

# Young People's Education and Skills Operational Sub-Group

## Consultation on 16-19 vocational reform

Item: 6

**Date:** 19 April 2013  
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- Summary** The Department for Education is consulting on proposals to determine which level 3 vocational qualifications taken by 16 to 19 year olds will be included in future performance tables.
- Following the consultation, which closes on 10 May, the Government will publish a list of 16 to 19 vocational qualifications in autumn 2013. This list will be updated on an annual basis, as the list for 14 to 16 year olds has been since 2011.
- Recommendation** Operational Sub-Group members are asked to:
- comment on the initial draft response (*to be sent in a second dispatch*); and
  - note the timetable for preparing and approving the Young People's Education and Skills Board response to the consultation.

## 1 Background

- 1.1 The Department for Education (DfE) is consulting on proposals to determine which level 3 vocational qualifications taken by 16 to 19 year olds will be included in future performance tables<sup>1</sup>. It is seeking views on proposals to:
- establish a process and set of characteristics by which qualifications could be judged for inclusion in reformed 16 to 19 performance tables;
  - introduce two separate categories of vocational qualification – 'applied general' and 'occupational', to complement academic qualifications; and
  - only include applied general and occupational qualifications that meet pre-defined standards in future performance tables.
- 1.2 The consultation sets out proposed characteristics for each of the two categories that will apply to vocational courses taught from September 2014 and reported in performance tables from 2016.
- 1.3 Following the consultation, which closes on 10 May, the Government will publish a list of 'high value' 16 to 19 vocational qualifications in autumn 2013. This list will be updated on an annual basis, as the list for 14 to 16 year olds has been since 2011.
- 1.4 This initial reform is expected to significantly reduce the number of courses counted in the school and college performance tables (currently about 4,000). As some

<sup>1</sup> [Government proposals to reform vocational qualifications for 16-19 year olds](#)

qualifications may require substantial redevelopment in order to demonstrate the full range of characteristics, the Department plans to introduce a lower 'interim' standard for a grace period of two years to provide awarding bodies time to work with employers to redevelop qualifications to meet the full standard.

- 1.5 As with vocational qualifications for 14 to 16 year olds, the reforms will not prevent other qualifications being offered where these are best suited to individual students' interests and abilities, although these will not count in the performance tables.

## **2 Context for the proposed reforms**

- 2.1 The proposed reform of 16-19 vocational qualifications is to support the Governments wider changes to funding and curriculum provision for this age group arising from Professor Alison Wolf's Review of Vocational Education.
- 2.2 As a result of this review, it was announced last July that all 16-19 provision would transition to a 'per student' basis for funding. From September 2013, all students must be offered a 16-19 Study Programme that reflects their ambitions and prior attainment.
- 2.3 To support the introduction of 16-19 Study Programmes and encourage teaching of substantial vocational qualifications:
  - Ofsted will inspect the suitability of the programmes developed for students as a part of demonstrating progress and progression standards under the Common Inspection Framework; and
  - the Education Funding Agency (EFA) will monitor whether qualifications taken are 'substantial' – the size of the qualifications, their approval for teaching post-16 and whether they will be reported in performance tables.
- 2.4 Additionally, the 16-19 reform proposals share common principles with the Richard Review recommendations for apprenticeships and are in line with the reform of school accountability measures and regulation of qualifications being proposed by Government.

## **3 Summary of key proposed changes**

- 3.1 There will be two categories of vocational qualification – those specialist qualifications which equip a young person for a skilled trade or occupation, either directly or through progression to a higher education qualification ('Occupational Qualifications'); and more general vocational qualifications whose primary purpose is to enable progression to further study, including higher education ('Applied General Qualifications').
- 3.2 The consultation proposes to end the practice of counting all vocational qualifications as 'equivalent' in school and college performance tables (A levels and vocational qualifications are already due to be reported separately 2013). From 2016, vocational qualifications will be reported as Applied General Qualifications and Occupational Qualifications
- 3.3 Awarding bodies that want their qualification(s) to continue to be reported in school performance tables will be required to identify the category in which they are seeking a qualification to be placed. Each qualification will then be judged against a series of characteristics to ensure only qualifications that are of demonstrably 'high value', which support progression to further study or a good job, count in performance tables. The Government will publish a list of high value 16-19 vocational qualifications from autumn 2013 and annually thereafter, as is currently does for 14-16 year olds.

#### **4 Consultation response - progress and timetable**

- 4.1 Colleagues from the DfE attended the March Local Authority Forum meeting to introduce the consultation and talk through the policy drivers behind the proposed reforms. Local authority 14-19 Leads discussed the consultation questions<sup>2</sup> and provided initial feedback for the Board's response to the consultation.
- 4.2 A first draft of the response will be shared with members of the Operational Sub-Group week commencing 15 April for discussion and input at the 19 April meeting. Members will have the opportunity to provide further feedback by 26 April. The second draft will be sent out on 1 May to a) sub-group members for any (minor) amendments and b) the YPES Board Chair and Council Members for changes and approval by 8 May.

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Date</b>
First draft to OSG members	w/c 15 April
Feedback from OSG	19 April - 26 April
Second draft to OSG members	1 May
Second draft to Board members	1 May
Feedback from OSG and Board	8 May
Response submitted to DfE	10 May

#### **5 Recommendation**

- 5.1 Operational Sub-Group members are asked to:
- comment on the initial draft response (*to be sent in a second dispatch*); and
  - note the timetable for preparing and approving the Young People's Education and Skills Board response to the consultation.

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<sup>2</sup> [Consultation response form](#)