



# We need your views on qualifications

The Government has a consultation running until 10 December on the future of GCSEs. The Union is seeking to use this consultation to promote an examination system which is genuinely appropriate.

We want to get the views of as many members as possible on what the Government is proposing.

We are asking NUT reps to call meetings of members to discuss the dangers of Michael Gove's proposals and outline the Union's alternatives.

We would welcome further comments and ideas from members that can help the NUT's campaign.

The NUT is concerned about proposed changes to the external examination system. Notwithstanding Michael Gove's claim to want every young person to be able to achieve their full potential, the fact that he is allowing Ofqual to cap the number of A\* to C grades currently shows that he is comfortable with setting a limit on ambition. There is a fatal tension between the possibility for every child to succeed and a limit on passes.

There is also a flaw in the intention, whilst GCSEs still exist, to punish schools for being below a floor target whilst capping the number of A\* to C grades. This must mean that those schools currently below 40 per cent can only increase their A\*- Cs at the expense of others doing less well. This is perverse.

The Union is still engaged in the GCSE alliance campaign to achieve fairness for those young people whose work should have achieved a C grade in June but have had that success taken from them – except in Wales, where Leighton Andrews, Minister for Education and Skills, ordered a re-grading.

We do not agree with Michael Gove's criticisms of the current GCSEs or his proposals to introduce the English Bacc as a set of qualifications. Emphasising some subjects (Maths, English, Science, Languages, History and Geography) risks marginalising others. Insisting on a three hour terminal exam for all these subjects could lead to many students not showing their achievements.

However, there are good reasons to consider changes to the current system – not least the fact that the age of participation in either full-time schooling or in part-time industrial training is to rise to 18 by 2017.

The Union was in favour of the Tomlinson proposals for an overarching diploma. Discussions at the Party Conferences this term have shown that there is significant support for such a proposal.

Please turn the page to find out more about the NUT's policy and the questions that we'd like members to answer to inform our policy development.

## We need your views on qualifications

The Union is opposed to the introduction of the English Baccalaureate but is in favour of a serious reform of external examinations.

### What do you think?

The system we want to argue for with parents, political parties and employers is set out below and we would like to know your views on this. We would like to see:

1. An overarching diploma that each student would take with them at the end of secondary education. This would comprise both externally and internally assessed components and many students would have both vocational and academic components. This is essentially what Tomlinson proposed to acclaim from many in the profession but which politicians of all parties have so far not taken up.
2. Such a diploma would provide a statutory entitlement to a range of curriculum areas and learning experiences while also allowing more specialisation as students get older.
3. A system of assessment designed in consultation with teachers and experts in the field – which could vary from subject to subject. This system should be based on trust in teachers – for example using teacher moderated assessment – but with external testing to ensure consistency.
4. The system of school accountability reformed to remove pressures of teaching to the test by concentrating on the inputs not the outputs.
5. External inspection by respected professionals coupled with a challenging framework of school self-evaluation – which would have to include a role for parents and students to replace the current system of school accountability through league tables and Ofsted.

The Union has until early December to respond to Michael Gove.

If it is possible for members to get together in a meeting and feed in their views so that their rep can fill in one questionnaire from the school or college, that would be great. Otherwise members should fill in individual questionnaires and return them to their school rep, for them to post back to the NUT. Further copies can be downloaded at [www.teachers.org.uk](http://www.teachers.org.uk)

Please send back your survey/surveys as soon as possible and, at latest, by 23 November.

The questions that we'd like members to answer are on the following pages.

### Michael Gove's proposals in brief

- New qualification in English, Maths, Sciences, Languages (Ancient and Modern), History or Geography, each to be called an English Baccalaureate. GCSEs will be abolished.
- English, Science and Maths start in 2015. No start dates yet for the others.
- Only one exam board per subject.
- No internal assessment in those subjects.
- No tiering in the exam papers.
- Assessed by a three hour terminal exam.
- Students who do not pass get a record of achievement.

**1. What effect would the creation of the English BaccaLaureate have on the secondary curriculum?**

- Broaden the curriculum
- Narrow the curriculum
- Create a two-tier curriculum

(You may select more than one answer)

Other comments:

**2. The Union is concerned about**

**a: proposals to remove tiering of exam papers**

**b: proposals to remove all coursework from all EBacc subjects**

**c: proposals that assessment would only be by a three hour terminal examination.**

**Do you agree with the Union and what do you think are the implications of these proposals?**

**3. What benefits do coursework and teacher-based assessment bring students?**

**4. Given that young people will remain in education/training until age 18, do you believe an external exam at 16 is:**

- Necessary
- Unnecessary
- An inappropriate use of resources

(You may select more than one answer)

Other comments:

**5. Do you agree that there should be only one syllabus for each subject?**

Agree

Disagree

**6. Whilst accepting the importance of the subjects that comprise the English Baccalaureate, the Union is opposed to the creation of this new qualification. Do you:**

Agree

Disagree

**7. Are you in favour of an overarching diploma at the end of secondary education?**

Yes

No

**8. Should such a diploma include vocational as well as academic success?**

Yes

No

**9. Should the diploma be designed as the single qualification to provide entry to HE, FE, world of work ie with different levels?**

Yes

No

**10. What effect may Michael Gove's proposals have on students with special needs or who have English as an additional language?**

**11. Michael Gove's consultation is only about how to implement the EBacc. Do you agree with the Union that there should be a much wider consultation?**

Yes

No

Please add here any other comments that you/your members have about GCSEs and assessment