training which will generate a similar transformation in the learning and skills sector.

The key to higher achievement is to put the needs of students at the centre of 14–19 provision. They need a coherent and motivating curriculum, delivered in a wide range of institutions, recognised by a coherent qualifications system. We owe it to our young people to put this in place.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles Clarke', written in a cursive style.

Charles Clarke

Executive summary



Schools and colleges have faced many recent challenges: A Level reforms, the strategy to improve lessons for 11–14 year-olds and exam targets. While each has required hard work from teachers, lecturers and students, they are improving teaching and learning. The exam system has been severely tested, too. Following the Tomlinson Inquiry into A Level standards, steps are now being taken to improve arrangements for testing and marking. Our first priority is therefore to ensure the smooth running of A Levels this year and beyond.

The Case for Change

Our current system has its strengths. The GCSE has encouraged more young people to stay in education. Over half of 15 year-olds gained 5 A*–C grades last year, compared with 37% a decade ago. These strengths are underpinned by the growing professionalism of teachers, the increasing diversity of post-16 provision and the extensive choice of subjects available for advanced study.

But the system also has significant weaknesses. Nearly half of young people still do not achieve five good GCSEs at school. More still do not reach that standard in English and mathematics. And one in twenty leaves without a single GCSE pass. These data reflect a deeper problem. Too many young people truant in their last two years of compulsory education. And the behaviour of some who turn up makes it hard for teachers to teach and others to learn. International league tables rank us 25th out of 29 among developed nations for participation of 17 year-olds in education and training.

Behind such worrying statistics lies one of the most persistent shortcomings of our education system: the weakness of our vocational offer. While there has been progress – such as better co-operation between schools and colleges on work-related learning – learning a trade has still to become a truly valued option.

Where young people follow the academic track, they face a different problem: what they learn is often too narrow. Until Curriculum 2000, A Level students typically studied three specialist subjects. Many now

take at least four. But advanced level students in other countries typically study six, including their native language and mathematics. Their remaining choices are not narrowly restricted to either science or the humanities. And such breadth is increasingly sought by universities and employers.

A new 14–19 phase

These difficulties are underpinned by how we view education. For too long, we have thought in terms of two phases: 11–16 and 16–19. Many young people swap learning after 16 for low-paid, dead-end jobs with few prospects. But others use college courses or apprenticeships to reach GCSE standard a year or two later and move on to advanced qualifications. To think in terms of two phases is no longer helpful or meaningful.

This is why we wish to develop a 14–19 phase. By doing so, we aim to provide greater coherence for schools, colleges and employers. And we hope students will more clearly see how their qualifications lead to further education or work.

But to make this change a reality students must have more choice. That means more flexibility in their GCSE studies, with new applied options for traditionally academic subjects. It also requires institutions to work more closely together to provide young people with the widest possible GCSE, A Level and apprenticeship choices. We do not support the abolition of GCSE. It should be a progress check on the road through the 14–19 phase.

Quality remains paramount. Where the standards of some qualifications have been criticised, they must improve. And where they already deliver a high standard, such standards must be maintained and built upon.

Our goals require short-term and longer-term reforms.

What will happen by 2005

We propose practical changes to the curriculum for 14–16 year-olds to combine breadth of study with more flexibility for schools and colleges to tailor programmes to individual needs and aptitudes.

Under our proposals for 14–16 year-olds:

- English, mathematics and science remain compulsory. All students will also continue to learn to be responsible and healthy adults;¹
- Information and Communications Technology will remain compulsory for now, although such skills will increasingly be taught through other subjects;
- all students will learn about work and enterprise;
- all students will be entitled to study another language, a humanities subject (such as history), an arts subject, and design and technology;

Young people will also be entitled to study literacy, numeracy and computer skills until 19 to Level 2 standard (GCSE or equivalent). And schools and colleges will be encouraged increasingly to enter pupils for exams when they are ready. We also plan three reforms to address the weakness of vocational education:

- in addition to the eight vocational GCSE subjects, new 'hybrid' GCSEs will allow students to study on either academic or applied tracks, depending on their preference and aptitude;
- Modern Apprenticeships will be improved and expanded, so that at least 28% of young people become apprentices by 2004;
- we shall no longer describe GCSEs or A Levels as 'vocational' or 'academic'. Status matters, and engineering should have equal status with mathematics or art and design.

These reforms will be reflected by other administrative and practical changes in the scope of inspections, the LSC funding arrangements and our policies for specialist schools and further education colleges.²

- 1 They will do so through citizenship, religious education, sex education, careers education and physical education, which will remain compulsory for 14–16 year-olds.
- 2 Such measures include the Increased Flexibility for 14–16 year-olds programme; new teacher training requirements; LSC-led strategic reviews of post-16 provision; wider reporting of qualifications in performance tables; 14–19 area-wide inspections; weighted funding where students attend several institutions; and a recognition of the 14–19 changes in our wider policies for schools and colleges.

Long Term Reform

These changes will offer students greater choice, coherence and quality. They should help to improve participation and achievement while avoiding further major upheaval in a system that has undergone substantial recent change. But we believe that longer-term reform is needed. And there is a growing consensus that such change should:

- provide a much stronger vocational offer;
- allow for more manageable assessment, which recognises all of the young person's achievements;
- broaden choice and stretch students, with a unified framework of qualifications.

Such changes could improve student motivation and make applied training as important as academic learning. A unified framework would be designed to provide opportunities for young people of all abilities, by promoting progression from Foundation through Intermediate to Advanced levels. Baccalaureate-style qualifications of this kind work well abroad. We believe that this model, designed to suit English circumstances, could tackle long-standing English problems. But a new qualifications system must meet the needs of higher education and employers if it is to be introduced.

A new working group

We have deliberately distinguished between short-term and long-term reforms, because the biggest changes will require further detailed consideration and a long lead-in time. We intend to work with all those involved in 14–19 education to test whether agreement can be reached on a workable model. We will appoint a new Working Group for 14–19 Reform, to be chaired by Mike Tomlinson and comprising a wide range of expertise and experience. It will examine how developments in vocational education, assessment and the qualifications framework could contribute to the successful and lasting transformation of 14–19 learning. The Group will issue an interim report within a year, with a view to finalising its work within 18 months.

The consultation on *14–19: extending opportunities, raising standards* was one of the most extensive consultation exercises ever mounted by the Department:

- we received almost 2000 written responses to the Green Paper, and a further 4000 responses from our consultation with young people;
- representatives of every secondary school and every FE-sector college in England, as well as a wide range of other stakeholders, were invited to one of 58 regional 14–19 workshops, managed jointly by LEAs and local LSCs;
- we held additional events for employers and their representatives, higher education, the youth service and voluntary sector providers. These added valuable insights into the views and expectations of specific sectors;
- for the first time, we produced a version of the Green Paper specifically for young people and, through the Connexions Service, we held informal events to discuss the proposals with them face to face. This produced an exceptional response, both from individuals on their own initiative and from students who had been encouraged by their schools and colleges to discuss and respond to the proposals. We received over 4000 individual written responses in all;
- summaries and analyses of responses to the full Green Paper and the young people’s version, and of discussions at the regional workshops, are available on the Department’s website at www.dfes.gov.uk/14–19.

The case for reform



1.1 The consultation on the Green Paper *14–19: extending opportunities, raising standards* revealed strong support from all quarters for more coherence in the learning opportunities available to 14–19 year-olds at school, college and in the workplace. It is clear from the debate and the substantial response to the proposals that the case for reform was accepted. The suggested aims for this 14–19 phase commanded widespread support.

1.2 All young people are entitled to expect excellent provision that responds to their needs, enables them to progress in their learning and prepares them for the modern workplace. Yet our system does not currently offer those opportunities effectively to those who wish to follow vocational learning programmes and to low attainers. At the same time, it is often too narrow for A Level students. This is the case for change.

The evidence

1.3 Too many young people, particularly those gaining few or no qualifications, are not achieving as well as they should. Too many of them then drop out of education and training when they are 16 and 17:

- despite steady progress over recent years, only 51% of pupils achieve 5 good GCSEs (at A*–C) or equivalent by age 16, and just over 5% achieve no GCSEs at all;
- in a league table of participation rates for 17 year-olds we are equal 25th out of 29 OECD countries, ahead of just Greece, Mexico and Turkey;
- one in four 16–18 year-olds had dropped out of education and training at the end of 2000, significantly above the OECD and European Union averages;
- fewer 25–34 year-olds in the UK hold Level 2 (GCSE A*–C standard) qualifications than in France and Germany; and
- socio-economic background remains a barrier to educational success. While half of those in the higher socio-economic groups

attain Level 3 qualifications (A Level standard), only one in three of those from the lower socio-economic groups does so, a gap which widens in higher education.

1.4 Behind these statistics lie some harsh realities. Despite top quality provision in many schools, too many people have been turned off by their experience of secondary education. They are unsure what options are available to them if they do not want to stay on after age 16 and do A Levels. Many find the choice available after GCSEs unappealing, or they believe that they are failures at any kind of study. This means they often do not have the motivation to continue with any formal education or training. For some this is reflected in poor behaviour and regular truancy. A significant minority – particularly those most at risk through personal or family circumstances or with low parental aspirations or support – drop out of education altogether. Many never return. Instead, they head for low-skill, low-paid jobs or drift into unemployment. This not only affects their personal health, prosperity and well-being; it also damages the nation's competitiveness.

1.5 Even for those many young people who get good GCSE results and go on to take A Levels, the subjects they study do not always reflect the range of experience they need or desire. Their programmes do not have the greater breadth or cross-disciplinary content typical of many successful systems abroad, or that provided in the International Baccalaureate. Yet, these strengths are increasingly beneficial in higher education and important to employers.

The causes

1.6 To tackle these shortcomings, their causes must be understood and addressed:

- some young people have already disengaged from learning before the age of 16. They are bored by their GCSE studies and feel trapped in school when they would prefer to be working and living a more adult life;
- other students are coasting in Key Stages 3 and 4 because the work is insufficiently challenging or interesting;
- they assume that 'leaving school at 16' is natural. The GCSE is still treated by too many as a leaving certificate;

- the GCSE has become a qualification at two levels: Level 2 (or grades A*–C) is viewed by the public as success, while Level 1 (or grades D–G) is seen as failure. For many young people achieving Level 1 is demotivating. Some young people prefer not to reveal that they have taken GCSEs than admit to a lower grade. This undermines motivation and discourages staying on;
- whilst there is a clear A Level route in schools and colleges, and increasing opportunities for apprenticeships, significant numbers of young people are on other college-based programmes. But some of them are lost in an apparent jungle of alternative courses and qualifications, too many of which lack status, clarity of purpose and brand recognition with employers;
- Modern Apprenticeships are improving, but their quality is variable and completion rates on some programmes are unacceptably low. Other vocational courses are unattractive to young people, failing to capture their interest and imagination;
- at A Level, though the Curriculum 2000 reforms have helped provide some greater breadth and variety, too many students still study narrow programmes. Many, particularly the most able students, find that their studies fail to stretch them;
- styles of learning and teaching at A Level do not always meet the needs of candidates, especially in vocational areas;
- the amount of assessment can limit experience of the wider aspects of education;
- the financial circumstances of some young people and their families affect the decision on whether to participate in education after 16; and
- if young people do not receive high-quality advice and guidance at critical points during the 14–19 phase, they may take the wrong decisions – or even lose heart and drop out.

14–19 education and training in other countries

1.7 We can learn from other countries. With our annexes we reproduce a paper designed to stimulate and inform debate, which explores

aspects of 14–19 education and training in several developed nations. Each country shares the aims we seek to address in this paper: to provide a good level of general education, to support efficient entry to higher education and to prepare students for the workplace. The key features of successful systems abroad appear to include:

- a common curriculum for all pupils in the lower secondary phase;
- an expectation that students will continue with a broad range of subjects through the upper secondary phase;
- vocational routes that provide access to higher education as well as employment;
- measures to persuade disadvantaged and disaffected students to participate in learning; and
- grouped awards, like the French Baccalauréat and the German Abitur, to mark the end of the phase.

Our conclusion

1.8 There is much to celebrate in our current system. Teacher professionalism, institutional diversity and, post-16, extensive curricular choice are real strengths.

1.9 But it is clear that we still have structural weaknesses to address. These weaknesses start from a lack of clarity about fundamental issues in 14–19 education. Policies since 1997 have been resolutely focused on the problems identified in the 14–19 review: poor staying-on rates at 16, lack of breadth and challenge in the curriculum, and a weak vocational offer. This is why we introduced new vocational GCSE and A Level programmes; why we embarked on the AS reform, to broaden the post-16 curriculum; and why we have improved and expanded Modern Apprenticeships, where we are aiming for 28% of young people to participate by 2004. All these policies are now in place and will, we hope, bear fruit. For them to do so, we need to retain stability and focus in the current system for the next few years. Although attenuated by our recent reforms and others over the last two decades, these weaknesses are not eliminated. The evidence – both in this country and from abroad – is that we need for the future a system which:

- stretches all young people whatever their ability;
- uses curriculum flexibility to motivate students and encourage achievement; and
- encourages institutions to work together to deliver programmes suitable for each individual learner.

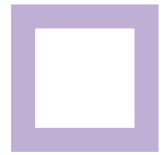
1.10 Structural reform raises profound issues. Over the last year, a wide range of specialists and young people themselves have contributed to the debate about structural reform. There is a strong and growing consensus that:

- there needs to be a much stronger vocational offer, with a strong underpinning of general education;
- assessment within programmes must be fit for purpose, must be manageable for students and teachers, and must accommodate recognition of a wide range of learning and achievement;
- the aims of breadth and stretch, raising the status of vocational provision and student motivation are best driven forward through a unified framework of qualifications. Any such framework must be suitable for young people across the ability range and promote progression through Foundation to Intermediate and Advanced levels.

1.11 Baccalaureate-style qualifications of this type work well in other countries, and we believe that this model, designed to suit English circumstances, could tackle long-standing English problems, giving greater emphasis to completing courses of study (and training as appropriate) through to the age of 18 or 19 without a heavier burden of examination and assessment.

1.12 A change to this type of model would be a long-term reform but one on which we are ready to embark if further work shows that such a unified system can prepare people for the varied needs of higher education and employment. This sort of reform needs to be carefully planned and built on consensus, as recommended by Mike Tomlinson's second report on last year's A Levels. We are committed to work with all the partners interested in the future of 14–19 education to test whether we can achieve consensus on a workable model that can be developed for implementation.

Moving forward



The vision

2.1 What young people learn from the ages of 14–19 is vital for their future development. It should encourage them to aim higher, while preparing them for work and for further learning, which should continue throughout their lives. Schools, colleges and workplaces thus have a great responsibility and a tremendous opportunity. They should ensure that all young people have an experience of learning which stimulates, motivates and stretches them so that they achieve their full potential.

2.2 Our vision for the 14–19 phase is one where:

- all young people can choose from a range of courses and qualifications covering a wide range of subjects and skills from 14;
- they can start to develop their own mix of subjects from 14, combining a broad range with more specialist choices that meet their interests and aspirations. This should help them to move on to more advanced learning at sixteen;
- they can easily see how their studies will lead to further education and employment, whether they are involved in general education or more specialised vocational courses. Students must be able to switch courses too;
- all young people can develop essential practical skills for life and work. Additionally, the curriculum and assessment arrangements must emphasise and promote competence in analysis, problem-solving and thinking, so that young people have the confidence to explain and defend their conclusions;
- those with special needs or those facing difficult personal, family or social circumstances are helped to overcome any problems these present;

- regardless of where they learn, young people have access to different types of provision, centres of excellence and other relevant expertise; and
- schools and colleges are working in partnership and innovatively to meet the needs of all learners.

2.3 We will not seek to impose a single national blueprint for delivery of this vision. An effective 14–19 system with good links to the labour market will look different in different places. This should reflect not only the needs of the local labour market but also the differing patterns of learning institutions and traditions in each locality, and the increasingly distinctive specialisms of local schools and colleges. This local innovation and dynamism will help bridge the gap between security and stability in the current framework and long-term reform.

Priorities and targets

2.4 The case for reform was thoroughly discussed and debated during the Green Paper consultation. At the same time, the consultation responses demonstrated many current strengths and much good practice. However, they also highlighted the importance of tackling the unacceptably high levels of drop-out and disengagement. This means building on strengths, removing barriers and remedying weaknesses.

2.5 It is not enough simply to recognise the problems and invest in solutions. We need to be able to demonstrate that our strategy is making a difference. To test whether the obstacles to greater participation and higher achievement among 14–19 year-olds have been overcome, we need to see:

- hard evidence of improving participation and retention rates and higher achievement in the wide range of qualifications to match the best performing systems in other countries; and
- students whose full potential has been developed through a broader education with the skills, experience and personal development to play a full part in society and to contribute to a productive economy.

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CASE STUDY: NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE LEA

Meeting the needs of all young people

North Lincolnshire aims
to extend and develop
14–19 education and
training through

collaborative work, and to raise expectations and attainment
through targeted self-development programmes and high-quality
information and guidance.

LEA-wide objectives: flexibility and opportunity

This Pathfinder will focus on shifting an existing culture of low
aspirations, increasing progression at 16+, improving the numbers
entering higher education, and raising the attainment of boys by
widening the range of courses provided at 14–19 (including
enterprise, vocational and work-related learning).

These objectives will be reinforced by providing specialist careers
guidance for learners and parents at important transition points,
and by the innovative use of technology for learning, including
e-mentoring/e-buddies schemes, e-learning and video-conferencing.

Productive partnership arrangements

The Pathfinder will develop new, flexible structures favouring
greater collaboration, such as common timetables across schools
and colleges. The LEA will be the lead body, and the collaboration
will involve all schools, two Beacon colleges, the local Learning and
Skills Council, the local Learning Partnership, the Education

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Business Partnership,
Connexions, the
Consortium for Work-
based Learning, HE
providers,
neighbouring LEAs,
Adult Education and
Youth Services, and
Scunthorpe United FC.

2.6 This work will be given a clear focus by our priority targets which are:

- compared with 2002, the proportion of 19 year-olds achieving 5 GCSE grades A* to C or the equivalent vocational qualifications will rise by three percentage points by 2004, and a further three percentage points by 2006;
- by 2010, 90% of young people by age 22 will have participated in a full-time programme fitting them for entry into higher education or skilled employment;
- by 2004, 28% of young people will enter Modern Apprenticeships by age 22; and
- by 2010, to increase participation in higher education towards 50% of those aged 18 to 30. Also, to make significant progress year on year towards fair access, and to bear down on rates of non-completion.

2.7 We have already indicated (paragraph 1.10) the growing consensus that in the longer term we should move towards a unified qualifications structure suitable for all young people. This means positioning 14–19 as a single coherent phase rather than as many people see it now, a 14–16 phase followed by a 16–19 phase. This would reflect the reality that many young people are working towards Level 2 qualifications (5 good GCSEs or equivalent) after the age of 16. But getting this right will require sufficient high-quality provision so that all young people can find courses that are suitably stretching and relevant to their needs and aspirations. Such courses must also have real currency with employers and with higher education. There must be sufficient advice and guidance so that they can get help and support to make the right choices. And there must be coherence within and between programmes so that progression is clear and assured, that options are not closed down too early, and that outcomes are valued and understood. We agree with those organisations such as the lecturers' union NATFHE, which noted the lack of clear progression routes from Entry and Foundation levels.

2.8 The English system has tended to make a sharp distinction between academic and vocational learning opportunities. The public often sees vocational options as inferior to academic provision. This perception not only undermines those young people on vocational programmes, it is also harmful to an economy which needs more skilled workers, particularly at technician level. And the terminology is not particularly descriptive either: law and computer studies are seen as “academic” subjects but they have clear vocational content. We think it more helpful to talk in terms of general or specialist education.

2.9 Some actions can and will be started immediately. Other matters require carefully considered analysis and planning. They will take five to ten years to implement in full. Moreover, we recognise the need to maintain stability so that everyone retains confidence in what we currently do well and is reassured that what works well will not be undermined. By doing so, we can build a consensus both about the way forward and on the nature of any changes. The scope for innovation and improvement is considerable. Before enlarging on the possibilities for more radical reform in the medium to longer term, we set out what can be done now to provide a better, more flexible experience to young people.

Next steps



Changes in the shorter term are necessary and achievable. We set out in this chapter our plans:

- the 14–19 curriculum will combine a breadth of study with greater flexibility to enable schools and colleges better to address the needs of individual pupils;
- 14–16 year-olds will be entitled to learn modern foreign languages, design and technology, and arts and humanities;
- all young people will include work-related and enterprise learning in their programmes. New ‘hybrid’ GCSEs will be developed to include general and vocational options;
- we will retain and extend the range of subjects offered in the Advanced Extension Awards;
- we will develop a coherent approach to teaching and learning for all teachers and lecturers working with 11–19 year-olds;
- we will engage more proactively with employers to understand and respond better to their needs. We will explore models for more effective local employer involvement;
- we will encourage new forms of partnership. Pathfinder projects will help identify and spread good practice and assess the scale and costs of new patterns of 14–19 provision; and
- young people will be better able to plan their learning from the end of Key Stage 3. Schools will have overall responsibility for managing the process, supported by agencies such as the Connexions Service.

Key Stage 4

3.1 The Green Paper confirmed our commitment to ensuring that during their period of compulsory education all young people should

follow a broad and balanced programme. At the same time there was considerable support from both teachers and young people for our proposals to introduce greater flexibility and choice in the Key Stage 4 curriculum. These proposals would enable schools to offer programmes that better meet young people's individual needs and strengths, whilst ensuring they acquire the core of general learning and experience essential to later learning and employment. We therefore intend to amend the statutory requirements at Key Stage 4 to enable schools to put our Green Paper proposals into effect:

- all students will still have to learn English, mathematics and science. These will continue to be statutory requirements. In mathematics and English, we expect the breadth and depth of content to be no less than at present. We will review the current substantial Programme of Study for science to set a core content that is suitable for all learners. However, we will expect the majority of pupils to spend the same proportion of their programmes on science as they do now;
- Information and Communications Technology (ICT) will also remain compulsory. However, we expect pupils increasingly to develop their ICT skills through other subjects. In time, ICT may no longer need to be discretely specified as a statutorily required National Curriculum subject. Many pupils will, of course, wish to pursue ICT in more depth and to gain appropriate qualifications;
- all students will also continue to be taught citizenship, religious education, sex education, physical education and careers education. We think there is potential across these areas for greater co-ordination and cross-curriculum delivery than is often the case now. In time, we will seek to support this through the specification of the relevant requirements and through teaching materials;
- all pupils at 14–16 will in future learn about work and enterprise;
- schools will no longer be required to teach modern foreign languages and design and technology to all pupils. All schools will be required to ensure as a minimum that they are available to any pupil wishing to study them; and
- there will be similar entitlements to study the arts and humanities, neither of which is currently compulsory at Key Stage 4.

CASE STUDY: BLACK COUNTRY LSC

Championing language learning

The 'Networks for Excellence' Pathfinder aim to redress the decline in modern foreign languages provision in Black Country schools, colleges and the wider community.

Led by the local LSC, the pathfinder will explore new ways of working, forging links between schools, including specialist and Beacon schools, colleges (Centres of Vocational Excellence), and private providers to develop their strengths in language learning and use of new technologies.

Injecting language learning into vocational learning

Language learning will be enhanced and developed across the 14–19 range and included in vocational learning through new GCSEs in vocational subjects, work-experience and entrepreneurial activities with students, employers, FE and HE.

A special focus of the project will be the practical use of language skills in a work-based environment. Curriculum language content will be developed to meet business needs, including Student and Modern Apprenticeships incorporating language learning.

Innovative ICT solutions, including videoconferencing and interactive delivery, will enable language learning and cultural awareness to reach the widest audience, including European and international links. An important element will be the focus on the effective use of community languages such as Punjabi and Urdu.

The pathfinder will cover the three boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall, and the City of Wolverhampton, an ethnically diverse

urban area with significant levels of deprivation. It is supported by a wide range of local, regional and national partners.

3.2 We announced our conclusions on modern foreign languages in our Language Strategy in December. We are committed to supporting language learning, because of its vital contribution to cultural understanding and economic competitiveness. However, we do not believe that requiring schools to teach languages to every young person beyond the age of 14 is the best way to achieve this objective, particularly where students struggle with a subject in which they have little interest or aptitude. Every young person at this stage will be entitled to study a language if they wish, and we shall require schools to provide this entitlement to every young person that wants it. Our National Languages Strategy set out our plans to deliver an entitlement to language learning for pupils from the age of seven by 2010. Individual schools may continue to require pupils to study languages as part of their school policy.

3.3 We are convinced that all young people should undertake some work-related learning at Key Stage 4. We noted the considerable support from those consulted, including the Association of Colleges, for this conclusion. In introducing this new requirement, we are clear that this need not be taught as a separate subject but should offer a range of suitable experiences through and across the curriculum. Following the Howard Davies review *Enterprise and the Economy in Education*¹, it will include the development of enterprise capability as an important outcome, as well as the work-experience that most young people now have during the stage. We intend that this enterprise capability will be a clearly articulated outcome of work-related learning. We will shortly announce more details of our response to the recommendations of the Howard Davies review, including its contribution to the development of work-related learning. We will also ask the QCA, with partners, to advise us about the content of this requirement and what further guidance may be needed for schools.

3.4 All 14–19 year-olds should be involved in wider activities and experience beyond the curriculum, including volunteering, which can enrich learning, whilst developing and expressing creative and practical skills and interests. We can draw upon the considerable enthusiasm of arts and sports organisations – and personalities – who are already working with schools and colleges to give young people more exciting

¹ *Enterprise and the Economy in Education*, Howard Davies Review 2002 (available online at www.daviesreview.org)

and challenging experiences. We will also ask our Working Group on 14–19 reform (see Chapter 4) to consider how young people can receive greater recognition and acknowledgement of activities and achievements outside the classroom as part of a unified framework of qualifications.

3.5 The curriculum changes will not take effect before the 2004/2005 academic year at the earliest. In subjects such as science, preparation for a revised Programme of Study and associated qualifications may take longer. In the meantime, we propose to align the arrangements that enable schools to disapply some aspects of the National Curriculum for their pupils with our proposed changes.

3.6 As well as providing greater flexibility at Key Stage 4, there should be more opportunities for young people to develop and progress at a pace consistent with their abilities. This might include taking a GCSE early or skipping it where appropriate, or moving more slowly where this is the best option. We do not intend to be prescriptive about what should happen in particular circumstances. This is best left to local judgement and discretion. Volume 2: Annex 2 includes some steps we shall take to enable pace to be well managed.

3.7 The concept of giving good schools Earned Autonomy will also provide additional freedoms to make changes to National Curriculum requirements. This will help them to develop and promote curriculum innovation in a way that best suits the needs of their pupils. Full consultation on proposals for Earned Autonomy will be undertaken before it is implemented.

3.8 To help ensure that all young people are well equipped in literacy, numeracy and computer skills we will introduce an entitlement for them to continue studying up to age 19 until they reach the standard of a good GCSE or the corresponding Level 2 key skill qualification. Those going on to higher education or professional study after 19 should be encouraged to achieve a Level 3 qualification in at least one of these skill areas.

GCSEs and A level

3.9 Mike Tomlinson produced two reports in 2002 from his inquiry into A Level marking and standards. His first report made immediate

recommendations to ensure the effectiveness of the arrangements for setting, maintaining and judging A Level standards. His second report made important proposals for how the system might develop in the future. We welcomed the Tomlinson reports and recommendations. Volume 2: Annex 1 summarises the main issues to arise from his inquiry. We recognise that it is vitally important to re-establish confidence in the system and to ensure that the processes involved are robust, secure and effective. We will work with schools and colleges, as well as Awarding Bodies and the QCA, to get this right. This is the top priority in this area for the Department and the National Bodies responsible for running the current system.

3.10 GCSEs and A Levels have enabled many young people to succeed in school, college, university and employment. As a result of the Curriculum 2000 reforms, A Level students are able to choose from a wider range of courses than before. New GCSEs in vocational subjects were introduced last September.

3.11 During the consultation, some argued that the GCSE qualification should be scrapped. But many others accepted our argument in the Green Paper that the GCSE serves several important functions, and that it is more prudent to think in terms of its evolution than its abolition. There has also been important discussion about the role and contribution of the science GCSE. The place of mathematics at Key Stage 4 will be an essential part of the post-14 mathematics inquiry. The Green Paper set out proposals to develop the range and flexibility of courses and programmes, and reduce the significance of distinctions between general courses and those in vocational subjects. Some young people need routes through Entry and Foundation levels. We need to build on some good practice here. As a result of the consultation, the following changes will be made:

- QCA will continue their programme to develop new GCSEs in vocational subjects;
- the sharp distinction between general and vocational GCSE subjects, and their respective labels, has been removed;
- we will introduce 'hybrid' GCSEs with a common core and optional vocational or general units. QCA is developing pilot GCSEs for teaching from September 2003 in areas related to science and geography – and these will test out different approaches to 'hybrid' qualifications;

- we will consult QCA on optimum timing for moving to a single label for A Levels; and
- we received many representations that the 6-unit GNVQ provides valuable opportunities for vocational study, particularly for students over 16. We have already announced that it will be retained, alongside the new GCSEs, until suitable alternatives are available.

3.12 We do, however, intend to depart from one proposal in the Green Paper. When we proposed the A Level A grade ‘with distinction’, we were concerned that take-up for the Advanced Extension Award would not be sufficient to provide a reliable approach to differentiating between able students. In the event, higher than expected take-up of Advanced Extension Awards (AEAs) last summer and robust results have confirmed the rigour of AEAs and their fitness for the purpose for which they were designed. Additionally, within the consultation, there were doubts as to whether the new A grade would in practice achieve its aims. Potential technical difficulties included risks to standards and attainment at the lower end of the grading structure. We have therefore decided for the time being not to proceed. Nonetheless, it is important that we offer able students a demanding and stretching challenge. We wish to give the new AEAs the chance to build on their promising start and establish a clear position in the qualifications framework by motivating the most able and helping universities to distinguish very high levels of attainment. Arrangements are in place – including a programme of master-classes through the Excellence Challenge programme – to ensure that a wide range of able students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and poorer performing schools, have access to these qualifications and fully demonstrate their ability. We have also decided to extend the range of subjects currently offered and are considering whether this should include some vocational subjects. We will continue to monitor their progress closely. We note in this context the interest of some partners in the possible use of SAT-type tests, as used in America, to offer information about the suitability of young people for higher education. We have a different tradition in this country, but are happy to see debate continuing in this area.

3.13 Details of the action we plan to take on the 14–19 curriculum and on qualifications are set out in more detail in Volume 2: Annex 2.

A strategy for teaching and learning

3.14 Learners are rightly expected to be at the centre of policy discussions, but too rarely do we discuss how they are taught or what they learn. We need a consistent approach to teaching and learning in schools, colleges and workplaces. Heads and principals need to create an environment where high expectations, consistent teaching practice, good behaviour and regular attendance are the norm in every part of their school or college. Doing so will help to turn young people into confident, independent and motivated adult learners.

3.15 We want to break down barriers between schools and colleges. The proposals for teaching and learning in *Schools: achieving success* and *Success for All* will help schools and colleges offer young people a better learning experience. The early evidence from the Key Stage 3 strategy is encouraging – there is already anecdotal evidence that it is influencing teaching with older pupils. A new Standards Unit has been established within the Department to lead on improving post-16 learning and teaching. The Unit will establish a coherent approach to identifying and disseminating best practice in post-16 teaching, training and learning.

3.16 The simultaneous development of these key strategies offers us a timely opportunity to open a debate with providers about how to bring together the best of teaching from schools, FE and work-based provision. We can do so in the knowledge that e-learning is assuming a growing significance, not least in its capacity to reach new kinds of student with innovative materials. Some further new materials and training programmes will be piloted early this summer in advance of wider piloting in 2004. We intend the full package of training, support through local consultants, and guidance to include:

- different approaches for the various age ranges and subjects;
- wider dissemination of established best practice in teaching literacy, numeracy and ICT;
- management of increasingly individualised learning, in a variety of institutions and the workplace through e-learning and other methods;

CASE STUDY: SHROPSHIRE LEA

A coherent 14–19 phase in a rural context

This project will be testing imaginatively the development of a coherent 14–19 phase across the whole county of Shropshire, a large, sparsely populated rural area.

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Wider curriculum choice through extended collaboration and ICT

ICT and e-learning will be used to tackle issues of rural isolation: the pathfinder will explore how urban models can be adapted to rural areas working with 'DigitalBrain' to build on the experience of the London Grid for Learning and City Learning Centres.

14–19 curriculum models will be developed to provide a common entitlement and a menu of choices to all. International models for sparsely populated areas will be explored, in particular those in Canada and Australia. Flexibility to allow a varied pace of learning will cater for Gifted and Talented students, pupils with special educational needs and irregular attenders.

Collaboration in a rural area

Geography and limited public transport make collaboration difficult, with journey times between different providers a major

problem. The pathfinder will look at developing best practice transferable to other rural areas.

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- using ICT and e-learning imaginatively to enhance learning for all and to motivate learners to achieve; and
- management of difficult behaviour, and motivation of hardest-to-reach students.

3.17 Until relatively recently, there was too little focus on the skills and qualifications of college lecturers. Through the *Success for All* strategy we are proposing to set a target that, by 2006, 90% of full-time teachers and 60% of part-timers in FE colleges will be qualified or enrolled on appropriate courses. Over time, we will look to extend this approach to work-based training providers.

Apprenticeships

3.18 High-quality, high-status and work-based training through Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) is essential to providing young people with clear options from 14–19. Already many young people progress to HE and higher level vocational qualifications after their apprenticeship.

3.19 The basic structure of Modern Apprenticeships is in place. The Foundation MA enables young people to achieve a National Vocational Qualification at Level 2, while an Advanced MA allows them to progress to Level 3. However, the standards are variable and the MA remains less well known than the A Level route. The Government and the LSC have announced a number of reforms to address these weaknesses, based on the recommendations of the MA Advisory Committee chaired by Sir John Cassells last year².

3.20 We have also announced a new employer-led Modern Apprenticeship Task Force. Its aim is to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities for young people and to ensure that the design and content of MAs meet their needs and those of employers.

3.21 Young people who are not ready for apprenticeship will join a new flexible and individually focused programme called Entry to Employment (E2E). Drawing on support from the Connexions Service, the programme will also target disengaged young people, with the aim of giving all participants the help they need to enter an MA or

² The detailed implementation plans for reform of Modern Apprenticeships can be found at the LSC's website www.lsc.gov.uk.

alternative training and educational routes. Eleven pathfinder programmes are preparing the way for national implementation.

3.22 Student Apprenticeships offer further, flexible, progression opportunities, into a Modern Apprenticeship or higher education. Student Apprenticeships are a collaborative approach to offering students in post-16 full-time education the opportunity to gain valuable work experience and vocational learning alongside their qualifications. The LSC is currently supporting the implementation of seven Student Apprenticeship pathfinders.

Employer involvement and meeting business needs

3.23 At the beginning of the 21st Century, we can no longer tolerate an artificial divide between the world of education and the world of work. Our national success is heavily dependent on our capacity to develop a skilled workforce which can meet the challenges of both an increasingly competitive global economy and high-quality public services.

3.24 We agree with the TUC and the CBI, which have noted how important employers are to the 14–19 phase. Greater flexibility in the curriculum, new work-related learning programmes and GCSEs in vocational subjects will particularly help those seeking to enter the labour market directly from school or college, and enable them to progress to an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship or further training. However, we recognise that we have more to do to address the preparation of young people for entry to the wide range of skilled technical employment on which the economy will depend.

3.25 Local links between education and business are an established part of school and college life. All schools and colleges should have an effective relationship with employers in their locality. And employers concerned about sector/local skills shortage and the quality of job applicants must be willing to make a positive contribution to young people's educational experience.

3.26 We want to see access for all young people to short or longer-term employer placements which are challenging, innovative and responsive to individual need. For some this may be a relatively small part of their curriculum. For other young people it could be a significant part of their

learning programme – the key to unlocking talent and raising aspirations.

3.27 We welcome the fact that business mentors are making a significant contribution in an increasing number of schools and colleges. Many young people benefit from a relationship with an adult role model outside their educational institution. Such mentoring relationships can be an important source of support for the professional development of teachers and leadership skills of head teachers.

3.28 Nationally, the Department is committed to developing a closer relationship with the DTI, CBI and other employer-led organisations. It is essential that future policy development is better informed by the experiences and needs of employers.

3.29 There are a number of relevant challenges that we intend to address:

- a qualification framework which has currency with employers;
- an education system which provides young people with both the basic and generic skills so essential in the modern world of work;
- careers advice based on credible labour market information and an accurate presentation of the full range of options;
- employer recruitment practices which match their stated requirements;
- vocational education and training which is high quality and has high status amongst young people, parents, educationalists and employers; and
- employer willingness to invest in a new generation of Modern Apprentices.

The opportunities which would be created by a new dynamism in the employer-education relationship cannot be overstated. They lead to the heart of the Government's social and economic objectives.

3.30 Historically, business and education have not always worked closely enough together. We need to strike a deal between employers, young people and schools so that each knows what to expect from the other. The priorities of small and medium-sized enterprises, in particular, are understandably closely focused on managing their own business successfully. They have often found it difficult to get involved with education and training in their area. Through pathfinders and in discussions with businesses and their representatives, and with the close involvement of the LSC, the Sector Skills Development Agency, the DTI and other Government Departments, we intend to explore models for more effective employer involvement, particularly from small firms. Such models must more consistently reflect employer perspectives. They should make it easier for employers to get involved without diverting time and resources from their commercial priorities. Post-16 providers have already been encouraged through the *Success for All* strategy to improve their responsiveness to businesses and to local and regional skills needs.

Helping change to happen: local collaboration and innovation

3.31 The main purpose of our shorter term measures is to enable schools, colleges and other providers to respond better to the needs and circumstances of individual young people. We expect Chief Education Officers and Local Learning and Skills Executive Directors to give a forceful lead in ensuring that provision in their areas seizes the opportunities that the 14–19 agenda offers. No single school or college can always offer the full range of 14–19 options on its own. But we are not persuaded that wholesale institutional reform is either necessary or desirable. The variety of cultures, structures and institutional arrangements is a distinctive strength. It can respond well to local needs and circumstances, including very varied local labour markets. That is why we want to see the necessary changes delivered through locally-devised arrangements that exploit local strengths and meet distinctive local needs.

3.32 Our vision demands new forms of partnership and collaboration between schools, colleges, employers, training providers and universities. These must build on existing good practice including Education-Business partnerships. Both LEAs and local LSCs have considerable scope to support such arrangements and to remove the

concerns of some headteachers and principals that their arrangements are bureaucratic and obstructive. Working collaboratively, as some now do, they have the potential to harness the energy and creativity to generate worthwhile innovation in every area.

3.33 Under our *Success for All* reforms from April 2003, LSCs will comprehensively review their local post-16 provision to improve its range, quality and choice and better meet learners' needs. Such partnerships will vary in size from relatively limited arrangements, through federations of schools, to distinctly defined learning communities, covering all types of education provision. Whatever their nature, they should have one key objective: to enable many more students to draw on the strengths of several different institutions.

3.34 We also plan to encourage the independent schools sector to play a greater role in local partnerships. Two of the 2002/03 pathfinders involve independent schools. We believe there is scope for others to be involved as part of our drive to support more diversity. We encourage more LEAs to think creatively about the opportunities to incorporate independent schools into their local provider networks.

3.35 If schools and/or LEAs face legislative barriers to developing, diversifying and innovating, the Power to Innovate in the 2002 Education Act permits a school or LEA to apply to the Secretary of State to lift regulatory requirements temporarily. A group of schools could also apply jointly where they can show that removing a regulation would raise educational standards.

3.36 Some local partners wish to go further in developing innovative models to integrate delivery of 14–19 learning, and we welcome new approaches (within existing legislation) that better meet local needs. We also support radical structural change where there is clear evidence that such change could do more to improve the quality of teaching, learning, participation and attainment than more informal approaches to collaboration. Such proposals should also show how they support and enhance the distinctive mission of participating colleges, in line with the vision in *Success for All*.

CASE STUDY: KNOWSLEY

14–19 COLLEGIATE

Individualised learning through innovative partnership

Partnership is the keystone of this ambitious project which aims to raise attainment,

achievement and employability by creating a new coherent and flexible single phase of 14–19 education and training focused on individual needs.

The Collegiate structure, vocational skills and student support

Knowsley will build on its existing Collegiate structure, an innovative model which has currency for other metropolitan areas with similar barriers to learning and collaboration.

Pre- and post-16 students will have access to a range of vocational options, complemented by a new Vocational Skills Centre replicating the workplace. Work-related programmes will be extended with well-developed plans for securing employer commitment.

Individual student needs are at the heart of the process. A new support unit will provide advice and guidance, while Individual Learning Plans will help with learning at varied paces.

Partnership and collaboration at each level

The Collegiate incorporates all the Borough's secondary schools, including City Learning Centres, specialist schools and special schools, and involves local employers such as Jaguar Halewood.

Knowsley's well-supported Schools Council will cascade information about the enhanced offering to students, link to parents or carers, and gather and evaluate student opinion.

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**CASE STUDY: INCREASED
FLEXIBILITY PROGRAMME:
STAMFORD COLLEGE
PARTNERSHIP**

**Enhanced vocational learning
and employability**

Stamford College

Partnership aims to

enhance work-related learning opportunities at 14–16, and to increase provision of vocational GCSEs and qualifications supporting the Lincolnshire Employability Graduation Award (EGA).

Increased provision and opportunity

By providing a broader curriculum and greater access to educational opportunities, the partnership aims to raise attainment in national qualifications and increase vocational skills/knowledge and post-16 retention in education and training. Social learning and development will be improved through the experience of learning in an adult environment.

The EGA, a local initiative preparing students for FE, training or the world of work (including ICT, careers education, work-experience, health and safety, and community service elements), will be developed through the delivery of linked vocational qualifications.

Broad-based partnership

Stamford College of Further Education will provide the courses and, in all, nine schools will be invited to put forward Year 10 pupils. Other partners will include the Connexions Service and the Education-Business Partnership.

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Supporting local delivery

3.37 Enabling and supporting those at local level – in schools, colleges and other providers – to seize and take forward the opportunities to offer greater choice and flexibility, and to drive up achievement, is essential to the success of our 14–19 strategy. A number of measures, in hand or in prospect, will help develop the confidence and competence of institutions and their leaders to understand and deliver change. At the same time we will ensure the agenda is reflected in accountability, inspection and funding arrangements, and supported by our policies for institutional specialisation and diversity.

3.38 In Volume 2: Annex 3 we set out in detail the decisions and progress we have made following the Green Paper to support local delivery of the 14–19 agenda. These include:

- *the Increased Flexibility for 14–16 year-olds programme*: this draws together local partnerships expected to involve over 2000 schools and 30,000 pupils to give young people access to specialist vocational teaching;
- *local 16–19 planning*: the LSC will begin strategic area reviews from 2003 to determine the configurations of provision that best meet local needs;
- *performance tables*: following strong support for proposals made in the Green Paper, some changes will be introduced at the earliest practicable date, subject to successful piloting. These include reporting a wider range of qualifications and ensuring that AS Levels taken early are recorded in secondary school tables. We will continue to work on further complex issues around pace and progression and where responsibility for students' progress is shared between institutions;
- *Ofsted/ALI inspection arrangements for individual providers and whole areas*: during 2003, area inspections will be developed to cover 14–19 provision in place of the current 16–19 inspections;

3.39 There were suggestions in the consultation that some performance measures should reflect the achievements of an area as a whole, not just those of individual institutions. We believe it is

important for accountability to continue publishing data which reflect the performance of individual schools and colleges. However, we recognise that a collective performance measure, such as an area's post-16 participation rate, could encourage more collaboration. So we shall consider further, with the Learning and Skills Council, how to achieve this in the context of target setting by local LSCs and the new national participation target for 2010.

3.40 The Green Paper proposed a programme of 14–19 pathfinders to test local delivery in a range of settings. We have announced the first 25 year one pathfinders. They are drawn from each region and reflect different social circumstances. They will soon start to expand collaboration in innovative ways. We expect all of them to be in place by the end of January 2003. We will shortly be inviting expressions of interest for a second round of pathfinders to begin in September 2003.

3.41 Volume 2: Annex 4 sets out our plans for pathfinders in more detail.

3.42 We are keen to learn from local experience, both within the pathfinders and from other partnerships. Our pathfinders' website www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19pathfinders will be a source of good practice and innovation.

Raising aspirations: advice, guidance and support

3.43 An effective 14–19 phase will depend on young people receiving effective advice and guidance so that they can make the best choices and manage their options well. We agree with those, like the CBI, who noted the importance of such advice being impartial so that young people are able, for example, to make an informed decision about whether to study A Levels at school or college, or to pursue an apprenticeship. There was strong support for our Green Paper proposal for more structured planning at the end of Key Stage 3, including moves towards the development of an Individual Learning Plan and for beginning curriculum-led careers education earlier. Volume 2: Annex 5 outlines how we propose to approach both Individual Learning Plans and ongoing advice and support, including the key role of the Connexions Service. The Youth Service will also have an important role.

3.44 For many young people the 14–19 phase of education is a key opportunity to break the cycle of deprivation. Many parents want their children to seize that chance, but this requires the appropriate support. Giving young people greater ownership of their options, with more choice and flexibility will help to raise their aspirations and motivation. And it should also help to improve behaviour and attendance.

3.45 Following extensive trials from 1999, the Government announced in the 2002 Spending Review that Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) would be available throughout England from September 2004. The principle behind EMAs is that young people in post-compulsory education receive regular means-tested payments in exchange for keeping to the terms of a learning agreement signed with their school or college. Evidence from the pilots has been very encouraging: fewer students are dropping out of courses and there has been a notable improvement in the behaviour of young men. There is strong evidence that EMAs can play a major role in transforming aspirations.

3.46 The Connexions Card is now available to post-16 learners as an incentive to continued participation and attainment. Take-up is good and feedback from young people has been positive. Young people who use the card to its full potential are getting value in excess of £300. This highly innovative initiative will both encourage more young people to stay in learning and add to their enjoyment.

From reform to transformation



The shorter-term actions we propose will introduce greater flexibility into the system. But they do not amount to a transformation of young people's experiences that is our ultimate goal. There is a growing consensus that more radical change is needed. We intend to appoint a Working Group for 14–19 Reform that will address three main areas:

- a much stronger vocational offer with a firm underpinning of general education;
- ensuring that assessment within programmes is fit for purpose; and
- the development of a unified framework of qualifications suitable for young people across the whole range of ability.

4.1 Our analysis in paragraph 1.10 identified the main areas where there is growing consensus that we need to move beyond incremental changes towards such structural transformation. Mike Tomlinson's second report into A Level standards also makes some specific recommendations for the longer term which contribute to this debate. The analysis points towards three key strategic directions for change:

- strengthening the structure and content of full-time vocational programmes, and offering greater coherence in learning programmes for all young people throughout their 14–19 education;
- developing assessment arrangements for 14–19 year-olds that are appropriate to different types of course and styles of learning and teaching, with the overall amount of assessment manageable for learners and teachers alike; and
- bringing forward a unified framework of qualifications that stretches the performance of learners, motivates progression and recognises different levels of achievement.

4.2 We now intend to appoint a Working Group for 14–19 Reform under the chairmanship of Mike Tomlinson. Its membership will have direct experience of 14–19 education and training, in sixth form and FE colleges, independent and maintained schools, higher education and industry. With the close involvement of the QCA, the group will examine in detail how developments in each of these areas might contribute in the longer term to the successful and lasting transformation of 14–19 learning. Full membership will be announced shortly.

4.3 We will expect the Group to work with all key stakeholders in the delivery and outcomes of 14–19 learning – young people, employers, schools, colleges, universities, training providers, LEAs and local LSCs – so that we can proceed with a widespread consensus. Their work should address the need to improve the links between education and employers in the 14–19 phase.

4.4 The terms of reference for the Group are set out in Volume 2: Annex 6.

4.5 The Group will take account of the following objectives that cut across all three themes:

- reducing the notion of ‘leaving at 16’ to encourage young people to progress to more worthwhile outcomes at 19;
- meeting the needs of all young people, including the gifted and talented, low achievers and those who face significant obstacles to learning;
- enhancing diversity of provision, local innovation and student choice; and
- removing unnecessary burdens on teachers and learners.

4.6 Although some of the Group’s recommendations might be taken forward quite quickly, these reforms will constitute a substantial longer-term agenda. The Tomlinson reports re-emphasised the importance of major changes being taken forward in a measured way with thorough testing before implementation. Over time, however, we expect the Group’s proposals will lead to significant changes in the 14–19

framework, and they will advise how any eventual transition can be smoothly managed.

4.7 Meanwhile, we remain committed to the existing arrangements and will act on the conclusions of Mike Tomlinson’s review of A Level standards. Students have every right to expect that A Levels will continue to serve their interests in providing a qualification with a consistent, high standard. We recognise the commitment that schools, colleges and other providers make to offer high-quality opportunities and programmes. It is essential that they continue to develop and enhance their offering within the existing framework whilst it remains in place. We have no doubt they will do so.

4.8 The following sections set out some of the key issues to be addressed in each of the three areas.

Improving the quality of vocational options and coherent programmes for all young people

4.9 We showed above how the basic structure of Modern Apprenticeships is now in place. We outlined our reforms to address weaknesses in the arrangements. High-quality, high-status, work-based training is essential to our plans.

4.10 The 2002 Green Paper proposed flexible curriculum arrangements and options that could be tailored more closely to the needs of individual young people. Within that approach, we attached priority to developing a wider range of high-quality opportunities for vocational learning, which could be integrated into learning programmes alongside traditional GCSE and A Level subjects, or which could form the basis for a predominantly vocational programme.

4.11 This approach was widely welcomed in the consultation. But some consultees pointed to the potential confusion and lack of focus that could result from additional choice and flexibility. So we need to explore how learners could combine flexibility and choice with coherent programmes of study, particularly in predominantly vocational programmes. Developing more effective and consistent partnerships between learning and business should help us to do this and to recognise and respond to the changing and increasing demands of the labour market for higher levels of knowledge and skills.

CASE STUDY: COVENTRY LEA**High inclusivity and a full range of expertise**

This project will draw on the expertise of the full range of providers in the city and will benefit all 14–19 students, including those in pupil referral units.

Increasing choice, raising achievement

The Pathfinder aims to raise achievement of all young people at 14–19 and increase participation in post-16 learning. There will be a focus on raising the achievement and motivation of under-achieving groups, particularly white UK-heritage boys and black Caribbean-heritage boys.

Provision of 14–19 education and training will be enhanced by introducing a broad range of the new GCSEs in vocational subjects. Provision of vocational A Levels and GNVQs will also be enhanced and Student Apprenticeships developed at this level, ensuring an increased range of pathways for young people. The Pathfinder will develop a city-wide common timetable for pre-16 courses, enabling students to access provision in other schools and colleges. The Coventry Learning Net will make high-quality teaching materials available to teachers online.

Wide-ranging collaboration

All 14–19 students will have access to a wide range of work-related learning, including placements in colleges or with training providers in areas such as hairdressing or sports and recreation; work experience placements with local employers; and enterprise education.

There will be strong links with other programmes, including 'Increased Flexibility for 14–16 year-olds', Coventry Education Action Zone, Young Enterprise, Excellence Cluster, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and New Deal for Communities.

4.12 Programmes should contain a coherent blend of general and specialist education and training tailored to the individual student. Many programmes in schools, colleges and the workplace already achieve this. Our plans for secondary education, and further education and training, reform should progressively improve young people's experiences. However, there are still too many vocational programmes and qualifications that lack coherence and opportunities for progression. Unsurprisingly, they are not respected by employers or universities. And they fail to motivate students, who then abandon their studies before completion. All too often these are the students who feel they have already failed at school and who most need well-structured and imaginatively taught options to achieve their potential. We must improve the quality of vocational programmes if all young people are to have access to high-quality, motivating options. This is especially important for those who do not choose A Level programmes or apprenticeships but want to see a strong practical orientation to their studies.

4.13 We will also invite the Working Group to look at how young people can develop the essential practical skills for life, and how the content of individual subjects and programmes could place a greater emphasis on analysis, problem solving and thinking skills, as well as the presentation and argument of conclusions. Practical and analytical skills are equally essential in adult life and in the workplace. Existing programme and subject requirements do not always sufficiently emphasise these skills. We would welcome the Working Group's ideas as to how they are best addressed in programmes during the 14–19 phase. The Group will wish to consider how their development can build on the learning and development of key skills, including teamwork, problem solving and improving one's own learning and performance, all of which are valued by many employers and universities.

4.14 We shall ask the Working Group to consider also whether and how to inject additional breadth and complementary study into the post-16 element of all 14–19 programmes. They will consider the extent to which learning programmes of all types should encompass a common core of general education, and particular kinds of knowledge and skill. All students need a blend of general and specialist education during this phase.

14–19 assessment: enhancing fitness for purpose

4.15 Our qualifications and assessment arrangements have a number of purposes:

- to help young people to assess their progress;
- to motivate and recognise achievement;
- to provide key information to students and teachers about readiness for further and higher education and employment;
- to differentiate between young people in applying for work or HE;
- through performance data, to provide information about institutions.

4.16 The 14–19 Green Paper did not explicitly address the general nature of student assessment during the 14–19 phase. Nevertheless, a number of issues emerged strongly during the consultation, articulated by the Secondary Heads Association and others. There are three main dimensions to these issues:

- sustainability of the current exam processes and systems;
- the impact on young people and teachers of the frequency and volume of assessment; and
- matching the assessment methods of particular courses and subjects to their goals and purpose.

4.17 Addressing these issues needs to recognise the different purposes that assessment arrangements serve. Sometimes this can be achieved through the right balance between internal and external assessment. But that will depend on the nature of the assessment and whether it is measuring progress or final attainment. In other words, a high-stakes examination, which is widely used to assess candidates for jobs or higher education, will often need a significant degree of external assessment to maintain its currency.

4.18 We look to the QCA and others to identify and help implement solutions to the first of the three issues in paragraph 4.16. Mike Tomlinson's reports have already made an important contribution to the debate. Proposals for professionalising examiners are one possible approach. However, any solutions should reflect the primary responsibility of teachers to teach and recognise any workload implications.

4.19 We will ask the Working Group to focus on the second and third issues. The Group's terms of reference will ensure too that this longer-term work takes account of the recommendations of Mike Tomlinson's review of A Level standards, and in particular considers his recommendations for a de-coupling of the AS and A2 to create two free-standing qualifications.

4.20 A major concern raised in consultation was that the assessment within some vocational qualifications constrained the learning styles to which many young people responded positively. This in turn reduced the impact of their programmes, and made them less accessible. Changes to assessment arrangements for vocational qualifications in recent years have sought to ensure that they are reliable and robust. But some argue that the result has been to deny young people the opportunity to demonstrate convincingly the very skills and competencies that employers are looking for. We agree with those, such as the Association of Colleges, who argued that we should look carefully at whether and how assessment arrangements might be developed to recognise achievements in a wider range of learning and teaching styles, whilst maintaining reliability and credibility.

4.21 There were concerns too about the frequency and extent of external assessment from age 14, and the effect this can have on the scope and capacity within the education and training system for creative learning and teaching. Currently the majority of young people face three main phases of external assessment – at the end of Key Stage 3, GCSEs at age 16 and further external qualifications at 18. We agreed with consultees such as the LGA who noted that the accumulation of large numbers of qualifications, particularly at GCSE, may not be helpful. We will ask the Working Group to consider the right balance of external assessment between 14 and 19. It should recommend steps that might be taken to reduce the emphasis and focus on the GCSE as an end-point

in young people's learning, and advise on how it might evolve increasingly into an intermediate progress check within the 14–19 phase.

4.22 As noted earlier, many respondents were concerned that students who achieve grades D–G at GCSE often become imbued with a sense of failure and so become disenchanted with formal education. It is important that young people are recognised for what they have achieved – a Level 1 qualification can be the first step on the ladder of a qualification. More also needs to be done to acknowledge positively the achievement of those unlikely to progress to intermediate or advanced levels by age 19, particularly young people with special educational needs. We will ask the group to consider how this might be achieved.

4.23 In asking the Working Group to look at 14–19 assessment, we intend that it should focus primarily on the principles underpinning effective assessment, rather than looking at the detailed arrangements within individual qualifications or groups of qualifications. We will also ask the Group to examine:

- the balance between internal and external assessment in 14–19 qualifications. This must reflect the purpose of the assessment and its intended currency;
- the balance between terminal examinations and continuous and portfolio assessment. In particular in vocational subjects, consultation suggested that terminal examinations were sometimes inappropriate if used as the major means of measuring the level of attainment and skills of the candidate. But there are issues too about burdens on teachers in managing and assessing course and portfolio work, and users' confidence in the outcomes; and
- the role of formative assessment during this phase and how it helps young people to identify their future learning and development needs, as well as recording and accrediting previous progress. There are links here with the work on vocational programmes and towards a unified awarding framework.

A unified framework of qualifications

4.24 We included in the Green Paper a proposal for an Overarching Award – called provisionally the Matriculation Diploma. This would have been

based on existing qualifications and included a core of literacy, numeracy and ICT, and a strand to recognise participation and achievement in a range of wider activities. The concept and specific aims of such an award received a considerable degree of support in the consultation. But it was strongly argued that the approach outlined in the Green Paper was unlikely to achieve these aims. Employers and universities were not attracted to it and without such currency the Diploma could not succeed. So we have decided not to proceed with either of the two models proposed. We welcomed the frank opinions of organisations such as the Secondary Heads Association, the National Association of Head Teachers, the Association of Colleges and the Headmasters Conference that we should consider more radical possibilities.

4.25 Much concern was expressed that our proposals did not include an award at Foundation level. It was argued that to set the floor of the award at Intermediate level (Level 2) would be to alienate and demoralise many of those young people who we most need to retain in education and training, namely those who are finding it difficult to reach the first rungs on the ladder of qualifications. Young people in particular were enthusiastic about the idea of an award that could recognise the full range of their educational and other achievements, and felt strongly that there should be greater recognition of their wider activities and achievement outside the traditional curriculum.

4.26 A qualifications structure must stretch and motivate pupils, and recognise and differentiate achievement. We believe that an overarching award – a baccalaureate type of award – can offer the prospect of meeting all these needs in the longer term. This is supported by many of those we consulted, who said that our Green Paper proposals were simply not radical enough.

4.27 We noted in the Green Paper the particular strengths of the International Baccalaureate (IB). We will expect the Working Group to consider the structure and delivery of the IB as part of its work. But we are clear that the IB was not designed to be, and is not, a suitable model to meet the needs of the majority of young people in this country.

4.28 We are attracted to a structure of qualifications that has clear, pre-set requirements and which incorporates the wide range of programmes that young people might pursue. It should also recognise

achievement at different levels as young people progress through the 14–19 phase. A significant amount of work is needed to establish whether such a structure could be developed in a form that would attract widespread support and offer sufficient value over and above existing qualifications. The qualification would need to:

- be available at several levels, including Foundation level (Level 1);
- recognise a wide range of activity and achievement;
- provide more stretch than other options in breadth, depth and learning styles;
- enhance the much-needed coherence in learning programmes;
- support progression through different 14–19 programmes and help to make them simpler and more transparent; and
- offer a clear summit to climb towards, particularly, but not exclusively, for the most able learners.

4.29 If such a proposal can be developed then it would in due course replace the current wide range of qualifications. To succeed, the framework of qualifications will need currency with higher education and with employers. We intend to see whether a suitable proposal can be developed, and to build the necessary consensus through the Working Group.

4.30 The Group’s proposals must build on the strengths of existing qualifications. We will also ask that their proposals are explicit about the steps and processes that would be involved in implementation, and how the impact on current arrangements of uncertainties caused by the prospect of longer-term changes might be managed without disruption.

Chapter 5

Conclusion



5.1 In this response to the consultation on our Green Paper, *14–19: extending opportunities, raising standards*, we have set out the case for reform and our vision, priorities and targets. We have identified a range of measures to begin immediately, while recognising that these changes must be taken forward carefully, respecting the pressures on institutions and teachers. Annex 7 summarises the implications of our strategy for schools and colleges and sets out an illustrative timetable for change.

5.2 In considering longer-term strategic directions we have identified some major issues where, although our objectives are clear, change will not happen quickly and the precise means of achieving change needs more debate. We have already, begun to build the consensus that will be so crucial to moving forward, and which will assist the Working Group on 14–19 reform to reach sound practical conclusions that can then be put into place progressively over the next decade.

5.3 Our objectives are ambitious – to promote higher participation and attainment, and to build a system in which young people come first with learning that is uniformly of high quality, combines general and specialist study and is designed to meet their needs, aptitudes and aspirations. The time is right to begin to tackle these issues so that all our young people are far better prepared for life, for further and lifelong learning, and for employment.

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