



House of Commons
Education Committee

The English Baccalaureate

Fifth Report of Session 2010–12

Volume I

Volume I: Report, together with formal minutes and oral and written evidence

Additional written evidence is contained in Volume II, available on the Committee website at www.parliament.uk/education-committee

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The Education Committee

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Summary

The English Baccalaureate (EBac) was first announced on 6th September 2010 by the Secretary of State for Education; further details were announced through the Schools White Paper of November 2010. The EBac has two principal functions: to act as a new performance measure for use by parents and the wider public, and as a certificate of achievement for individual students. To achieve the EBac, a student would need GCSEs (at grades A*–C) in English, mathematics, at least two sciences, history or geography, and a modern or classical language. The EBac performance measure records the percentage of each school’s population which achieves the award. The EBac was applied to the 2010 league tables, and revealed that around 15.6% of students that year achieved the EBac.

The Government appears to have three main reasons for creating the EBac. The Minister of State for Schools said that the EBac is a “key component” of the Government’s approach to narrowing the attainment gap between the richest and the poorest students. It is also designed to ensure that all students have access to a broad, academic curriculum, and within that to increase uptake of particular subjects. Finally, it contributes to the Government’s clearly-articulated desire for more performance measures and more publicly available information about schools.

Much of the evidence we received—in itself an unusually high volume of submissions for a Committee inquiry—focussed on concerns around one or more of these stated objectives. However, there were also concerns about the manner of the EBac’s introduction: without consultation, but with retrospective application to the 2010 performance tables. We recognise the tension between the lack of consultation concerning the EBac’s introduction, and the Government’s aspiration to afford greater autonomy and respect to the education profession. We therefore recommend that, in the future, the Government should aim to give appropriate notice of, and undertake consultation with key stakeholders and the wider public on, any new performance or curriculum measures. We welcome the recently-launched review of the National Curriculum and understand the Government’s wish to introduce reform with all speed, but regret the launch of the EBac before the curriculum review was completed. Finally, in our chapter on the EBac’s introduction, we recommend that the Government should assess the extent to which the EBac’s name might cause confusion: it is not a baccalaureate as generally understood.

The Committee fully supports the Government’s stated intention to improve the attainment of the poorest young people. However, the evidence is unclear as to whether entering more disadvantaged students for EBac subjects would necessarily make a significant contribution to this aim. Concentrating on the subjects most valued for progression to higher education could mean schools improve the attainment and prospects of their lowest-performing students, who are disproportionately the poorest as well; other evidence, though, suggests that the EBac might lead to a greater focus on those students most likely to achieve it, and therefore have a negative impact on the most vulnerable or disadvantaged young people. It is essential that the Government confirms how it will monitor the attainment of children on free school meals in the EBac. We also recommend that the Government should provide further international evidence, and analysis of it, to inform debate on the merits of the EBac: the evidence we received does not suggest a link,

in other countries, between the prescribed study of certain academic subjects and improved attainment and prospects for poorer students.

The choice of subjects included in the EBac has been one of the most controversial aspects of its creation. We acknowledge that certain academic subjects studied at A-level are more valued by Russell Group universities than others. We encourage the Government to examine carefully the evidence presented to us and to reconsider the composition of the EBac on conclusion of the National Curriculum Review. Academic subjects are not the only path to a successful future, and all young people, regardless of background, must continue to have opportunities to study the subjects in which they are likely to be most successful, and which pupils, parents and schools think will serve them best.

We agree with the Government that more performance measures, including those showing the progress made by every child, would be very welcome, and acknowledge that the EBac might sit amongst such measures. We are concerned, though, that the existing EBac is not yet part of a balanced score-card which gives equal weight to the progress of every child. Publishing unique learner numbers would enable the analysis of entry for, and attainment in, particular subjects and combinations of subjects within a school, and we recommend that the Government considers this move. The Government needs either to remove or revalue qualifications appropriately within the performance tables, and we therefore welcome the Government's response to the Wolf Review with regard to vocational qualifications and their league table tariffs. However, we remain unconvinced that the EBac is an effective way to redress the perverse incentives generated by existing performance measures. We are also concerned that an EBac certificate might give too much emphasis to one performance measure in a balanced score-card, and for this reason suggest that plans for certification should be shelved.

The volume of evidence for this inquiry was unusually large: over 360 written submissions in addition to a subject-specific campaign of more than 340 letters based on a common template; we have examined that, and other, evidence in detail. While we saw significant support for the principles of a broad and balanced curriculum, the evidence we received was mainly negative about the EBac as it currently stands. We think that the Government is right to say that all children should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum up to the age of sixteen, including traditional, academic subjects, and that the attainment gap between rich and poor can, and should, be narrowed. The evidence available does suggest that the list of subjects contained in the EBac is, broadly speaking, representative of those that have the highest value to the individual in keeping their options open. However, our inquiry has uncovered significant concerns about the exact composition of the EBac, the impact the EBac will have on students, and the manner of the EBac's introduction. We urge the Government to keep the EBac under careful scrutiny, to review the subjects in it, to consult more widely with the public on how best to measure students' and schools' performance, and to take seriously the lessons to be learnt from the EBac's introduction.

1 Introduction to the report

1. The English Baccalaureate (EBac) was first announced by the Secretary of State for Education in a speech at the Westminster Academy on 6 September 2010. At that event, Mr Gove argued for a new certificate which would “create special recognition for those students who secure good passes in a balanced range of rigorous qualifications” and “ensure that all children—especially those from less privileged backgrounds—have a chance to gain a base of knowledge and a set of life chances too often restricted to the wealthy”.¹ The Secretary of State further emphasised that, while the English Baccalaureate would not replace existing performance measures, it would be “a valid expectation of most young people in the 21st century” and “could reinvigorate the culture of learning in this country”.² He was clear on the sorts of subjects which might be included (although the list later changed), based on international evidence from high-performing countries’ experiences, but similarly clear that the measure would “not preclude the study of other GCSEs outside of this core or any vocational qualifications that would be of genuine benefit”.³

2. The Schools White Paper, published later in 2010, provided more detail about the nature and scope of the EBac:

[W]e will introduce a new award—the English Baccalaureate—for any student who secures good GCSE or iGCSE passes in English, mathematics, the sciences, a modern or ancient foreign language and a humanity such as history or geography. This combination of GCSEs at grades A*–C will entitle the student to a certificate recording their achievement. At the moment only around 15 per cent of students secure this basic suite of academic qualifications...⁴

The White Paper went on to explain that the English Baccalaureate would serve as a performance measure alongside the existing ‘five good GCSEs’ measure.⁵ The first use of the EBac performance measure was when it was retrospectively applied to the 2010 league tables published on 12 January 2011.

3. The data revealed by the application to the 2010 league tables showed that, in that year, “22% of pupils took the required subjects and 15.6% of pupils achieved the English Baccalaureate.”⁶ The Fischer Family Trust’s evidence revealed that, over the past few years, the number of students entered for the combination of subjects leading to an EBac has been declining, although the proportion of those who would have been awarded the EBac *as a percentage of those entered for it* has been on the rise:

1 Speech by the Secretary of State for Education, at Westminster Academy, 6 September 2010, available at <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/speeches/a0064281/michael-gove-to-westminster-academy>

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 *The Importance of Teaching – The Schools White Paper 2010*, p. 44

5 See *The Importance of Teaching – The Schools White Paper 2010*, p. 44

6 Ev 36 (Department for Education)

Table 1: Number and proportion of all students entered for, and achieving good GCSEs in, EBac subjects, 2004-10⁷

Year	Number of students in cohort	Students entered for EBac suite of subjects (number, and percentage of cohort)		Students attaining A*-C grades in those subjects (number, and percentage of cohort)		Percentage of those entered who attained the required grades
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
2004	591,301	235,042	39.8%	105,725	17.9%	45%
2005	588,699	192,622	32.7%	100,785	17.1%	52%
2006	598,911	164,401	27.5%	94,269	15.7%	57%
2007	601,135	147,038	24.5%	88,547	14.7%	60%
2008	597,390	130,948	21.9%	85,248	14.3%	65%
2009	577,621	128,232	22.2%	86,412	15.0%	67%
2010	577,073	126,379	21.9%	87,600	15.2%	69%

The Fischer Family Trust's evidence also makes clear that students are performing better in certain EBac subjects:

Table 2: Number and proportion of students in maintained schools (England) achieving grade C or better for each EBac subject, 2004-10⁸

Year	English		Mathematics		Science		Humanities		Languages	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
2004	321,076	54.3%	280,277	47.4%	264,903	44.8%	189,216	32.0%	193,947	32.8%
2005	327,905	55.7%	293,172	49.8%	261,382	44.4%	187,795	31.9%	188,384	32.0%
2006	339,583	56.7%	308,439	51.5%	262,922	43.9%	189,256	31.6%	173,684	29.0%
2007	349,259	58.1%	323,411	53.8%	265,101	44.1%	188,155	31.3%	163,509	27.2%
2008	357,239	59.8%	335,733	56.2%	259,865	43.5%	186,983	31.3%	160,698	26.9%
2009	356,970	61.8%	339,641	58.8%	254,731	44.1%	181,951	31.5%	160,579	27.8%
2010	380,868	66.0%	360,671	62.5%	263,722	45.7%	184,086	31.9%	159,849	27.7%

4. Not least due to the considerable public and media interest in the EBac, we announced an inquiry into the new award on 9 February 2011, inviting written evidence by 8 March.

7 Adapted from table shown at Ev w357 (Fischer Family Trust), and additional information received from the Fischer Family Trust. Percentages have been rounded.

8 Adapted from table shown at Ev w356, and additional information received from the Fischer Family Trust. Percentages have been rounded. The complete list of subjects and qualifications which count towards the EBac is available at Appendix A; in the context of this table, therefore, 'Humanities' refers to those subjects and qualifications which count towards the 'humanities' component of the EBac, 'Languages' to the relevant language qualifications, and so on.

The Committee also took oral evidence from two expert panels and from the Minister of State at the Department for Education.⁹ The terms of reference for our inquiry included the purpose and benefits of the EBac as well as the choice of included subjects, the implications for pupils, schools and employers, and any international comparisons with the EBac.¹⁰

5. In this report, we look at the reasons given by the Government for the creation of the EBac. These appear to fit into three broad categories: to improve opportunities for students' social mobility; to ensure a core, academic curriculum offer for all students; and to provide another performance measure for use by parents and in tables, as part of the Government's drive for transparent and publicly available data.¹¹ This report offers a chapter on each of these rationales for the EBac, and examines the Government's position as well as the evidence we received. First, however, we consider the evidence base for our inquiry, before looking at the manner in which the EBac was introduced, which was the subject of much of the evidence we received.

6. As ever, the Committee has benefited from the involvement of its advisers, Professor Alan Smithers and Professor Geoff Whitty CBE, and we are grateful to them for their expertise.¹²

The evidence base for our inquiry

7. The response to our call for evidence was unusually high for a Select Committee inquiry: 362 submissions were received, together with 346 letters (following a common template provided by the Incorporated Society of Musicians) as part of a campaign calling for music to be included within the list of EBac subjects. This campaign was also highly unusual: the Committee does not often receive such a number of letters on a single issue. Submissions came from a variety of sources, including teachers and parents, schools and colleges, representative and subject associations, employer and faith-based organisations, and local authorities.

8. We note that the majority of the evidence we received came from education professionals, rather than the wider public: 107 responses came from individual teachers, 49 from individual headteachers, and 31 from schools, as well as over 100 from representative groups, subject associations, and the higher education sector. However, that evidence painted a somewhat different picture to the findings of two YouGov polls.¹³ While a proportion of the evidence we received was broadly in favour of a core, academic curriculum for all students, the majority also raised significant concerns about the EBac. Many of these were focussed on the precise choice of subjects included, which we discuss in Chapter 4. Only ten submissions (including that of the Department for Education) were wholeheartedly supportive of the EBac.

9 A list of witnesses and written evidence received can be found at the back of this report

10 The announcement of the inquiry can be viewed at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/education-committee/inquiries/the-english-baccalaureate/>

11 More information on the Government's programme to improve the transparency and availability of data, specifically within education, can be found at www.number10.gov.uk/news/letter-to-cabinet-ministers-on-transparency-and-open-data/, and in *The Importance of Teaching – The Schools White Paper 2010*, pp. 66-69.

12 Professor Geoff Whitty has declared an interest as a Trustee of the IFS School of Finance.

13 See paragraph 9 below

9. Some of the evidence we received welcomed aspects of the EBac, or made a point of agreeing that a core, academic curriculum should be more commonly available than is currently the case. Two independent polls have suggested that the subjects included in the EBac are considered by the public to be broadly those on which school performance tables should focus. A YouGov poll conducted for *The Sun* in January 2011 asked which subjects should count towards a “school’s league table positions”; the total results are shown below.

Table 3: Results of a YouGov poll, January 2011, asking which subjects should count in measuring a school’s league table position¹⁴

Mathematics	86%
English language	85%
Science	79%
English literature	67%
History	66%
Geography	64%
French, German, Spanish or other modern languages	61%
Information and Communication Technology	55%
Economics	45%
Design and Technology	38%
Business Studies	37%
Law	33%
Home Economics	32%
Art and design	25%
Religious Studies	22%
Sociology	22%
Latin	19%
Media Studies	15%
Drama	13%
Dance	8%
None of them	3%
Don’t know	7%

¹⁴ Table adapted from the poll results, available at <http://today.yougov.co.uk/sites/today.yougov.co.uk/files/YG-Archives-Pol-Sun-LeagueTables-130111.pdf>. 1,518 people were polled.

The survey found that the EBac subjects (with the exception of Latin, which scores low, and other classical languages, which are not featured in the poll) were considered the most important by the public when measuring a school's performance. This is supported by a further YouGov poll, conducted for *The Sunday Times*, which showed 69% of those polled were in favour of "changing school league tables to concentrate on core subjects of English, maths, science, humanities and a foreign language".¹⁵ As we will see later in this report, these subjects are also very similar to those A level subjects considered by the Russell Group as facilitating entry to its universities.

10. In its submission, the Department for Education drew attention to the "broadly similar arrangements to the English Baccalaureate" which it says exist in a number of countries, including Singapore, Germany, France, Japan, Sweden, Canada and the Netherlands. However, the Committee finds that these are not all directly comparable examples. The Department's full evidence can be found at page Ev 36 of this volume. In the context of the United Kingdom's recent decline in the international education performance tables, we agree with the Government that learning from best practice around the world is important,¹⁶ and we have considered this evidence further in our report.

15 The complete results of this January 2011 poll, which asked a range of questions about the Government's policies and performance, including on education, can be found at <http://today.yougov.co.uk/sites/today.yougov.co.uk/files/YG-Archives-Pol-ST-results-21-230111.pdf>

16 See the Foreword by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister to *The Importance of Teaching – The Schools White Paper 2010* (November 2010): "In the most recent OECD PISA survey in 2006 we fell from 4th in the world in the 2000 survey to 14th in science, 7th to 17th in literacy, and 8th to 24th in mathematics. The only way we can catch up, and have the world-class schools our children deserve, is by learning the lessons of other countries' success." (p. 3)

2 Introduction of the EBac

Rationale for the EBac

11. Three main purposes have been given by the Government as rationale for the EBac's creation: to have a positive impact on social mobility and the closing of the achievement gap between richer and poorer students, to act as a new performance measure, and to ensure a core, academic curriculum offer for all students. We will discuss these purposes, and others, in subsequent chapters. The Department published an Addendum to its Statement of Intent concerning the EBac,¹⁷ and announced the EBac in the Schools White Paper;¹⁸ however, some of its reasoning is to be found in Ministerial speeches and other announcements, and we acknowledge that this has contributed to a certain degree of confusion among schools and the wider public as to the purpose of the EBac.

12. Whilst the EBac is not a complete curriculum, nor even a compulsory subset of subjects, the concept of the EBac does make explicit for the first time in England the proposition that, even going beyond English and Maths, and within subjects that can be broadly described as 'academic', some subjects have a higher average worth than others. Can this be justified?

13. The Committee was presented with very little evidence on any differential 'value' (in either a narrow economic sense or a broader sense) of various subjects to the individual student. But, looking at what external evidence is available, it does appear that some subjects do have a higher perceived value than others, and that those subjects approximately equate to the set of subjects included in the EBac. That external evidence includes:

- the Russell Group's 2011 publication *Informed Choices*, which lists those A-level subjects viewed as 'facilitating' entry to Russell Group universities, and which is discussed in further depth in Chapter 3;¹⁹
- a similar list of 'non-preferred subjects' published by the London School of Economics; that list features exclusively subjects not included in the EBac;²⁰
- the Department for Education's July 2011 report on the Youth Cohort Study, which shows that 19% of young people who had achieved good passes in all of the exams of the EBac were not in Higher Education, versus 32% of the larger group who had got five or more GCSEs (or equivalents) at grade C or above (including English and mathematics);²¹

and

17 See Appendix 1

18 See *The Importance of Teaching – The Schools White Paper 2010*, pp. 44-45

19 *Informed Choices* can be read online at http://russellgroup.ac.uk/uploads/InformedChoicesupdated_2.pdf

20 The LSE's list, and fuller admissions guidance, can be viewed at <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/howToApply/lseEntryRequirements.aspx>

21 The study, published on 7 July 2011, is available at <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b001014/b01-2011.pdf>; the statistics quoted are on page 16

- public perceptions of various subjects' worth; as demonstrated through the YouGov poll quoted in the previous chapter, the subjects included in the EBac were seen by those polled as more important to count towards schools' league table positions.

14. We were pleased to hear the Minister of State for Schools say that the EBac is “not an accountability measure”,²² although it is clearly being viewed as such by many; at the same time he said that it was a “measure to give information to parents”²³ but without a target figure being set for the number of students achieving the award.²⁴

Creation and consultation

15. Many submissions were concerned about the lack of consultation undertaken in relation to the EBac's introduction. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) told us that it had “rarely received such a high level of communication from members expressing concern and dismay about a government initiative”, and that those members, while expressing different views on the detail of the EBac, were “united in expressing their anger about its hasty introduction without any consultation”.²⁵ Other bodies have agreed with the ASCL's view; the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, for example, emphasised that “consultation with the education profession ... would have ensured a more accurate understanding of the existing educational offer, including in relation to raising standards and educational attainment”.²⁶

16. Asked in a Parliamentary Question what consultation had been undertaken “prior to introducing the English Baccalaureate into performance tables”,²⁷ the Minister of State for Schools suggested that the measure itself was introduced without consultation, but that schools were invited “to submit their comments by the end of the year”.²⁸ However, this invitation appears to have been solely the letter from the Secretary of State to headteachers, on 24 November 2010, which gave just over two weeks for recipients to offer their “initial thoughts and reactions” on the White Paper, and which made no specific reference to the EBac.²⁹ On the other hand, the Minister of State explained to the Committee that it was made “very clear before the election that we were concerned about perverse incentives in the league tables” and that, if the accountability measure of five or more GCSEs were to be changed “there would be much more consultation.”³⁰

22 Q 85

23 Q 86

24 Q 88

25 Ev w195

26 Ev w213

27 HC Deb 4 April 2011 col 703W

28 Ibid.

29 The letter can be seen on the Department for Education website, at <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/m/michael%20goves%20letter%20to%20headteachers%20and%20chairs%20of%20governors%20on%20the%20schools%20white%20paper%20%20%2024%20november%202010.pdf>

30 Q 98

17. The Secretary of State has explained that the EBac’s manner of introduction means that the first year’s results “manifestly can’t have been gamed”.³¹ However, a top-down, non-consultative methodology could nonetheless be seen as at odds with the Secretary’s of State’s clearly-articulated belief that “headteachers and teachers—not politicians and bureaucrats—know best how to run schools.”³²

18. We acknowledge the Secretary of State’s rationale for the retrospective introduction of the EBac. However, we also recognise the tension between the lack of consultation concerning the EBac’s introduction, and the Government’s aspiration to afford greater autonomy and respect to the education profession. Consultation with teachers, as well as the further and higher education sectors and employers, might have avoided a number of the concerns which are now being raised, and may have secured support for the EBac rather than generating the mainly negative response which our inquiry has seen. In future, the Government should aim to give appropriate notice of, and undertake consultation with key stakeholders and the wider public on, any new performance or curriculum measures.

The timing of the EBac’s introduction

19. A full review of the National Curriculum was trailed in the White Paper³³ and announced on 20 January 2011;³⁴ the Wolf Review, which made significant recommendations concerning curriculum and qualifications, was published in March 2011; and the process of reforming the education accountability system, including changes to Ofsted’s inspection regime, was underway by the time the EBac was introduced. Evidence submitted to our inquiry expressed some concerns about how well the EBac was aligned with these other reforms; for example, the CBI’s Susan Anderson argued that the “debate needs to take place as part of the curriculum review”,³⁵ while the Association of Teachers and Lecturers said:

We believe that any considerations of the choice of subjects included in the EBac in fact prejudices the outcomes of the curriculum review and precludes the latter from being an independent and open-minded re-evaluation. We are very disappointed with what is either a deliberate obfuscation or a lack of co-ordination within the Department for Education.³⁶

20. We welcome the recently-launched review of the National Curriculum. We hope this will lead to a considered, coherent rethinking of the curriculum allowing full consultation with, and input from the teaching profession, parents, employers, colleges and universities. We understand the Government’s wish to introduce reform with all speed, but regret the launch of the EBac before the curriculum review was completed.

31 Speech by the Secretary of State for Education to the Education World Forum, 11 January 2011, available at <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/speeches/a0072274/michael-gove-to-the-education-world-forum>

32 Ibid.

33 See *The Importance of Teaching – The Schools White Paper 2010*, p. 41

34 See <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/a0073149/national-curriculum-review-launched>

35 Q 79

36 Ev w215

Any measure which examines schools' performance in particular subjects would be better introduced once the curriculum itself has been defined and finalised.

The EBac's name

21. Evidence submitted to this inquiry has raised some concerns about the naming of the EBac, which is potentially misleading. Universities UK wrote to us that:

It is not a true Baccalaureate but a collection of existing subjects and as such could give rise to misconceptions both in the UK and abroad. In the UK we have Welsh, Scottish, European and International Baccalaureates being taught at Level 3 which are qualifications and, as such, form part of the higher education admissions requirements. The English Baccalaureate, however, is at Level 2 and is only an award and generally not a requirement by universities.³⁷

This, some universities feel, “could be confusing for potential applicants”.³⁸ The Association of School and College Leaders, in its written evidence, argues that the EBac “is not a baccalaureate as understood internationally”, not least because a true baccalaureate usually assesses “achievement in both knowledge and skills” in practical as well as academic fields.³⁹ Furthermore, the word ‘baccalaureate’ in modern usage implies a qualification in itself, which the EBac—a combination of a performance measure and a certificate—does not seem to us to be.⁴⁰ As Philip Parkin, General Secretary of the union Voice, has written

[The EBac's] name suggests that it is an actual programme of study like the challenging International Baccalaureate. Instead, if you've got some GCSEs, you will get another piece of paper to wrap the certificates in— no extra work involved.⁴¹

22. We do not believe the EBac— the hybrid of a certificate and a performance measure, named after a qualification—is appropriately labelled: it is not a baccalaureate, and as it stands the name can therefore be misleading to parents, professionals and pupils. The Government should assess the extent to which the name might cause confusion: a concern, like some others, which consultation before the EBac's introduction could have identified.

37 Ev 41

38 Ibid.

39 Ev w196; see also Ev w310 (1994 Group)

40 The word ‘baccalaureate’ has its roots in the Latin word *baccalaureus*, meaning an advanced student. Nowadays, the word is most familiar to educators in the ‘International Baccalaureate’ concept. The IB is “(a qualification awarded for satisfactory performance in) a set of examinations intended to qualify successful candidates for higher education in any of several countries.” (The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1993 edition) On that definition, the EBac is batting zero for two: it is not a qualification in its own right, and – being at age 16 rather than 18 – does not automatically make successful candidates eligible for higher education without further study.

41 Writing in a letter to *The Times Educational Supplement*, 28 January 2011

3 The impact of the EBac on progression and social mobility

Narrowing the attainment gap between richer and poorer students

23. The Committee fully supports the Government’s stated intention to improve the attainment of the poorest young people. The Minister for Schools (Nick Gibb MP) has stated that the Government sees the EBac as a “key component” in the “overall objective of closing the attainment gap between wealthier and poorer children”.⁴² Alongside concerns that “the number of pupils who receive a broad education in core academic subjects is far too small”, the Minister is worried that this “is particularly the case for pupils in disadvantaged areas.”⁴³ There is strong statistical evidence to support this. The National Pupil Database shows that, in 2010, only 4.1% of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals [FSM] achieved the EBac; this is in contrast to 17% (four times as many) of pupils who were not eligible for free school meals.⁴⁴ The Department for Education’s submission also notes that “as the proportion of FSM pupils in a school increases the number of students either entering or achieving the EBac drops dramatically”.⁴⁵ Research by the Fischer Family Trust has uncovered other evidence supporting these broad trends: for example,

Even when students with the same prior-attainment are compared (e.g. those in the top 20% of attainers at the end of Key Stage 3) FSM [free school meals] pupils are around 10–15% less likely to study a History or Geography GCSE when compared to non-FSM students with the same prior attainment.⁴⁶

24. The union NASUWT—which represents over 250,000 education professionals—says:

International evidence make[s] clear that no education system... has managed to end the tendency for pupils from relatively advantaged backgrounds attaining higher measured outcomes in the academic subjects that are central to the EBac... Therefore, it is clear that pupils from less deprived backgrounds will have the greatest prospects overall of achieving the qualifications required to secure award of the EBac.⁴⁷

While we note that no country appears to have eliminated entirely the tendency for poorer students to perform less well in EBac subjects, we reject the NASUWT’s counsel of despair and, although we may not be able to end the tendency entirely, we can seek to reduce the size of the gap. The issue, we believe, is not whether it can be done but whether the EBac will help.

42 Q 120

43 HC Deb 7 February 2011 col 14

44 HC Deb 31 March 2011 col 490W

45 Ev 37

46 Ev w358

47 Ev w81

25. The Department for Education’s evidence to our inquiry drew attention to several countries which have “broadly similar arrangements” to the EBac.⁴⁸ Singapore, for example, has “compulsory O levels in English language, mother tongue, mathematics, combined humanities, science and one other subject.”⁴⁹ Similarly, in Japan, tests at age fifteen may (depending on the prefecture) cover Japanese, social studies, mathematics, science and English.⁵⁰ Both of these countries have a percentage of “resilient students” from disadvantaged backgrounds (ie those students who are amongst the best performers of all students of similar backgrounds internationally) which is significantly above the OECD average.⁵¹

26. However, the Department’s evidence also cites arrangements in countries such as Germany and Sweden which, on the same measurement of disadvantaged students’ resilience, are below the OECD average (indeed, Germany ranks lower than the United Kingdom). The “broadly similar arrangements” to which the Department refers encompass a variety of different models, some of which, as we understand them, are more similar to the EBac than others. For example, in Sweden, a passing grade at age 16 is required to “receive the school leaving certificate”, but only in three subjects (English, Swedish and mathematics); in Alberta, Canada, whilst the range of subjects tested is similar to the EBac, the tests are “not public examinations”.⁵² As previously stated, we agree absolutely with the Government that our education system should learn from best practice internationally; however, the Department’s evidence offers no analysis of the impact that EBac-type arrangements in the countries it cites have made on disadvantaged students, and we are therefore unconvinced that there is any positive link.

27. Evidence from the Institute for Public Policy Research suggests that the EBac performance measure will encourage schools to focus on wealthier students because, as the evidence of the Fischer Family Trust and the National Pupil Database makes clear, they tend to do better in EBac subjects:

The English Bac is intended to be the Government’s ‘gold standard’ against which schools will be judged. This means that schools will have an incentive to focus extra resources on children who are likely to do well in those subjects... In effect, placing the English Bac at the heart of the new accountability framework will provide incentives for schools to divert resources *away* from FSM pupils.⁵³

28. While the number of students eligible for free school meals and entered for the EBac subjects has declined markedly since 2004, the overall number of FSM students achieving the EBac has remained fairly stationary—decreasing by 1.1 percentage points (from a 4.9% baseline in 2004) over eight years:

48 Ev 39

49 Ibid.

50 Ev 40

51 See PISA In Focus 5 report, *How do some students overcome their socio-economic background?* (June 2011), available at <https://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/26/48165173.pdf>

52 Ev 40

53 Clifton, J., and Muir, R., *Room for improvement: ippr’s response to the schools white paper* (Institute for Public Policy Research, 2010), p. 3

Table 4: Number and proportion of students eligible for free school meals entered for, and achieving good GCSEs in, EBac subjects, 2004-10⁵⁴

Year	Number of students eligible for FSM	Students eligible for FSM and entered for EBac suite of subjects (number, and proportion of FSM students)		Students eligible for FSM achieving grades A*-C in EBac subjects (number, and proportion of FSM students)		Proportion of FSM students entered for the EBac achieving required grades
		Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion	
2004	82,246	20,973	25.5%	3,985	4.9%	19.0%
2005	80,652	16,453	20.4%	3,620	4.5%	22.2%
2006	78,673	11,880	15.1%	3,422	4.4%	28.8%
2007	76,806	8,986	11.7%	3,028	3.9%	33.7%
2008	74,602	7,609	10.2%	2,937	4.0%	38.6%
2009	74,010	6,291	8.5%	2,749	3.7%	43.7%
2010	76,954	6,464	8.4%	2,928	3.8%	45.3%

The Fischer Family Trust's evidence cited in paragraph 23 suggests that, even when students with the same prior-attainment are compared, "FSM [free school meals] pupils are around 10-15% less likely to study a History or Geography GCSE".⁵⁵ However, the table here suggests that – even if schools did begin entering substantially more students on free school meals for EBac subjects – it may have relatively little effect, in itself, in increasing the number achieving good grades in them. Worse, pushing disadvantaged children into subjects they fail may prove damaging and counterproductive. Speaking in the House of Lords, Schools Minister Lord Hill of Oareford appeared to agree with this broad principle:

I agree with the point that children should not be shoe-horned into choices that are not appropriate for them. I think that everyone would accept that children are different, that there is no right way for any particular children and that vocational options as well as academic options should be fully available.⁵⁶

If students do become shoe-horned in this way, and are driven into subjects where they have less interest or aptitude, the EBac could in effect become one of the "perverse incentives" in performance measurement which we understand the Government wishes to guard against.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Adapted from table shown at Ev w357 (Fischer Family Trust) , and additional information received from the Fischer Family Trust. Percentages have been rounded.

⁵⁵ Ev w358

⁵⁶ HL Deb 5 May 2011 col 568

⁵⁷ See Q 95

Concerns for particular groups of students

29. Some evidence has suggested that the EBac is flawed because it does not differentiate between good and outstanding performance by individuals. This was demonstrated by the evidence of St Marylebone School:

Take for example the following two pupils' results from St Marylebone in 2010:

Pupil A: English B, English Lit B, Maths, C, Core Science C, Additional Science C, Spanish C, Geography C, Design Technology C, ICT C, RE short course C.

(ten GCSEs at A*–C with **a pass in the English Baccalaureate**; average grade C)

Pupil B: English A, English Lit A, Maths A, Statistics A*, Biology A, Chemistry A, Physics A*, Spanish A, Economics A, Art A, ICT B, RE A.

(twelve GCSEs at A*–C—**a fail in the English Baccalaureate**; average grade A)

One is recorded in our 36% of English Baccalaureate successes and one is recorded in our 64% of English Baccalaureate failures for 2010. But which one has the more successful and academic passes? The bald percentage of the English Baccalaureate as published in league tables would suggest pupil A represents success but pupil B does not. This, in our view, is misleading. It also seems unreasonable that pupil A is awarded a certificate from the government to recognise her academic achievement when pupil B is not recognised. Is it really pupil B that is leaving us so low in the international league tables that Mr Gove worries about so much?⁵⁸

30. While this evidence refers just to two pupils, it does illustrate some of the complexities which can arise as a result of the EBac. Pupil B has a clear academic profile across a range of subjects, yet will receive no additional recognition from the Government for an achievement which in many regards is superior to Pupil A's.

31. Similar potential consequences were further elaborated on by the Ilford Ursuline High School:

The EBac is a simplistic threshold measure likely to mean that schools will devote more resources to borderline C grade students in order to achieve the highest percentage score in league tables... Moreover, an EBac 'pass' will not tell anyone (including parents) whether a particular grade represents success or failure for a given student. For example, a school receiving a high percentage of pupils achieving the EBac for example at Grade B might actually be seriously underperforming if a significant proportion of these pupils might have been expected to achieve an A or A*.⁵⁹

If this concern is replicated nationally, it could lead to a situation where students on the C/D borderline received yet more attention, leading to increasingly less focus on the

58 Ev w296. Pupil B fails because she did not pass a GCSE in a recognised humanities subject.

59 Ev w174

poorest-performing children (who, as we have seen, are also disproportionately from more disadvantaged backgrounds), as well as the highest-performing.

Young people not in education, employment or training

32. Varying opinions were expressed with regard to the impact the EBac might have on the most vulnerable young people – those at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEETs). Andrew Chubb, Principal of the Archbishop Sentamu Academy in Hull, told us that “bringing in a metric that narrows and is more likely to lead to disengagement pre-16 is only going to increase the number of NEETs post-16.”⁶⁰ He went on to suggest the dramatic effect this could have:

There is a very worrying statistic going around at the moment. If you take those who are NEET at 16, within 10 years one in four is in prison and one in seven is dead. It’s a very serious statistic and a very serious issue, and one that I think the EBac is going to make far worse.⁶¹

Hugh O’Neill, who leads St Benedict’s Catholic School in Bury St Edmunds, said that whilst the EBac will not “do anything to improve” the current situation with regard to NEETs, he did not think it would increase the total figure of NEETS either;⁶² Chris Morecroft, from the Association of Colleges, said the “general consensus is that [the EBac] may have some impact on driving up the numbers of NEET young people”.⁶³ This, he believes, is because of the narrow range of subjects included within the EBac:

[T]hose who may have their eyes set on a career as an apprentice or as a painter and decorator or in construction would not see the relevance [of the EBac]. To start that range of qualifications therefore... as a compulsory element of their programme would be seen as an irrelevance and they would drift away and increase truancy. That is not the case for all young people but we would expect to see a marginal increase in NEETs.⁶⁴

33. However, some evidence was positive. Caroline Jordan—a headteacher representing the Girls’ Schools Association—argued that “to have an academic focus for many young people is a good thing to do”,⁶⁵ provided the details are well worked out, and Matt Brady—an assistant head from Coventry—said he thought the EBac could help some young people at risk of becoming NEET to “raise their aspirations.”⁶⁶

60 Q 38

61 Idem.

62 Q 41

63 Q 56

64 Ibid.

65 Q 38

66 Q 40

Progression to higher education

34. The list of subjects included in the EBac, which is discussed in the next chapter, is almost identical to the list of ‘facilitating subjects’ included by the Russell Group of universities in its recently-published booklet *Informed choices*. That document defines a facilitating subject as one “required more often than others” for university entry,⁶⁷ and lists subjects which “can” be viewed as such as mathematics and further maths, English, physics, biology, chemistry, geography, history, and classical and modern languages. Giving evidence to our inquiry the Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, emphasised the connection between those subjects and the EBac:

If you talk to people like the Russell Group, they have implicitly been saying that they would regard those sort of subjects that are in the English Baccalaureate as the best preparation for going to a Russell Group university.⁶⁸

35. We know from the Office for National Statistics that “degree holders earned an average of £12,000 a year more than non-graduates over the past decade”.⁶⁹ It could therefore be argued that, if they wish to progress to better-paid jobs associated with completion of a degree, students might be advised to focus on those subjects which good universities say facilitate entry. However, the Committee did not receive any evidence suggesting that many universities have plans to use the EBac itself as an admission criterion. While Universities UK has acknowledged “the benefits of the [EBac] award in terms of the breadth of study it offers”, it told us there was “currently a limited appetite” among universities to use the EBac “in university admissions processes, entry requirements or selection criteria.”⁷⁰ The 1994 Group of universities was more categorical, stating that there was “no intention” and “no desire” to use the EBac in that way.⁷¹

36. Partly because of the similarity between the Russell Group’s list of facilitating subjects and those included in the EBac, some parents and schools are clearly confused about the EBac’s precise ‘status’ and future role in university and college admissions. One parent explained to us that this could lead to decisions about subject choices at GCSE being changed for fear of their future impact:

Of course, the choice not to pursue [a particular] qualification can be made and subjects chosen accordingly, but as parents we worry that countenancing this will lead to problems further down the line. Will colleges and Universities demand this as additional entrance criteria? How much store will be set by this new qualification? The truth is we have no idea, nor do the educational professionals who are advising us and our children.⁷²

67 *Informed choices: a Russell Group guide to making decisions about post-16 education* (Russell Group, 2011), p. 20

68 Q 123

69 See <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=1166>; median annual earnings 2000-10 based on Labour Force Survey data

70 Ev 41

71 Ev w310

72 Ev w96 (Mrs G. A. Byron)

37. We support the Government's desire to have greater equality of opportunity for all students, and to improve the attainment of those eligible for free school meals. The evidence is unclear as to whether entering more disadvantaged students for EBac subjects would necessarily make a significant contribution to this aim. Concentrating on the subjects most valued for progression to higher education could mean schools improve the attainment and prospects of their lowest-performing students, who are disproportionately the poorest as well. However, other evidence suggests that the EBac might lead to a greater focus on those students on the borderline of achieving it, and therefore have a negative impact on the most vulnerable or disadvantaged young people, who could receive less attention as a result. At the same time, we believe that the EBac's level of prescription does not adequately reflect the differences of interest or ability between individual young people, and risks the very shoe-horning of pupils into inappropriate courses about which one education minister has expressed concerns. Given these concerns, it is essential that the Government confirms how it will monitor the attainment of children on free school meals in the EBac.

38. We agree with the Government that, if our education system is to improve, it must take account of best practice internationally. However, the evidence we received does not suggest a link, in other countries, between the prescribed study of certain academic subjects and improved attainment and prospects for poorer students. The Government should provide further such international evidence, and analysis of it, to inform debate on the merits of the EBac.

39. Universities, further education providers and sixth form colleges have already begun to communicate their position on the EBac, but confusion on its status remains. Information on how it might be used in applications procedures, if at all, should be made readily available to students, parents, and schools.

4 Subjects and specialisation

40. The choice of subjects included in the EBac has been one of the most controversial aspects of its existence, featuring in a very large number of submissions to our inquiry. In considering the evidence, we recognise that, in compiling any list of ‘preferred’ subjects, there is likely to be understandable opposition from teachers of, or those with a special interest in, other subjects. Concerns ranged from the exclusion of individual subjects – most notably religious education—through to broader worries about the absence of creative, practical and technical subjects. Currently, to achieve the EBac students must have a GCSE, at grades A* to C, in the following subjects:

English

Mathematics

At least two sciences (having entered all three) *or* double award science

History, geography or ancient history (but not classical civilisation)

A modern or classical language

The list of precisely which qualifications are eligible is available at Appendix 1.

Rationale for the chosen subjects

41. Three predominant explanations for the final choice of EBac subjects have been forthcoming from the Government. The Minister of State for Schools, Nick Gibb MP, told us that the EBac was a conscious method of improving take-up:

In 2002, something like three quarters of the whole cohort took a modern foreign language to GCSE. Last year, that figure was 43%, and if you strip out the independent sector it is just above a third. That is a concern. Geography has fallen from 45% of students taking it in 1995 to 26% of students taking it in 2010. History is down from 39% to 31%. So we are trying to address some very real concerns...⁷³

The Minister also explained that some schools appear to have dismissed these subjects completely:

These subjects are entitlement subjects... Most of them are actually compulsory and must be studied to the age of 16. And yet there are 175 secondary schools where no pupils were entered for all the English Bac subjects; there were 169 schools where there were no French entries, and there were 137 schools where no pupils were entered for geography.⁷⁴

42. Secondly, the Minister explained that the EBac is about delaying specialisation:

73 Q 96

74 Q 93

It is about delaying specialisation until 16 and keeping options open as long as possible, so that people are not closing down opportunities post-16. There has been a tendency, because of the league tables, for some students to be entered into qualifications that close down those options. They are being entered for those qualifications solely because of the league table position of the school. It is trying to redress that perverse incentive that is part of the reasoning behind the English Baccalaureate.⁷⁵

The evidence we received demonstrated some support for this principle, as did Alison Wolf's recent report of vocational education, which recommended a core academic curriculum pre-16.⁷⁶ What concerned some witnesses, however, was that the EBac would leave too little time in the curriculum for the pursuit of other subjects, whether academic or vocational. The Minister told us that the EBac will occupy 70-80% of curriculum time,⁷⁷ allowing "ample time in the curriculum for other subjects".⁷⁸ However, considering there are other statutory subjects, some witnesses have argued that, in reality, the EBac dictates the whole curriculum, as headteacher Andrew Chubb explained:

The academy I lead is a Church of England academy so RE [religious education] is compulsory for all students...⁷⁹ By the time you add in PE [physical education], which is a requirement, and PSHE [personal, social and health education], which is essential, in our academy you are left with about 10% of the time to deliver anything outside what we would call the core plus EBac.⁸⁰

43. If this scenario is replicated elsewhere, the consequences of the EBac will not chime particularly comfortably with the words of Mr Gibb's Ministerial colleague, Lord Hill of Oareford who said, in response to a question about the award:

I think that everyone would accept that children are different, that there is no right way for any particular children and that vocational options as well as academic options should be fully available. It would be wrong if schools were forcing children to do things that were not right for them or were forcing them to change subjects halfway through their course.⁸¹

Unfortunately, this may be happening already as a result of the EBac's introduction, particularly in relation to certain subjects.

44. The third rationale for the final choice of subjects is, as we saw in the previous chapter, that the EBac subjects are very similar to those considered by the Russell Group to facilitate entry to its universities, and the EBac could therefore play a role in enabling more students, including those from poorer backgrounds, to progress to those universities and the benefits

75 Q 125

76 See *Review of Vocational Education – the Wolf Report* (March 2011), p. 109

77 See Q 119: the Minister explains that schools will have "20% or 30%, or more time" to teach everything not included in the EBac.

78 HC Deb 7 February 2011 col 7

79 As the Minister has pointed out, religious education is a statutory subject. See paragraph 50 below.

80 Q 6

81 HL Deb 5 May 2011 col 568

that accrue from completion of their degrees. Related to that, we note that Alison Wolf, in her review of vocational education, said that too many students have been following courses which have little or no labour market value.⁸²

Technical subjects

45. Some employers raised particular concerns about the exclusion of technical subjects from the EBac suite. David Bell, Chief Corporate Development Officer at JCB, told us as a recruiter that the EBac will mean “fewer people doing the subjects that I want them to be doing”.⁸³ ADS, the trade organisation advancing the UK’s aerospace, defence, security and space industries, told us that the existing EBac configuration “may have a potentially adverse impact on engineering and technology qualifications”;⁸⁴ the National Committee for 14-19 Engineering Education of the Royal Academy for Engineering agreed that the EBac “does nothing to promote practical and technical experience outside of mathematics and science” and, consequently, “does not do enough to support productive industry in the UK”.⁸⁵

46. Specific concerns were raised by a number of witnesses around the exclusion of information and communication technology [ICT] and design technology from the EBac. One teacher summed up fears of the impact this could have on employers and business:

ICT skills particularly are an area in which developed nations should be looking to lead in. When taught well ICT is an enabling subject which improves the capacity of students and provides them with the tools required to function in a digital age. The announcement of the EBac has directly led to a reduction of almost half in the number of students opting to study ICT [at my school], which will have a knock on effect in future years on the number of A-level and then Degree entrants.⁸⁶

47. The Association of Colleges, amongst others, has called instead for a parallel ‘technical baccalaureate’, which it argues would be “more motivating for quite a number of individuals.”⁸⁷ However, it was suggested to us that while the ‘TechBac’ would be “better than nothing”, the “deep culture that we have in this country”—as noted, for example, in the Wolf Review⁸⁸—would mean the “EBac will be for the bright kids, and the TechBac will be for the less bright kids.”⁸⁹ There is, therefore, a concern that a ‘TechBac’ would perpetuate the myth, as described by Lord Baker, that “the grammar school on the hill was always better than the school in the town with the workshops”.⁹⁰

82 See *Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report* (March 2011), p. 21 and elsewhere

83 Q 58

84 Ev w194

85 Ev w135

86 Ev w245 (Mr J. Partridge)

87 Q 60 (Chris Morecroft)

88 In his introduction to Professor Wolf’s 2011 review of vocational education, the Secretary of State for Education wrote that England has always “struggled with our failure to provide young people with a proper technical and practical education”.

89 Q 62 (David Bell)

90 Lord Baker, ‘Wolf’s backing of vocational training is great, but she ducks the question of how much it will cost’, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 25th March 2011

48. As we recommended in our recent report on participation by 16-19 year olds in education and training, the Department for Education “should consider whether a 40%/60% split between time spent on specifically vocational or technical study and on core academic curriculum would best suit 14 year olds who take up vocational options while at school.”⁹¹ However, we have not seen any evidence that the problems associated with the introduction and mission of the EBac could be avoided if a Technical Baccalaureate were introduced along similar lines, despite the support this won from some witnesses. For these reasons, we do not recommend the creation of such a baccalaureate at this time.

Religious education

49. The exclusion of religious education [RE] from the humanities category of the EBac has been perhaps the most hotly contested aspect of the award’s introduction. A vigorous parliamentary campaign calling for the inclusion of RE attracted the signatures of over 100 MPs, echoing the views of many on the front line. The Catholic Education Service summed up many of these concerns, arguing that religious education “has a strong claim to be *the* humanity, *par excellence* as it demands knowledge and skills in history, textual criticism, anthropology, ethics, philosophy and theology” and that “its omission from any measure which seeks to ensure that pupils receive a genuinely broad education is indefensible”.⁹²

50. Two defences have, nonetheless, been offered. The Minister of State for Schools has said that “the reasoning behind our decision not to include RE” is that “it is already compulsory by law”;⁹³ indeed, as he also noted, “it is the only subject that has been a compulsory part of the school curriculum since 1944.”⁹⁴ Secondly, the Minister has argued that the EBac aims to encourage increased take-up of those subjects where fewer students were achieving, or even entering for, GCSEs—such as history, geography and languages—which is not the case for religious education:

[R]eligious studies [RS] rose from 16% in 1995 to 28% in 2010... Our concern was that if you included RS or RE as a component part of the humanities, some schools – and we thought it would be the schools that we were most concerned about, and that were already not offering the full range of history, geography and modern languages to their pupils—would use RS to tick the box for humanities.⁹⁵

Furthermore we acknowledge that, in an independent public poll asking which subjects schools’ performance should be judged on, religious studies garnered support from 22% of those surveyed, where most EBac subjects scored at least 60%.⁹⁶

91 *Participation by 16-19 year olds in education and training*, Fourth Report from the Education Committee, Session 2010-12, HC 850-I, paragraph 34

92 Ev w242

93 HC Deb 17 May 2011 col 50WH

94 *Ibid.*, col 48WH

95 Q 109

96 The complete results of this January 2011 poll can be found at <http://today.yougov.co.uk/sites/today.yougov.co.uk/files/YG-Archives-Pol-ST-results-21-230111.pdf>

51. There is, however, concern that faith schools—to which the Government has said it is “committed”⁹⁷—are indirectly discriminated against by the EBac’s exclusion of religious studies. The Church of England Board of Education explained the dilemma to us:

Church of England schools, many of which maintain a commitment to full course GCSE RS for all students, are now faced with an impossible choice. Keeping RE as part of the core for all students may well be seen as too risky. At the very least there will be extreme pressure on the timetable if RE is to be maintained alongside the acceptable English Baccalaureate subjects.⁹⁸

A survey of nearly 800 schools, conducted by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE), recently found that almost one in three secondary schools plans cuts to RE teaching.⁹⁹

52. Others have argued that the absence of religious education in the EBac will encourage schools—despite its standing as a compulsory subject—to treat the subject less seriously, which could have a detrimental effect on students’ wider education. Headteacher Hugh O’Neill predicted that “for a non-faith school” religious education will become “an extremely rare choice, if the EBac stays as it is”,¹⁰⁰ despite being—in the words of another Headteacher—“as rigorous academically at GCSE as history and geography.”¹⁰¹ Ben Thomas, Headmaster of Thomas’s Battersea, added:

Tolerance will surely come only through understanding of each other's religions, and understanding through education.¹⁰²

The creative arts

53. The Committee received over 340 similarly-worded letters as part of a campaign to have Music GCSE included in the EBac,¹⁰³ as well as a large number of other submissions on the creative arts, from a variety of sources. The Department for Education’s decision not to include music and art in the EBac could be seen as odd in light of the Government’s view that “Involvement with the arts has a dramatic and lasting effect on young people”,¹⁰⁴ but perhaps even more so considering Michael Gove’s own words when announcing the EBac last year:

I’m proposing that the Government look at how many young people in each secondary school secure five good GCSEs including... a humanity like history or geography, art or music.¹⁰⁵

97 HC Deb 17 May 201 col 48WH

98 Ev w198

99 See ‘RE teaching time slashed in English Bac scramble’, in *The Times Educational Supplement*, 4 February 2011

100 Q 22

101 Q 24 (Caroline Jordan)

102 Ev w343 (Jane Ellison MP)

103 Orchestrated by the Incorporated Society of Musicians, which provided a template letter.

104 Website of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport: http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/arts/7205.aspx

105 Speech by the Secretary of State for Education, at Westminster Academy, 6 September 2010, available at <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/speeches/a0064281/michael-gove-to-westminster-academy>

The White Paper published two months later referred only to “a humanity such as history or geography”.¹⁰⁶ No specific rationale for that change of heart has been forthcoming, although the Minister acknowledged that it “is a difficult judgment call whether to include music and art as well”.¹⁰⁷ Darren Henley, who was commissioned by the Government to conduct a review of music education, recommended that “Music should be included as one of the subjects that go to make up the new English Baccalaureate”, when the award’s “constituent parts are next reviewed”.¹⁰⁸ A January 2011 YouGov poll, cited previously in this report, asked the public which subjects ought to count when measuring schools’ performance, and music was omitted from the list; however, other arts subjects scored low with only 25% of those surveyed supporting art and design, 13% drama, and 8% dance.¹⁰⁹

54. The vast amount of evidence calling for the arts to be recognised in the EBac included, unusually, a submission from the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Policy Committee for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport. It argued that the arts “are valuable academic subjects in their own right; that they can significantly improve performance in literacy, numeracy and foreign languages; and that they are vital to the future of our creative industries” and opined that the EBac, as it stands, may well “have a negative impact on the schools arts provision.”¹¹⁰

55. There is some evidence that this decline in provision has already begun, as a result of the EBac, as a small study by the National Association of Music Educators told us:

As early as January 2011 60% of the 95 music teachers who responded indicated that their schools had already taken action that would reduce the uptake of the music GCSE in September 2011. In some cases, this involved reducing the number of subjects that pupils could choose to two; in others, it involved putting music in option blocks against EBac subjects, so that pupils had to choose between them.¹¹¹

This evidence, like that of the Church of England Board of Education, seems to contradict the Minister’s view that the EBac allows “plenty of time in the curriculum—20% or 30%, or more time” to study “a vocational subject, music and art, RE and so on.”¹¹²

56. Other evidence has argued that music, for example, is as rigorous an academic subject as history and geography. The Incorporated Society of Musicians, citing research from the Institute of Education, told us that:

Music education has been shown repeatedly to have a positive impact on pupils’ perceptual and language skills, literacy, numeracy, intellectual development,

106 *The Importance of Teaching – The Schools White Paper 2010*, p. 44

107 Q 117

108 *Music Education in England: A Review by Darren Henley for the Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport* (February 2011), paragraph 3.6, available at <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/Music%20Education%20in%20England%20-%20Review.pdf>

109 The complete results of this January 2011 poll can be found at <http://today.yougov.co.uk/sites/today.yougov.co.uk/files/YG-Archives-Pol-ST-results-21-230111.pdf>

110 Ev w210

111 Ev w122

112 Q 119

attainment, social and personal development, physical skills and health. One can assume that with a decline in the availability of music in schools, a similar decline will be noticed in these core areas.¹¹³

57. One head of a school with music specialism, said he was “furious” that the EBac offered no praise for the “often exceptional achievement of our students in the Arts”, asking, “Why does discussing Tudor politics give ‘credit’ for the EBac while discussing the impact of the Spanish Civil War on artistic movements in Europe does not?”¹¹⁴ Similar concerns were expressed around art and drama. Art and design educators at Birmingham City University wrote to us that:

If the English Baccalaureate as it is proposed is imposed on schools, lasting damage will occur to the cultural education of thousands [of] pupils... In a complex and culturally diverse society it is essential that cultural understanding and global perspectives are fostered through education. The arts subjects are uniquely placed to make crucial inputs to this understanding.¹¹⁵

Meanwhile, Theatre for Young Audiences emphasised that drama and theatre can “teach children the essential skills that employers are increasingly seeking”, as well as improving students’ technical and intellectual rigour alongside each other.¹¹⁶

58. Evidence also intimated that the exclusion of a creative component within the EBac could have a detrimental effect on the creative industries and on employers.¹¹⁷

Other issues of subject choice

59. In addition to the concerns highlighted about religious education, the arts, and technical subjects, a number of other concerns around the EBac subjects and qualifications were raised during the course of our inquiry. It is impossible for us to address each one here; instead, we have drawn attention to those where the body of evidence was most substantial and where potentially serious repercussions could be forthcoming for schools, employers and pupils if the Government does not consider the issues further.

Applied languages

60. The first of these was around the composition of language qualifications. Most linguists who provided evidence warmly welcomed the EBac’s inclusion of modern languages. However, concerns were expressed over the nature of the qualifications themselves. Headteacher Richard Curtis suggested to us that “as currently taught to GCSE, languages are decidedly ‘non-academic’—being almost entirely focused on gaining functional skills”,¹¹⁸ which is potentially at odds with the Government’s desire for the EBac to be an

113 Ev w110-111 (submitted in conjunction with Conservatoires UK)

114 Ev w11 (Richard Curtis, Headteacher, St Bede’s School)

115 Ev w264

116 Ev w252

117 See, for example, Ev w201 (Creative and Cultural Skills- sector skills council), Ev w217 (National Association for Gallery Education, also known as Engage) and Ev w218 (Crafts Council)

118 Ev w10

academic wrapper. The Association for Language Learning suggested that “if more pupils from all backgrounds and across ability ranges are to be engaged by languages and do well in them, GCSE languages examinations will need to be reviewed to ensure that there is appropriate and stimulating content.”¹¹⁹ By contrast, Chris Morecroft (President of the Association of Colleges) suggested that, for many employers, applied, less academic language courses were more useful: “It could be business language for travel and tourism. It would not necessarily have to be rigorous GCSE French or German or Mandarin.”¹²⁰ Similarly, the inherent skills associated with modern, as opposed to classical, languages, are seen by some employers as very different. David Bell, Chief Corporate Development Officer at JCB, said that “if I were employing somebody who had those [BRIC country modern] languages, that would be a big tick in the box for me” but that if “they had Latin and Greek it would probably be a big negative tick”.¹²¹

Latin

61. The languages category also raised another potential consequence of the EBac. While Latin GCSE is included in the list of ‘eligible’ subjects, the WJEC Level 2 Certificate in Latin is not. The Certificate, which WJEC told us was accredited under the same processes as iGCSEs, has had a positive effect on the uptake of the subject:

Even in the short time of their availability those schools using the Certificates in Latin have reported a significant rise (a doubling or tripling) in the number of students studying Latin at KS4 and intending to study Latin at KS5. For the first full entry this summer there will be over 5,000 unit entries from over 150 centres. Inclusion of the Certificates in Latin would promote this growth, whereas exclusion will cause a reduction in the number of students studying Latin in England.¹²²

62. From this evidence, it could be understood that the EBac, far from increasing the uptake of Latin, could have the opposite effect. This view was expressed in many submissions, including that of classics teacher Rowan Stephenson:

The WJEC Level 2 Latin certificate needs to be included in the EBac languages list because there are many state schools like mine where there is not enough time available either in or outside the curriculum to cover the ground needed for the current OCR Latin GCSE... If the certificate is excluded from the EBac it will discourage state schools from introducing Latin and give the impression that the language study involved is of less value than [other languages].¹²³

The concerns were summed up the University of Cambridge School Classics Project:

Latin teaching in UK schools, which has seen significant growth over the last decade, will enter another period of decline if the WJEC Level 2 Certificates in Latin are not rapidly included in the Language component of the EBac... The negative impact on

119 Ev w209

120 Q 65

121 Q 65

122 Ev w236

123 Ev w47

Classical subjects of the EBac in its current form will be felt in both the state and independent sectors, but more severely in the state sector.¹²⁴

Science

63. Concerns about the EBac's potential impact on science have been expressed to us as well. Currently, to receive the award, students would need to pass two single sciences at grade A*–C, but to have been entered for all three, or to pass double award science with an A*–C. The CBI's Susan Anderson felt that, if the EBac drove more schools to offer three separate sciences, businesspeople would consider that “a good thing”,¹²⁵ but that, at present, too many state schools “only offer double science, which is not a good preparation for A-level.”¹²⁶ SCORE—a partnership focussed on science education—suggested the EBac would do little to reverse this trend:

The introduction of the English Baccalaureate as it stands may well reduce the number of pupils taking GCSEs in three separate sciences. Timetabling pressures caused by accommodating the English Baccalaureate subjects may restrict the amount of teaching time available such that some schools are not able to offer the separate sciences alongside Science and Additional Science... The science measure for the English Baccalaureate (for those students taking three separate sciences) will be the top two grades from the three separate sciences. There is a concern that schools might concentrate pupils efforts on the two sciences either for which they have specialist teachers or based on their results in early assessments.¹²⁷

64. Furthermore, this method of crediting science achievement could lead to potentially perverse consequences for individual students. For example, a student with a C grade in Double Science would be able to achieve the EBac, where a student with A*s in two sciences, and a host of other good GCSEs, would not unless they had entered the third science as well. This could become an active disincentive to study three separate sciences if, as one headteacher told us, schools start to think that “Double Science is ‘enough’”.¹²⁸

Humanities

65. That negative impact on pupils could extend to other subjects, as highlighted in Hugh O'Neill's comments concerning history and geography:

My students will have no chance to get the English Baccalaureate this year. We got zero in 2010 because the subjects that we do—short course history and geography—were not recognised, and neither was the GCSE in religious studies... The first students at St Benedict's school who will actually achieve an English Baccalaureate will pass it in 2013. There are three years of collateral damage.¹²⁹

124 Ev w228

125 Q 58

126 Ibid.

127 Ev w343

128 Ev w253 (Catherine Darnton)

129 Q6

66. A further concern raised in the humanities ‘bracket’ of the EBac was the inclusion of GCSE Ancient History but not Classical Civilisation. One head of Classics—representing many more witnesses who raised the issue—argued the benefits of the qualification to us:

The course is rigorous and demanding, but the variety of units available (a mix of historical and literary topics) gives pupils a wide taste of the Classical world... I have looked at the specification for Ancient History and I am convinced it would lead to fewer students at KS4. Although I **love** ancient History, the course is so much narrower than the Classical Civilisation specification...¹³⁰

The University of Cambridge School Classics Project anticipates that this will have a very real impact on the take-up of the course, predicting a “32% drop in the number of students studying Classical Civilisation by 2014.”¹³¹

Teacher supply

67. Evidence received for our inquiry—as seen throughout this chapter—suggests that schools are already realigning their curricula in order to increase uptake of EBac subjects, which could have a significant effect on teacher supply. The Department for Education has recognised this:

The biggest impact for schools will be on the change of the curriculum and the impact on staffing in terms of deployment and training. We recognise that this will not necessarily be a simple task and may take time for some schools to achieve, particularly if they need to recruit teachers in areas where shortages already exist, such as physics, or areas where we would expect there to be high demand, such as language teachers...¹³²

The Department went on to state that it is “currently working with the Training and Development Agency for Schools to increase the number of newly trained teachers coming into key EBacc areas where there is likely to be high demand.”¹³³

68. We acknowledge that certain academic subjects studied at A-level are more valued by Russell Group universities than others. The EBac is founded on that university-based curriculum. However, our inquiry has uncovered significant issues with the EBac’s current composition, and there are certain subjects and qualifications where we are not clear on the rationale behind their exclusion. A focus on a fairly narrow range of subjects, demanding considerable curriculum time, is likely to have negative consequences on the uptake of other subjects. We encourage the Government to examine carefully the evidence presented to us, and suggest that it reconsiders the composition of the EBac on conclusion of the National Curriculum Review. More importantly, future performance measures must be well thought through.

130 Ev w30 (Mrs Barbara Roden)

131 Ev w228

132 Ev 39

133 Ibid.

69. We are glad that the Department for Education has recognised the potential impact of the EBac on teacher supply, and is working on solutions to any adverse effect this might have. However, academic subjects are not the only path to a successful future, and all young people, regardless of background, must continue to have opportunities to study the subjects in which they are likely to be most successful, and which pupils, parents and schools think will serve them best.

5 The EBac as a measure of performance

70. In our report on the role and performance of Ofsted, we welcomed the Government’s desire for “more publicly available information on schools, including more comprehensive attainment tables.”¹³⁴ We stand firmly by that conclusion, and have therefore considered very carefully the potential merits of the EBac as a performance measure. A significant amount of evidence we received supported a core, traditional curriculum in schools; it might follow, logically, that those witnesses therefore support schools being judged on their ability to deliver that curriculum. However, two key concerns around the EBac’s role as a performance measure were raised with us: its retrospective application, and the attempt to draw a distinction between performance and accountability measures.

The EBac’s retrospective introduction

71. The EBac performance measure was applied retrospectively to the 2010 performance tables, which has caused considerable consternation in education circles: the move means that publicly available information—for the use of parents and the wider community—is based on criteria teachers and schools did not know they were being judged on. Matt Brady, assistant headteacher at Tile Hill Wood School and College in Coventry, argued that “when you introduce a measure that nobody’s aware of, you will move the goalposts, and people will be fairly upset by it.”¹³⁵ Ian Johnson, head of Ramsgate’s Marlowe Academy, argued that, far from being able to apply the performance measure retrospectively, a good two years’ interval is needed as it is “impossible to change [the curriculum accordingly] for the class of 2012, because they’ve already made their choices”.¹³⁶ In the meantime, as another headteacher told us, pupils will only gain the EBac by “happy coincidence”¹³⁷ or, as the Association of School and College Leaders explained, because of the specialism of the school they attend.¹³⁸ Gerard Kelly, editor of *The Times Educational Supplement*, summarised the situation thus (in an otherwise positive article about the EBac):

It is easy to understand the hurt and outrage that many teachers feel about the Government’s decision to rate their schools retrospectively against a measure they were only made aware of a few weeks [before]. As one headteacher said, it’s like teaching pupils one syllabus for two years and testing them on another in the exam. “Only one in six pupils passes the English Bac”, concluded the press, which neglected to mention that students didn’t even know they had taken it.¹³⁹

72. The Department for Education recognises that “it will take time for schools to change their curriculum”, which, it argues, is why the current performance measures will remain

134 *The role and performance of Ofsted*, Second Report of the Education Committee, Session 2010-12, HC 570-I, p. 45

135 Q6

136 Quoted in ‘Anger as ministers move goalposts on new ‘English Bac’’, in *The Times Educational Supplement*, 7 January 2011

137 Ev31 (Hugh O’Neill)

138 Ev w195

139 Writing in ‘It got off to a truly terrible start, but that shouldn’t blind us to virtues of EBac’, in *The Times Educational Supplement*, 21 January 2011

“for the time being” (despite the White Paper’s intimation that the EBac will sit “alongside” existing measures, rather than replace them).¹⁴⁰ In April 2011, the Minister of State for Schools was adamant that the “inclusion of the English Baccalaureate measure in the 2010 performance tables has already had a positive impact on GCSE choices in schools.”¹⁴¹ As was seen in chapter 4, this does not appear to be a universal picture.

73. In a speech in January 2011, the Secretary of State defended the retrospective introduction of the EBac as a performance measure, stating that it was “introduced this year to allow us to see how the schools system has performed in the past—in a way which manifestly can’t have been gamed.”¹⁴² Several submissions suggested that the retrospective introduction was a politically rather than educationally driven move, as it would, in the words of the Catholic Education Service, “allow the Government to show significant ‘improvement’ in future years”.¹⁴³

74. The Secretary of State is right to recognise the distortions created by ‘gaming’ of the system by schools. However, our evidence shows significant resentment on the part of schools at the retrospective application of the EBac to 2010 data, and we recommend that, in future, the Government gives schools sufficient warning of any change to the criteria on which their performance is to be judged by parents and the wider public.

Performance versus accountability

75. The exact role of the EBac as a measure, and the importance attached to it, does not seem clear to professionals or parents. As we noted in chapter 3, there is little evidence at present that the EBac will play any part in university admissions procedures. However, its role in judging schools’ performance is less clear. The Minister of State for Schools told us in his oral evidence that there will be no automatic consequence for schools with low EBac attainment:

There are 175 secondary schools where no pupils at all were entered for the EBac but, in terms of the schools that the Department is monitoring and is concerned about, we are not looking at those 175 unless they also happen to be in the group that is achieving less than 35% getting five or more GCSEs, including English and maths. That’s why there is a difference between a performance measure and an accountability measure.¹⁴⁴

The Minister also confirmed that “there will be no intervention measures from Government for schools that are achieving a low percentage in terms of the English Baccalaureate”, stating that this was rather “a measure to give information to parents”.¹⁴⁵

140 See Statement of Intent Addendum from the Department for Education, December 2010, and *The Importance of Teaching – The Schools White Paper 2010*, pp. 44-45

141 HC Deb 1 April 2011 col 544W

142 Speech by the Secretary of State for Education to the Education World Forum, 11 January 2011, available at <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/speeches/a0072274/michael-gove-to-the-education-world-forum>

143 Ev w243

144 Q 114

145 Q 86

However, the Minister did not categorically state that Ofsted would not judge schools on their EBac success:

I'm sure Ofsted will look at a whole range of performance measures, and I am sure it will look at the English Baccalaureate as well as the five or more.¹⁴⁶

That also raises the question of whether or not the EBac will eventually replace the existing “five or more good GCSEs” measure: the Government has said this will continue to be used “for the time being”, but implies this is largely because schools need time to change their curriculum to refocus on the EBac.¹⁴⁷ However, in oral evidence the Schools Minister said that there will be “more of these accountability measures, not fewer, in the future”.¹⁴⁸

76. As well as that lack of clarity, and the subsequent fears that schools will be held to account at some future date because of their EBac performance, concerns have been aired that the EBac is not a suitably robust performance measure as it stands. As the evidence in chapter 3, from St Marylebone School, shows, the EBac does not necessarily show how well a school is catering for all its pupils: indeed, in the examples provided by St Marylebone School, the EBac could actively skew the school’s academic reputation by diminishing the achievements by high-performers such as ‘Pupil B’.

77. We welcome the Government’s reassurance that it is not using the EBac as a trigger for intervention, and to that extent it is not an accountability measure, but that would not necessarily change the way it would be viewed by the public (we have no substantial evidence thus far of how in fact the measure is perceived by the public). **We are concerned that the EBac is not yet part of a balanced score-card which gives equal weight to the progress of every child, focussing instead on those who have a realistic prospect of gaining the award. We would encourage the Government to press ahead with its stated intention to develop performance measures which assess the progress of all pupils, including those on free school meals, and consider that future performance measures need to be part of a coherent and cohesive strategy for school reform, rather than appearing piecemeal. We re-iterate our desire, which we believe supports the Government’s, for more performance measures, amongst (rather than above) which the EBac might sit.**

78. **The Government should consider the publication of unique learner numbers which would enable the analysis of entry for, and attainment in, particular subjects and combinations of subjects within a school: information such as this could allow a fuller picture to emerge of how to meet Ministers’ aims.**

Equivalencies

79. We understand the introduction of the EBac was, in part, designed to address concern about the over-valuing of some non-GCSE equivalent qualifications in performance tables. These equivalencies, many argued, have provided an incentive for schools to encourage pupils to take these alternative qualifications, regardless of whether they helped pupils to

146 Q 115

147 See Statement of Intent 2010 – Addendum (English Baccalaureate), see Appendix 1

148 Q 91

progress thereafter. The issue is discussed in depth by Alison Wolf in her review of vocational education.¹⁴⁹ Some respondents to our inquiry suggested that the EBac might help counter the problem of equivalencies.¹⁵⁰ In oral evidence to the Committee the Schools Minister, Nick Gibb MP, agreed, saying:

There has been a tendency, because of the league tables, for some students to be entered into qualifications that close down those options (post-16). They are being entered for those qualifications solely because of the league table position of the school. It is trying to redress that perverse incentive that is part of the reasoning behind the English Baccalaureate.¹⁵¹

80. However, schools witnesses disagreed that the EBac was an appropriate response to issues with equivalences. Andrew Chubb, Principal of Archbishop Sentamu Academy, suggested that:

We need either to remove or revalue those qualifications in some way, so that they have the correct equivalence. The answer is not to introduce something else which will lead to a different type of gaming.¹⁵²

Meanwhile, Matt Brady, Assistant Headteacher of Tile Hill Wood School and College, commented that:

the EBac sets out to achieve something slightly different, and that is not a resetting of the standard in terms of equivalence; it is looking at broadening the core curriculum.¹⁵³

81. In its response to the Wolf Review, the Government has said that it will “identify the best vocational qualifications for this age group (14–16) and will recognise them in performance tables. In this way we will break free from the old equivalency based performance tables and include only a set of clearly defined vocational qualifications which have the greatest benefit for this age group.”¹⁵⁴

82. The Government needs either to remove or revalue qualifications appropriately within the performance tables. We therefore welcome the Government’s response to the Wolf review with regard to vocational qualifications and their league table tariffs. However, we remain unconvinced that the EBac is an effective way to redress the perverse incentives generated by existing performance measures (indeed in some ways it risks generating its own perverse incentives) and we feel that the EBac serves as a distraction rather than a solution in this context.

149 See *Review of Vocational Education- The Wolf Report* (March 2011), Parts 3 and 5

150 See, for example, Ev w11 (James Reeve), Ev w17 (Damien Graham), Ev w29 (Jane Crow) and Ev w40 (Andrea Lea)

151 Q125

152 Q51

153 Ibid.

154 *Wolf Review of Vocational Education: Government Response*, p. 5

Certification

83. As a measure of individual students' performance, the Government intends "to mark individual students' future achievements through a certificate."¹⁵⁵ One school suggested to us that "it is a major failing of this measure to award pupils a certificate that is of no more value than its constituent parts and to suggest that this award is the measure of an academic education"; furthermore, no other performance measure currently results in a similar certificate.¹⁵⁶ The Association of School and College Leaders argues that arrangements for the certification, were it to go ahead, are unclear, and could involve a "costly process":

When the Secretary of State first spoke about the EBac, he described it as a performance measure and a certificate for pupils. It has since become clear that no planning had been done on the introduction of a certificate for young people and no time scale for its introduction has been announced. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how such a certificate could be produced since the relevant qualifications will have been achieved through different awarding organisations, possibly at different times, and there is currently no process for the collation of awards to individual 16 year olds.¹⁵⁷

As well as cost, there are other logistical concerns to do with the award of a certificate: for example, it is unclear whether qualifications taken early (before the age of 16) will count, either towards an individual's performance in the EBac or for the school in performance tables.

84. We are concerned that an EBac certificate might give too much emphasis to one performance measure in a balanced score-card, and for this reason suggest that plans for certification should be shelved. We have not seen any evidence, either, that the cost and logistics of certification have been fully thought through.

155 Statement of Intent (Addendum); see Appendix 1

156 Ev w295 (St Marylebone School)

157 Ev w195

6 Concluding remarks

85. The response to our EBac inquiry was unusually large: well over 300 written submissions in addition to a subject-specific campaign of more than 340 similarly-worded letters. Those submissions came from a variety of individuals and organisations, the overwhelming majority of whom were professionals delivering secondary education. While there was significant support for the principles of a broad and balanced curriculum, the majority of the evidence we received was striking in its lack of support for the EBac as it currently stands.

86. In addition to the problems associated with the EBac's top-down introduction which we have discussed here, written evidence—supported by the experts from whom we took oral evidence—expressed a wide range of concerns about the detail of the EBac, including the subjects contained therein, the award's impact on schools, teachers and pupils, and its implications for progression and use in performance assessment. We have attempted to address some of these concerns in this report, in the hope that any future measures might be better designed and implemented and, therefore, more acceptable to the teachers and pupils who will engage with them day to day.

87. **We think the Government is right to say that all children should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum up to the age of sixteen, including traditional, academic subjects, and that the attainment gap between rich and poor can, and should, be narrowed. The evidence available does suggest that the list of subjects contained in the EBac is, broadly speaking, representative of those that have the highest value to the individual in keeping their options open. However, our inquiry has uncovered significant concerns about:**

- **the exact composition of the EBac. We therefore recommend a review of the complement of subjects in the EBac, following the completion of the National Curriculum Review, which should seek input not only from teachers, parents and pupils, but also from higher and further education institutions, employers, and learned societies;**
- **the impact the EBac will have on students, including the most disadvantaged, about which the evidence was unclear. We therefore urge the Government to keep the EBac under careful scrutiny, and to consult more widely with the public on how best to measure students' and schools' performance, with a view to developing a range of measures including the reviewed EBac;**

and

- **the manner of the EBac's introduction, which we believe damaged its potential credibility. We would therefore encourage the Government to take seriously the lessons to be learnt from that introduction, especially if, as we hope, the Government is to be successful in building greater respect for front-line professionals.**

88. We understand from the Government that it will “review the precise definition of the English Baccalaureate for the 2011 [performance tables]”.¹⁵⁸ By contrast, the Secretary of State has said that he “love[s] it the way it is” and is not “planning to change anything at the moment.”¹⁵⁹ We hope our report has provided useful evidence for a review which we, and the majority of the witnesses from whom we heard, would warmly welcome.

158 HC Deb 31 January 2011 col 553W

159 Quoted in “After-school classes set up in frantic bid to up EBac ratings” *The Times Educational Supplement*, 18 March 2011

Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction of the EBac

1. We acknowledge the Secretary of State's rationale for the retrospective introduction of the EBac. However, we also recognise the tension between the lack of consultation concerning the EBac's introduction, and the Government's aspiration to afford greater autonomy and respect to the education profession. Consultation with teachers, as well as the further and higher education sectors and employers, might have avoided a number of the concerns which are now being raised, and may have secured support for the EBac rather than generating the mainly negative response which our inquiry has seen. In future, the Government should aim to give appropriate notice of, and undertake consultation with key stakeholders and the wider public on, any new performance or curriculum measures. (Paragraph 18)
2. We welcome the recently-launched review of the National Curriculum. We hope this will lead to a considered, coherent rethinking of the curriculum allowing full consultation with, and input from the teaching profession, parents, employers, colleges and universities. We understand the Government's wish to introduce reform with all speed, but regret the launch of the EBac before the curriculum review was completed. Any measure which examines schools' performance in particular subjects would be better introduced once the curriculum itself has been defined and finalised. (Paragraph 20)
3. We do not believe the EBac—the hybrid of a certificate and a performance measure, named after a qualification—is appropriately labelled: it is not a baccalaureate, and as it stands the name can therefore be misleading to parents, professionals and pupils. The Government should assess the extent to which the name might cause confusion: a concern, like some others, which consultation before the EBac's introduction could have identified. (Paragraph 22)

The impact of the EBac on progression and social mobility

4. We support the Government's desire to have greater equality of opportunity for all students, and to improve the attainment of those eligible for free school meals. The evidence is unclear as to whether entering more disadvantaged students for EBac subjects would necessarily make a significant contribution to this aim. Concentrating on the subjects most valued for progression to higher education could mean schools improve the attainment and prospects of their lowest-performing students, who are disproportionately the poorest as well. However, other evidence suggests that the EBac might lead to a greater focus on those students on the borderline of achieving it, and therefore have a negative impact on the most vulnerable or disadvantaged young people, who could receive less attention as a result. At the same time, we believe that the EBac's level of prescription does not adequately reflect the differences of interest or ability between individual young people, and risks the very shoe-horning of pupils into inappropriate courses about which one education minister has expressed concerns. Given these concerns, it is essential that the Government

confirms how it will monitor the attainment of children on free school meals in the EBac. (Paragraph 37)

5. We agree with the Government that, if our education system is to improve, it must take account of best practice internationally. However, the evidence we received does not suggest a link, in other countries, between the prescribed study of certain academic subjects and improved attainment and prospects for poorer students. The Government should provide further such international evidence, and analysis of it, to inform debate on the merits of the EBac. (Paragraph 38)
6. Universities, further education providers and sixth form colleges have already begun to communicate their position on the EBac, but confusion on its status remains. Information on how it might be used in applications procedures, if at all, should be made readily available to students, parents, and schools. (Paragraph 39)

Subjects and specialisation

7. As we recommended in our recent report on participation by 16-19 year olds in education and training, the Department for Education “should consider whether a 40%/60% split between time spent on specifically vocational or technical study and on core academic curriculum would best suit 14 year olds who take up vocational options while at school.” However, we have not seen any evidence that the problems associated with the introduction and mission of the EBac could be avoided if a Technical Baccalaureate were introduced along similar lines, despite the support this won from some witnesses. For these reasons, we do not recommend the creation of such a baccalaureate at this time. (Paragraph 48)
8. We acknowledge that certain academic subjects studied at A-level are more valued by Russell Group universities than others. The EBac is founded on that university-based curriculum. However, our inquiry has uncovered significant issues with the EBac’s current composition, and there are certain subjects and qualifications where we are not clear on the rationale behind their exclusion. A focus on a fairly narrow range of subjects, demanding considerable curriculum time, is likely to have negative consequences on the uptake of other subjects. We encourage the Government to examine carefully the evidence presented to us, and suggest that it reconsiders the composition of the EBac on conclusion of the National Curriculum Review. More importantly, future performance measures must be well thought through. (Paragraph 68)
9. We are glad that the Department for Education has recognised the potential impact of the EBac on teacher supply, and is working on solutions to any adverse effect this might have. However, academic subjects are not the only path to a successful future, and all young people, regardless of background, must continue to have opportunities to study the subjects in which they are likely to be most successful, and which pupils, parents and schools think will serve them best. (Paragraph 69)

The EBac as a measure of performance

10. The Secretary of State is right to recognise the distortions created by ‘gaming’ of the system by schools. However, our evidence shows significant resentment on the part of schools at the retrospective application of the EBac to 2010 data, and we recommend that, in future, the Government gives schools sufficient warning of any change to the criteria on which their performance is to be judged by parents and the wider public. (Paragraph 74)
11. We are concerned that the EBac is not yet part of a balanced score-card which gives equal weight to the progress of every child, focussing instead on those who have a realistic prospect of gaining the award. We would encourage the Government to press ahead with its stated intention to develop performance measures which assess the progress of all pupils, including those on free school meals, and consider that future performance measures need to be part of a coherent and cohesive strategy for school reform, rather than appearing piecemeal. We re-iterate our desire, which we believe supports the Government’s, for more performance measures, amongst (rather than above) which the EBac might sit. (Paragraph 77)
12. The Government should consider the publication of unique learner numbers which would enable the analysis of entry for, and attainment in, particular subjects and combinations of subjects within a school: information such as this could allow a fuller picture to emerge of how to meet Ministers’ aims. (Paragraph 78)
13. The Government needs either to remove or revalue qualifications appropriately within the performance tables. We therefore welcome the Government’s response to the Wolf review with regard to vocational qualifications and their league table tariffs. However, we remain unconvinced that the EBac is an effective way to redress the perverse incentives generated by existing performance measures (indeed in some ways it risks generating its own perverse incentives) and we feel that the EBac serves as a distraction rather than a solution in this context. (Paragraph 82)
14. We are concerned that an EBac certificate might give too much emphasis to one performance measure in a balanced score-card, and for this reason suggest that plans for certification should be shelved. We have not seen any evidence, either, that the cost and logistics of certification have been fully thought through. (Paragraph 84)

Concluding remarks

15. We think the Government is right to say that all children should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum up to the age of sixteen, including traditional, academic subjects, and that the attainment gap between rich and poor can, and should, be narrowed. The evidence available does suggest that the list of subjects contained in the EBac is, broadly speaking, representative of those that have the highest value to the individual in keeping their options open. However, our inquiry has uncovered significant concerns about:
 - the exact composition of the EBac. We therefore recommend a review of the complement of subjects in the EBac, following the completion of the National Curriculum Review, which should seek input not only from teachers, parents and

pupils, but also from higher and further education institutions, employers, and learned societies;

- the impact the EBac will have on students, including the most disadvantaged, about which the evidence was unclear. We therefore urge the Government to keep the EBac under careful scrutiny, and to consult more widely with the public on how best to measure students' and schools' performance, with a view to developing a range of measures including the reviewed EBac;

and

- the manner of the EBac's introduction, which we believe damaged its potential credibility. We would therefore encourage the Government to take seriously the lessons to be learnt from that introduction, especially if, as we hope, the Government is to be successful in building greater respect for front-line professionals. (Paragraph 87)

Appendix 1: Statement of Intent 2010— Addendum (The English Baccalaureate)

In the White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*, published on 24 November 2010, the Secretary of State announced the introduction of the English Baccalaureate. This Addendum gives details of how a new English Baccalaureate indicator will be reported in the 2010 School Performance Tables which will be published in January 2011.

The 2010 Tables will also, for the first time, show the proportion of pupils at school, local authority and national level achieving good GCSE grades (A*-C) in both English and maths. Our intention is to include science in this 'Basics indicator' from next year.

Development of a School Report Card, proposed by the previous government, has been discontinued.

Further copies of this note and the original Statement of Intent, published in April 2010, can be found at www.education.gov.uk/performancetables.

Please address any queries or comments on the content of this document to:

The School Performance Data Unit

2nd Floor

Department for Education

Sanctuary Buildings

Great Smith Street

London SW1P 3BT

or send an email to mailbox.performancedatateam@education.gsi.gov.uk Statement of Intent Addendum December 2010 Re-issued 12 Jan 2011 (new para 4 and text on page 1 re School Report Card)

English Baccalaureate 2010

What is the English Baccalaureate?

1. The Government believes that schools should offer pupils a broad range of academic subjects to age 16, and the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) promotes that aspiration.
2. The EBacc is not a new qualification in itself. It will recognise students' achievements across a core of selected academic subjects in getting good passes in rigorous GCSEs or iGCSEs. The English Baccalaureate will cover achievement in English, mathematics, sciences, a language and a humanities subject. We intend to mark individual students' future achievements through a certificate.

What subjects and qualifications will count towards the English Bacallaureate?

3. Full GCSEs at grades A*-C and Double Award GCSEs at grades A*A*-CC will count towards its achievement. Accredited iGCSEs at grades A*-C and their legacy qualifications will also count. Further details of the specific components are given below:

English

- GCSE in English
- GCSE in English Language
- GCSE Double Award in English
- Cambridge International Certificate in First Language English
- CIE legacy iGCSE in English – First Language

English Studies, English Literature, English as a second language and Digital Communication are not included.

Mathematics

- GCSE in Mathematics
- GCSE in Additional Mathematics
- Achievement of a grade C in at least one of the new linked pair mathematics GCSE qualifications ‘Applications of Mathematics’ and ‘Methods in Mathematics’
- Cambridge International Certificate in Mathematics
- CIE legacy iGCSE in Mathematics

Science

The science component will be awarded if pupils:

Enter all three single sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics GCSEs, Cambridge International Certificates or CIE legacy iGCSEs) and achieve grades A*-C in two of them.

Achieve grades A*-C in Science and Additional Science GCSEs

Statement of Intent Addendum December 2010 Re-issued 12 Jan 2011 (new para 4 and text on page 1 re School Report Card)

Achieve grades A*A* - CC in Science GCSE Double Award

Humanities

- GCSE in History
- GCSE in Ancient History

- GCSE in Geography
- Cambridge International Certificate in History
- Cambridge International Certificate in Geography
- CIE legacy iGCSE in History
- CIE legacy iGCSE in Geography

Languages

- GCSEs in Modern Foreign Languages including Welsh and Welsh as a 2nd Language
- GCSE in Latin
- GCSE in Classical Greek
- GCSE in Biblical Hebrew
- Cambridge International Certificate in French
- Cambridge International Certificate in Greek
- Cambridge International Certificate in Hindi as a 2nd Language
- CIE legacy iGCSE in French
- CIE legacy iGCSE in Greek
- CIE legacy iGCSE in Hindi as a 2nd Language

GCSEs in Applied French and Applied Welsh 2nd Language are not included.

Where can I find a complete list of all qualifications counting towards the EBacc ?

4. For a list of all qualifications counting towards the English Bacc, including the Awarding Organisations offering them, go to www.education.gov.uk/performance-tables , select the 2010 Secondary School Tables, “User Guide and resources” then “Documents”.

Will the definition of the EBacc change in 2011?

5. We will review the precise definition of the EBacc for the 2011 Tables, but would not expect to remove any of the qualifications identified for the 2010 Tables.

Statement of Intent Addendum December 2010 Re-issued 12 Jan 2011 (new para 4 and text on page 1 re School Report Card)

Why are schools being judged against the EBacc when they have not had time to change their curriculum?

6. We recognise that it will take time for schools to change their curriculum and that is why we plan to continue to include the current 5+ A*-C GCSEs measure, including equivalences, in the Performance Tables for the time being.

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 19 July 2011

Members present:

Mr Graham Stuart, in the Chair

Neil Carmichael	Damian Hinds
Nic Dakin	Charlotte Leslie
Bill Esterson	Lisa Nandy
Pat Glass	

Draft Report (*The English Bacculaureate*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 88 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

A Paper was appended to the Report as Appendix 1.

Motion made, and Question put, That the Report be the Fifth Report of the Committee to the House.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 6	Noes, 1
Nic Dakin	Neil Carmichael
Bill Esterson	
Pat Glass	
Damian Hinds	
Charlotte Leslie	
Lisa Nandy	

Resolved, That the Report be the Fifth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Written evidence was ordered to be reported to the House for placing in the Library and Parliamentary Archives.

Written evidence was ordered to be reported to the House for publication on the Internet.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 7 September 2011 at 9.15 am]

Witnesses

Tuesday 22 March 2011

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Matt Brady, Assistant Headteacher, Tile Hill Wood School and College, Coventry; **Andrew Chubb**, Principal, Archbishop Sentamu Academy, Hull; **Caroline Jordan**, Headmistress, St George's School, Ascot, and Chair, Education Committee, Girls' Schools Association, and **Hugh O'Neill**, Headteacher, St Benedict's Catholic School, Bury St Edmunds Ev 1

Professor Les Ebdon CBE, Chair, Students, Quality and Participation Policy Network, Universities UK, and Vice Chancellor, University of Bedfordshire; **Chris Morecroft**, President, Association of Colleges; **David Bell**, Chief Corporate Development Officer, JC Bamford Excavators Ltd, and **Susan Anderson**, Director of Public Services and Skills, Confederation of British Industry Ev 11

Wednesday 27 April 2011

Mr Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State, Department for Education Ev 18

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4	Archbishop Sentamu Academy	Ev 31
5	Matt Brady, Assistant Headteacher, Tile Hill Wood School and Language College	Ev 36
6	Department for Education	Ev 36
7	Universities UK	Ev 40

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(published in Volume II on the Committee's website www.parliament.uk/education-committee)

1	Michael Tidd	Ev w1
2	Geoff Lucas, HMC	Ev w1
3	Independent Schools Religious Studies Association	Ev w2
4	Jonathan Morris, Headteacher, St Wilfrid's Catholic School	Ev w2
5	The Oratory School	Ev w3
6	Cllr Mrs K M Roche	Ev w4
7	Paul Allen	Ev w4
8	Andrew Strachan	Ev w5
9	Mr S G Bell, Headteacher, Paisley Catholic College	Ev w6

10	Cath Brookes, Deputy Principal, Burntwood School	Ev w7
11	Vincent Everett	Ev w7
12	Mr Brendan Hickey, Headteacher, St Thomas More Catholic School. Buxton, Derbyshire	Ev w8
13	John Keller, Principal, Guthlaxton College	Ev w9
14	Diocese of Nottingham Education Service and Tony Downey	Ev w9
15	Michael Wright, Headteacher, Leyland St Mary's Catholic High School	Ev w10
16	Richard Curtis, Headteacher, St Bede's School	Ev w10
17	James Reeve	Ev w11
18	Danny Brierley	Ev w12
19	Nick Taunt, Headteacher, Bishop Luffa, Chichester	Ev w13
20	Andrew R Middleton	Ev w14
21	Mervyn Apthorpe, Assistant Headteacher and Head of Technology, St Thomas More Science College	Ev w15
22	Miss Moira Kent, Head of RE, PSHCE, Careers, Stanley High School	Ev w15
23	Richard Wilkin, Headteacher, S Bede's Inter-Church School	Ev w16
24	Barnaby Lenon, Headteacher, Harrow School	Ev w16
25	Sharon Gladman, Head of Religious Studies, Religious Education at Dr Challoners High School	Ev w17
26	Damien Graham, Deputy Headteacher, All Saints' Catholic High School	Ev w17
27	Bernadette Mimmagh, Vice Principal, Mount Carmel RC Technology College for Girls	Ev w17
28	La Retraite Roman Catholic School	Ev w18
29	Philip Wood	Ev w19
30	Music Education Council	Ev w21
31	Miss Doreen Cronin	Ev w22
32	Martin Lapworth, former MFL Teacher	Ev w22
33	George Grainger	Ev w24
34	Professor John F Healey	Ev w25
35	David Sheppard, Headteacher, The Charter School	Ev w25; 26
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37	Council of University Classical Departments	Ev w27
38	Judith Mossman, Professor of Classics, University of Nottingham	Ev w27
39	Jonathan Kerr	Ev w28
40	Jane Crow, Headteacher, Cardinal Newman School, Luton	Ev w29
41	Chris Lord, Head of Classics, Chigwell School, Essex	Ev w29
42	Mrs Barbara Roden	Ev w30
43	Anna Karsten	Ev w31
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45	Mrs Aston	Ev w35
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49	Richard Vaughan	Ev w38
50	David Boothroyd	Ev w39
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52	Dr Iain W Farrell, Director of Studies, Harrow School	Ev w41
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54	Jolyon English	Ev w42
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56	Denise Davies	Ev w43
57	Elizabeth Wolverson on behalf of the London Diocesan Board for Schools	Ev w43
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60	S A Kurt, Head of Classics, Dartford Grammar School	Ev w46
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62	Dominic Hodgkinson, Brentwood School	Ev w48
63	Ms E A Hayden, Christleton High School	Ev w49
64	Sheila Oviatt Ham	Ev w50
65	The Learning Machine	Ev w53
66	Sue Warrington, Headteacher, Chace Community School	Ev w55
67	Miriam Fairclough	Ev w56
68	Professor Judith Lieu, Chair of the Faculty Board, Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge	Ev w56
69	Ian Bangay, Head of North Yorkshire Music Service	Ev w57
70	Kevin Harley, Deputy Head, The Piggott School	Ev w58
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82	New Visions for Education Group	Ev w83
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84	Mrs Marion Gibbs, Headmistress, James Allen's Girls' School	Ev w85
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91	Steve Jewell, The Littlehampton Academy	Ev w94
92	Little Ilford School	Ev w95
93	Danielle Fairey	Ev w95
94	Cardinal Newham Catholic School, Coventry	Ev w95
95	Mrs G A Byron	Ev w96

96	Mr A J Glover, Head Teacher, The Becket School	Ev w96
97	Association of University Professors and Heads of French	Ev w97
98	Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Bristol	Ev w98
99	Anne Teasdale	Ev w99
100	St John Fisher Catholic College	Ev w99
101	Dr Elizabeth Swinbank	Ev w100
102	Jill Taylor	Ev w101
103	Joe Hughes, Director of the Education Service, Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle Education Service	Ev w101
104	Dr Cain, School of Education, University of Southampton	Ev w102
105	Alderman Colin Cradock, Chair of the South Gloucestershire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education; Margaret Murphy, South Gloucestershire Advisory Teacher for Religious Education; and Antony Evans, South Gloucestershire Adviser for Personal, Social, Health and Moral Education and Citizenship	Ev w103
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121	Isabelle Jones, Head of Languages and Teacher of French and Spanish	Ev w136
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129	Alice Charnley, PGCE student	Ev w144
130	The Girls' Schools Association (GSA)	Ev w145
131	Catherine Hynes, Head of Religious Education, The Champion School	Ev w146
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168	Diploma Development Partnership for the Creative and Media Diploma by Skillset and Creative and Cultural Skills	Ev w211
169	Association of Teachers and Lecturers	Ev w213
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176	Rev Christopher Thomas	Ev w224
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200	Dr Christopher Ray, High Master, The Manchester Grammar School	Ev w261
201	Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) National Headteacher Steering Group	Ev w262
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240	Mr Duncan Spalding, Aylsham High School	Ev w310
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261	Jane Willis, Headteacher, Notre Dame High School	Ev w333
262	Chris Parkinson, Principal, Bosworth Community College	Ev w334
263	Mr P J Wickert, Headteacher, The Holy Trinity Church of England School	Ev w334
264	Mr A Sharpe, Headteacher, St Mary's Catholic School	Ev w335
265	Mr Stephen King, Director of Language College and MFL, Champion School and Language College	Ev w335
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List of unprinted evidence

The following written evidence has been reported to the House, but to save printing costs has not been printed and copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library, where they may be inspected by Members. Other copies are in the Parliamentary Archives (www.parliament.uk/archives), and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to The Parliamentary Archives, Houses of Parliament, London SW1A 0PW (tel. 020 7219 3074; email archives@parliament.uk). Opening hours are from 9.30 am to 5.00 pm on Mondays to Fridays.

Paul Gardiner

Petitions from Queen Mary's High School

Susan Marsh

Stephanie Stacey

Cllr. Stan Pajak

Andrew Halls

Jane Trott

Monica Benson

Mark McGinn

Eddie Rowe

Erica Cattle

Nick Thornber

Mary-Grace Browning

Alison Henshaw

Charlotte Avery

Jude Merrill

Jean Dawes

Sarah Buckle

John Burrough

Martin Taylor

Gary Webber

Teresa Grant

Colin Nelson

Paul Saunders

Helen Hadley

Mike Seales

Samantha Styles

David Pritchard

Mr Sean Bullen

Muhammad Irshad

David Eyre

Ian Clayton

Cassie Murphy

Robyn Mann

Kate Banbridge

Tina Davies

Erica Lymer
Ian Wilkinson
Elizabeth Logan
David Dawes
Mary Apperley
Savannah Carney
Ellen Victor
Mr L Quigley
Theresa Cheetham
Zahra Akbar
Ross Purves
Elizabeth Lazarus
Mrs B J Holmes
Jessica Clough
Rob Carter

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2010–12

First Special Report	Young people not in education, employment or training: Government Response to the Children, Schools and Families Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2009–10	HC 416
Second Special Report	The Early Years Single Funding Formula: Government Response to the Seventh Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009–10	HC 524
Third Special Report	Transforming Education Outside the Classroom: Responses from the Government and Ofsted to the Sixth Report of the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009–10	HC 525
Fourth Special Report	Sure Start Children's Centres: Government Response to the Fifth Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2009–10	HC 768
First Report	Behaviour and Discipline in Schools	HC 516-I and -II (HC 1316)
Second Report	The role and performance of Ofsted	HC 570-I and -II (HC 1317)
Fifth Special Report	Looked-after Children: Further Government Response to the Third Report from the Children, Schools and Families Committee, Session 2008–9	HC 924
Third Report	Services for young people	HC 744-I and -II
Fourth Report	Participation by 16–19 year olds in education and training	HC 850-I and -II
Fifth Report	The English Baccalaureate	HC 851

Oral evidence

Taken before the Education Committee

on Tuesday 22 March 2011

Members present:

Mr Graham Stuart (Chair)

Nic Dakin
Pat Glass
Damian Hinds
Charlotte Leslie

Ian Mearns
Tessa Munt
Craig Whittaker

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Matt Brady**, Assistant Headteacher, Tile Hill Wood School and College, Coventry, **Andrew Chubb**, Principal, Archbishop Sentamu Academy, Hull, **Caroline Jordan**, Headmistress, St George's School, Ascot, and Chair, Education Committee, Girls' Schools Association, and **Hugh O'Neill**, Headteacher, St Benedict's Catholic School, Bury St Edmunds, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: Good afternoon. Thank you very much for joining us to discuss the English Baccalaureate. This is an unusual time for us to hold a session of the Committee, but the Education Bill is going through its Committee stages. It sat this morning and will sit again this afternoon, immediately after this session, and will go on until late tonight. Pat and I will enjoy its endless deliberations.

May I ask you first of all, from a structural, overview point of view, whether the English Baccalaureate entrenches 16 as an important benchmark and undermines the concept of 14 to 19 education? Following on from that, in so far as it ensures an academic core curriculum, would the English Baccalaureate, if it had gone up to 14 but not 16, have found more favour with educationalists? Hugh, you are looking at me. I am always tempted to ask the person who looks at me as though they want it most or want it least. You look the least keen, so I will invite you to answer.

Hugh O'Neill: I think that for a secondary school, age 16 is one of the critical benchmarks in terms of Government-measured performance, so anything that places a new emphasis on that benchmark will receive a lot of attention. We felt under a great deal of pressure to try to meet the requirements of English Baccalaureate. I think most other schools in our situation would be the same.

Q2 Chair: That would suggest a change in the points at which we publicly examine young people. If it went to 14 rather than 16, would you think that a better situation?

Hugh O'Neill: That would be returning to making 14 a formal examination phase, which was dispensed with a couple of years ago. I would not be in favour of going back to rigorous testing at key stage 3 again, which is what that would imply.

Q3 Chair: Does anyone else want to pick up on that?

Caroline Jordan: If we examine at 14 but not at 16— if we are increasing the school leaving age to 18—that would be welcome. Our concerns about the choice of

subjects would be much lessened if we did not have to worry about taking it at 16 as opposed to 14.

Q4 Chair: Thank you. Does anyone else wish to pick up on that? Not particularly. Can I ask what you think of an advanced or accelerated Baccalaureate to reward schools that skip GCSEs, as featured in *The Times Educational Supplement* on Friday?

Andrew Chubb: What we need is a proper national debate about what we want to achieve through education. That is another idea that has come out before the debate on the national curriculum has got started. After the Wolf review and the E Baccalaureate, we need to go back to first principles and ask, "What do our students need for themselves? What do they need to engage them? What do our society and economy need?" Then we need to build a Baccalaureate worthy of the title from those first principles. Going back to first principles is what is needed before any other initiatives.

Chair: Do you want to pick up on that, Matt?

Matt Brady: Yes, I agree with Andy on that basis. Before we move towards an accelerated Baccalaureate, it is important to look at the EB as it stands in front of us at the moment; to look at the wrapper of qualifications and their relevance to students. The debate is about students, what is best for them, and whether they are capable of meeting the demands of the modern information economy. We need to start at that point before moving on.

Q5 Ian Mearns: Good afternoon everyone. Among the submissions that we have received, not many have welcomed the EBac completely and utterly wholeheartedly without reservation. From your perspective, what do you think is the primary purpose of the EBac?

Caroline Jordan: I am fortunate in that because I am representing independent schools, we don't necessarily have to follow exactly anything that is going to be laid down as a possible performance measure. We are not so concerned about that. Broadly, the principle of the subjects and the philosophy behind it is something that we do adhere to in our schools.

The prescription of the subjects is what we are concerned about.

Matt Brady: If I can pick up on that point, I believe that the idea behind the EB was to provide a rigorous academic benchmark against which schools can be measured; and to provide schools with the opportunity to promote subjects that have been in national decline in recent years. In principle, that is why I support the English Baccalaureate; I believe that we need to protect those knowledge-rich subjects, which have been in decline, and to provide a better and broader balance to the curriculum our students are capable of accessing. In principle, I agree with the idea behind the English Baccalaureate, but would be open to suggestion as to how it is enhanced and developed in future.

Andrew Chubb: I note that the rationale used to describe the EBac seems to have changed a little. A number of reasons have been given by the Secretary of State. What is clear is that it is now being described unequivocally as a performance measure, whereas earlier there was language around the idea of information to parents, shining a light on what schools do and so on. Now we know what it is—a performance measure—and as such, I don't think it gives a reliable measure of what schools are about, partly for reasons that I have already given. There is narrow choice of subjects; there seems to be a presumption that history and geography are harder than other subjects. I don't understand why RE is not a humanity, or why only GCSEs are being promoted as an assessment methodology. All in all, it gives a very poor indication of a school's overall performance.

Hugh O'Neill: I was looking at the Government helpline on advising students about what they should do at option time age 14. It is a little out of date, but it followed the advice that I have given for years at my school, which is to look for a balance of subjects. The sort of subjects in the EBac have to be seen as excluding the ones that don't get in. Design and technology subjects and all the arts subjects are excluded, but they are specifically named as two of the four areas of optional curriculum to which students should have access. By making an EBac, you determine that two of the four option areas are important enough to score on this qualification, and two others are not. There is no doubt that that will drive down the number of students taking those subjects. If that is the intention, I couldn't support that as a principle.

Q6 Ian Mearns: The EBac was introduced without any consultation that I can think of; there was very little, if any, consultation, at national level. Some youngsters might fail to gain the EBac, but they would have managed to get five good GCSEs. Matt, you described this as a measure against which schools can be measured. Do you think that some youngsters could be collateral damage in the transition from the five A* to C grades to the EBac measurement?

Hugh O'Neill: I feel that I can answer that. My students will have no chance to get the English Baccalaureate this year. We got zero in 2010 because the subjects that we do—short course history and

geography—were not recognised, and neither was the GCSE in religious studies. Two of our winners, our bankers in terms of getting high performance, were not counted, so we are on zero. We will be on zero next year because our year 11s are committed to the courses they are doing. Despite my inquiries to the Department about whether there is any chance of short courses being recognised, I have no answer to that. My year 10s at the moment are sitting running short courses too. The first students at St Benedict's school who will actually achieve an English Baccalaureate will pass it in 2013. There are three years of collateral damage.

Andrew Chubb: I think there will be a lot of collateral damage. If we take the choice of subjects, I know the Secretary of State has said that you can deliver an EBac in 70% of the time available, and there is 30% left over for other things. Leaving aside the assumption—or the inference—that those subjects aren't as important as the EBac for one minute, that is not really the case. The academy I lead is a Church of England academy so RE is compulsory for all students. I imagine that will be the same in many Catholic schools. As a transformer academy, we are working hard with historical weaknesses in English and maths, which means that we put more time into those very important subjects. By the time you add in PE, which is a requirement, and PSHE, which is essential, in our academy you are left with about 10% of the time to deliver anything outside what we would call the core plus EBac. That leaves no choice really. That is part of the answer, but my other observation is that already in the country, some schools—not our academy, I hasten to add—feel compelled to withdraw people from subjects such as PE, history or whatever, to do a language or a subject that they didn't originally opt for, to make up for not getting an EBac. The very practices that the Secretary of State rightly criticised in the White Paper about performance table gaming are already happening before our eyes and before the ink has dried on the paper. That is not good for student choice either.

There is a broader point about moving forward. Schools that feel they must get a certain percentage of students through the EBac will push those who do not have an interest in this choice of subjects down a course that they probably won't enjoy as much, and might therefore have a less likely chance of success. That has implications for narrowing participation.

My final point is that even if you get to the stage where perhaps 30% of our nation's young people have an EBac, what does that say to the 70% of young people who haven't got it, and the huge effort they went to to get qualifications that are equally worthwhile? It doesn't stack up.

Matt Brady: If I could pick up on your point about the retrospective introduction, this has not helped at a time of quite a lot of upheaval in education at the moment. Clearly, when you introduce a measure that nobody's aware of, you will move the goalposts, and people will be fairly upset by it.

I hasten to add that I represent a language college in the Midlands. I represent a comprehensive school with very much an average intake, and our GCSE results very much mirror the national average. We have a

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very interesting approach to, for example, the teaching of languages in that we follow the CLIL programme, and we deliver subjects such as science, but also subjects that are not included in the English Baccalaureate—for example, music and PSHE—through the medium of a language. Our languages lead the way in terms of our school performance criteria. Our students really engage with the languages, and that is seen to offset the national decline from 2000 when 79% of our young children at school studied a modern foreign language to 2009 when that figure was down to 44%.

If we are to compete on the global stage and if we are to engage with the knowledge economy, that academic rigour needs to be achieved. Whether the English Baccalaureate in its current form is the ideal vehicle for that delivery clearly needs some debate, and I would pick up on Hugh's point about the academic rigour of faith, ethics and religious education as part of the humanities portfolio of subjects. It does add value, and I echo his point.

Caroline Jordan: I was just going to say that in a White Paper that is talking about unnecessary prescription, we suddenly seem to have been told the subjects to teach. In a school like my own, where we won't have to worry about the EBac—the majority of the girls would take that range of subjects anyway—we are able to look at the individual, and the able dyslexic who is obviously not qualified to take a language, but might take 11 or 12 GCSEs at a very high level in other subjects. We have the latitude to be able to do that, and obviously in other schools the pressure will be on those individuals and schools to reduce that.

Q7 Ian Mearns: Are you taking any particular measures to sell the concept of the EBac to pupils and parents now that it is being introduced?

Andrew Chubb: I refuse to sell something that I think is such a poor idea. It's conceptually flawed, and I can't go to parents and say that it is a good idea when I don't think it is.

If I could pick up on one point that Matt made about languages, I think few would argue that business languages are not important, and it is another surprise to me that the Secretary of State is insisting on a pure GCSE in modern languages. I absolutely agree that languages are really important, but the ruling out of the NVQ in business languages or indeed the Asset Language ladder, which is a demanding qualification, seems completely arbitrary to me.

Q8 Chair: To go back to Andrew's earlier point, have the Government reacted to the perverse consequences of previous accountability measures by introducing the EBac and bringing in a whole lot of new ones? Is that your view?

Andrew Chubb: I would say yes.

Caroline Jordan: Yes.

Chair: So that was a yes from Andrew, and a yes from Caroline.

Hugh O'Neill: Yes. The Schools Minister in June talked on two or three occasions in different speeches about the desirability of cutting down the amount of prescription. That was in relation to diplomas, but it

seems to me that they were wise words that would also apply to the EBac.

Chair: And Matt.

Matt Brady: Yes, with the caveat that I think this is seen as a way of redressing the balance of the relationship between what are traditionally seen as academic subjects as opposed to vocational learning.

Chair: The rationale behind the Government initiative is reasonable. The question is whether the perverse outcomes offset the benefits, which brings me neatly on to Damian's question.

Q9 Damian Hinds: Can we have a quick-fire round with one-word answers. How many GCEs does the average pupil at your school do over their entire school life, up to and including year 11?

Hugh O'Neill: 9.5.

Caroline Jordan: 10.

Andrew Chubb: It completely depends on the student.

Q10 Damian Hinds: There must be an average.

Andrew Chubb: I couldn't tell you what the average is off the top of my head.

Q11 Damian Hinds: I will guess between 8 and 10. Is that fair?

Matt Brady: I would say 10 or 11.

Q12 Damian Hinds: Fantastic. Although it's not directly relevant to today, can I take you back to your own O-level or CSE times? How many did you do? How many of those were compulsory? You are academically accomplished people. Would you have fulfilled the requirements of the English Baccalaureate?

Hugh O'Neill: I did eight. I would get it, yes. I had three choices.

Caroline Jordan: I did eight and I would have got it. I don't remember very much choice.

Andrew Chubb: I didn't have as much choice as I wanted. I did nine subjects and I am an EBac failure.

Matt Brady: I did 10. Four were compulsory; one was optional.

Q13 Damian Hinds: Sorry, say that again. You did 10, of which four were compulsory and one was optional. The other five were somewhere in between.

Matt Brady: They were science, English and maths. I was strongly encouraged to take two languages because I was on that pathway, so effectively that narrowed down the measure, and I count that as four. History was my option.

Q14 Damian Hinds: Okay. I suppose the point I was trying to implicitly make was that back when we were all at school, it seemed quite normal to have a lot of compulsory subjects. I have spoken to lots of MPs and others who did exams at O-level or CSE. For most of them, the subjects that we are talking about today in the English Baccalaureate were largely compulsory in most types of school. Whether you want to call it achievement, attainment, performance or anything else, what is the most important measure of something at key stage 4?

Hugh O'Neill: I personally would say that five passes, including English and maths, is a perfectly reasonable benchmark to set. English and maths are absolutely essential. Within that is a certain range of ability. As soon as you start to specify the subjects you want to include, the more you include the more you drive up the threshold, because there is a chance that a medium ability student will be weaker in one of those threshold subjects. Having two that are absolutely key and three others seems a reasonable compromise.

Caroline Jordan: I don't think that we have an issue about a language and a humanity being included. In fact, most of the schools I represent will have that as a requirement. The individual, obviously, would make a slightly different in choice. Our issue is the type of language that's specified and indeed the humanity.

Q15 Damian Hinds: I was asking a slightly different question. Whether it's the English Baccalaureate or five A* to C, value added or uncapped average scores—write in your own measure—which do you think are the most important measures at key stage 4?

Caroline Jordan: I don't really have a view at key stage 4. The majority of our schools are looking at key stage 5 outcomes.

Q16 Damian Hinds: Okay. Thank you. Anybody else?

Andrew Chubb: I think the Secretary of State is quite right to insist on high standards in English and maths, and I think that the current performance measure of five or more GCSEs, including in English and maths and their equivalents, with the exception of English and maths, which should be GCSEs, is completely reasonable. There is a question about whether that is how you compare yourself to other schools—whether you take a pure value added or a contextual value added argument. I know that the latter is coming to an end. I do have a view on that, but that is perhaps not for this panel. I would say that the current measure is a just performance measure.

Q17 Damian Hinds: You mean five A* to C, including maths and English.

Andrew Chubb: Including maths and English and the equivalents for the other three is a completely reasonable floor target, if you like—a completely reasonable standard. The EBac, though, is an unjust metric. Can I pick up something that you said a minute ago? You seemed to make a link between subjects that were compulsory when you were at school and perhaps when I was at school. The point I would make is that at that time I think about 10% of pupils went on to higher education.

Damian Hinds: Just to be clear, I wasn't saying that that necessarily made it a good thing; I was just saying that it perhaps isn't new for these things to be suggested.

Matt Brady: I would suggest that five including English and maths is a good measure. I think it adds value to the measure that preceded it, which was the raw five A* to C. I see the English Baccalaureate as another brand of schools measurement, and I see it as a measure of school performance. I did not write the submission with the view that the English

Baccalaureate should become the measure of school performance, but I believe that it is a valuable measure.

Q18 Damian Hinds: On your suggestion of five-plus A* to C grades with English and maths, how does it square with what you were saying a few minutes ago about the decline in the teaching and examining of modern foreign languages?

Matt Brady: I think that is exactly the point. The EBac redresses that decline, and as a country we need to look at the qualifications that 16-year-olds are leaving education with. If you look at English, history and geography as an example, they are the world subjects. You only have to open the newspaper today to realise that we need to appreciate the world in a very different way. I think that those subjects are absolutely key to educating our young people in the ways of the world. They are knowledge rich, they are demanding, and they are cognitively challenging. I believe that that will add a cognitive measure into the mix.

Language, for me, is obvious. I feel passionately about the cause of languages, but there are other academic subjects with academic rigour that could be put into the programme. I have been speaking to arts colleagues this week about the academic rigour of, for example, music and the theory base upon which it operates. That is something to be considered.

Q19 Damian Hinds: But would you accept that if you are giving a list of subjects, you have to draw the line somewhere?

May I reveal a prejudice? When I saw the figure about the English Baccalaureate it did not strike me as particularly controversial. Obviously since then we have discovered all sorts of controversies and received lots of correspondence from RE or RS teachers, music teachers and others. In terms of defining an academic core, everyone is agreed that English and maths is about right. On foreign languages, I think most people you speak to in teaching, in education, say that you get richness from learning a language that you don't get from other subjects. Matt, you rightly say that in the modern world we need to do that. We know that science is vital in terms of the disciplines. Finally we could have a bit of a debate about the definition of humanities.

I hate to go back, but when I was at school humanities meant history and geography. So I suppose that to me that always sounds like quite a natural thing. It is not meant to be every subject and, as each of you has said, you do perhaps eight, nine or 10 GCSEs. This is only a subset. There is still plenty of room to do RE. How will this affect your curriculum and timetable?

Caroline Jordan: I won't let it affect mine, and it won't affect it very much anyway because we do ask our girls to take a humanity and a language. But we will not be insisting that the humanity is history or geography; we will allow them to choose RS.

Hugh O'Neill: We have switched from short courses to full courses. I feel disappointed about this because all our students receive both history and geography, which I would have thought is a good thing, and now they can only really have room for one. We

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recommend them, as we always have done. We have always said that universities and employers value those subjects, and about two thirds of our students take them. There is a slightly increased take-up, but we are not compelling students to do them.

Andrew Chubb: We are committed to enabling students to have as personalised a pathway as possible, certainly post-14. We are also committed to finding academic rigour and creativity in whatever subjects are delivered. So the answer is that we won't be requiring students to follow this pathway post-14. We will be making sure that any student who would like to follow the pathway is enabled to do so by having followed a broad, balanced and rigorous curriculum at key stage 3, and we will support them through key stage 4 if that is their choice.

Q20 Damian Hinds: Will you be advising that, as Hugh has just mentioned, these subjects are more highly valued by future employers and by people managing admissions to higher education? Whether they should or shouldn't be is a separate debate.

Andrew Chubb: Well, it's interesting because what employers seem to be calling for—the last report that the CBI wrote about this—are employability skills such as enterprise and all of the aspects that make up a person's ability to be successful in the world of work. That does not seem to figure anywhere in the current set of proposals for EBac. I can't use the term qualification, because it isn't, but as a metric that supposedly prepares people for the world of work, it simply doesn't, in that respect. So, no, I won't.

Q21 Damian Hinds: On employability skills, do you know of any other current or—at any time in our history—previous measure that has measured that?

Andrew Chubb: We are looking at introducing something like an NCFE enterprise qualification. We place a lot of emphasis on ensuring that students develop their personal learning and thinking skills—not only in a discrete subject, but through the curriculum. We are looking to develop our own Baccalaureate in conjunction with our partners, which will find a way of ensuring that all students are properly prepared in that way as in many others.

Matt Brady: We're not changing our curriculum this year. We have not made any moves to do so. Interestingly, geography has experienced a rise in popularity. It is difficult to define to what extent the English Baccalaureate has had an impact on that. We believe, just like Andy, in free choice. We believe in personalised learning and looking at the individual child and ensuring that their pathway is clear and beneficial for their learning. I hasten to add that I am in charge of not only our language specialism but our applied learning specialism as well. I work with a great number of gifted colleagues who deliver very effective vocational pathways with their students. We are looking at things like work skills as part of our curriculum to support those learners as well. I believe that the two can co-exist.

Damian Hinds: Thank you.

Q22 Chair: In terms of casualties in subjects, we have discussed applied languages, short courses, a

combination of history and geography, but do you have any idea as to which areas of study might be most hurt by the English Baccalaureate? What is the collateral damage?

Hugh O'Neill: I think that religious studies will be severely threatened by it, because most state schools offer it within the humanities curriculum as a GCSE. They may cover it in a loose way within some of the PSHE curriculum, but they certainly will not be offering it as a GCSE, unless it is offered within the humanities part. RE, for a non-faith school, will be an extremely rare choice, if the EBac stays as it is.

Q23 Chair: Any other thoughts? We have touched on music, but there is art, any of the creative subjects, engineering and so on.

Andrew Chubb: I am tempted to say anything that is not English, maths, science, history or geography will become rarer. The simple truth is—the White Paper has said it—that if you set that as a target, that is what people treat as a priority and other things will get moved aside.

Q24 Damian Hinds: I am interested to get your take on this. If there was, at the margins—it won't happen in your school, Hugh, because as a Catholic school you will continue to do RE to exam level—at other schools, a small shift from, for example, RE to history, how big a disaster is that?

Caroline Jordan: I think that the point is that RS is as rigorous academically at GCSE as history and geography.

Q25 Damian Hinds: But that suggests neutrality. It is neither a good thing or a bad thing, if they are equally rigorous and kids move from one to another.

Caroline Jordan: Yes, but then they will not go on to take an A-level in the subject or in something like philosophy and ethics, and then we will not have people going on to read PPE at Oxford and so on.

Damian Hinds: I did it without the A-level.

Chair: PPE at Oxford is, of course, a vocational subject for politicians.

Q26 Damian Hinds: Andrew, do you see it as a big problem if, for example, some kids at the margins move from RE to history?

Andrew Chubb: Yes, because I do not think that it is a marginal issue. This is a fundamental sea change in what we are being expected to deliver, certainly in areas such as mine in east Hull. It is dangerous to assume that you just have to switch from RE to history. It is nothing like that at all. As things stand, technology and the arts are valued by staff, students and society as much as history and geography are. Arguably, in terms of the results that students come out with, with this new metric in place it seems that unless you have this particular selection of five subjects, other things are not as important. It is a much deeper question than a bit of history and a bit of RE.

Q27 Nic Dakin: Can I focus on young people currently in years 7, 8 and 9? Will the existence of the EBac make their outcomes and their education better, as they reach age 16 and 18? Will it have a neutral

effect, or will it be detrimental? At the end of the day, it is the young people who matter.

Chair: Winners and losers.

Hugh O'Neill: I can say that I don't think that this will happen in my school, but if a school was driven, because it was extremely concerned about exam performance, to move students into that narrow curriculum and to do subjects that they are less suited to, in the end they will end up with fewer passes.

I will declare an interest in that I am a historian. History is my subject. I am often concerned about what I think is the quite naive view that studying history for two more years will create a more rounded citizen. It seems to me that the skills that we learn in history are about balance and judgment. You can achieve those in a whole range of other subjects. The other thing about history is that it is a very tight assessment model. If you cannot write well, you certainly cannot pass history at A-level and not at GCSE either. It is not just about acquiring a body of knowledge that we think is valuable; it is also testing a particular writing skill, constructing arguments and so on, which are quite high level. I do not want to see kids driven towards doing that because they feel that is necessary.

Q28 Nic Dakin: So you are simply saying it would be benign as long as schools don't—to use somebody's phrase from earlier—indulge in performance table gaming or as long as Ofsted doesn't begin to say that this is a measure by which you will be judged. It will be benign unless it is a matrix.

Hugh O'Neill: Personally, I don't think that it can be benign if it is stuck there as a performance measure in performance tables. That doesn't look benign to a head teacher. That looks aggressive. I don't think we have any choice but to recognise that as something that will be challenged on. I am facing zero for the next three years, and if Ofsted makes it one of its key performance measures, I would be terrified that I am going to get an inspection. I would not come out very well in terms of outcomes. It doesn't look benign to me at the moment.

Q29 Nic Dakin: From your judgment, are young people going to be less well off as a result of it?

Hugh O'Neill: They certainly would be if we were inspected and reduced to unsatisfactory. That wouldn't do them or us any good at all. That would be alarming.

Q30 Nic Dakin: I am trying to focus on the young people, rather than the institutions. Having run an institution for four years, I fully understand the pressures. I fully understand the need to ignore some of the nonsense that comes from people like us. I am interested in focusing on whether this is a good thing for kids in years 7, 8 and 9, when they are coming to the curriculum in key stages 4 and 5. People used phrases earlier such as “capable of meeting the needs of the modern information economy” and “capable of performing in the modern knowledge economy”. Will they be better off as a result of this or not? That is what I am interested in.

Andrew Chubb: Let's look at three broad categories of student: those who are higher attainers, those who are middle attainers and those who are lower attainers on entry. Those who are higher attainers at the start of secondary school education are not really going to be motivated by a threshold measure that recognises whether they get five or more C grades or above. However, those people may be worried about the prospect of it becoming a criterion for university entrance later on, so they will, at least, have their choice restricted. They do not gain.

The middle attainers are already motivated to achieve a threshold with five or more C grades or above, but, again, their choice will be restricted, because schools, in the main, will be worried about this—our academy and others excepted—and will be forcing people down a road that is not suited to them.

That brings us to the lower attainers, many of whom will not want to have that particular diet of subjects. For them, there is the risk of being switched off. I think, therefore, from the students' point of view, there are no winners that I can see, and everybody loses to a greater or lesser extent.

Matt Brady: In terms of change to the key stage 3 curriculum, if we are talking about years 7 to 9, in schools where the focus has shifted away from languages and history and geography at key stage 4, there will be some sea change to be observed. It will come as no surprise that schools will be looking at a new measure and readjusting their curricula accordingly. At years 7 and 9, you might expect that languages, history and geography might gain in terms of profile and in terms of time on the timetable.

Q31 Nic Dakin: But will students gain? Is it better for them?

Matt Brady: Ultimately, I believe it is, because it provides a level of cognitive challenge alongside the vocational learning aspects that our 11 to 14-year-olds are currently experiencing. It comes down once again to what balance is broadly right for our children, and I believe it is something that is positive, regardless of your social background.

Caroline Jordan: I think we would welcome encouraging that broadly academic route to 16, and there are a few students in years 7 to 9 who will now take those routes, which is to be welcomed. It would make a difference to some of them—perhaps the middle achievers we are talking about. I agree that high achievers will go down that route anyway, but I am worried about the effect on low achievers.

Q32 Nic Dakin: Your dyslexic girl who, at the moment, you would choose not to put in for a language—would you stick to that?

Caroline Jordan: I would, because I am able to, as I don't have to worry about the performance indicator.

Q33 Nic Dakin: Thank you. One of my observations is that over the last few years, there has been what I would call a BTEC-isation of the curriculum, which people can see as either a good or bad thing. Certainly, in the area that I know best, what it appears to have done is to have driven up outcomes for young people at 16, on the back of which GCSE maths and English

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have pursued that five A* to C indicator. Does that, in a sense, turn this on its head, or should we have a vocational or technical Baccalaureate that stands alongside the EBac? Would that be a route forward? You can see what I'm asking.

Andrew Chubb: I would make a couple of points. First, I would like to address the issue of cognitive challenge. It is a logical non sequitur to say that cognitive challenge equals history and geography, and the inference, therefore, is that those subjects somehow contain greater levels of cognitive challenge. Cognitive challenge can be found in any subject. It is about the skill of the teacher and how they deliver the subject, as well as the level of challenge that is applied to or drawn out of any particular subject for students. It is fallacious to say that any one subject inherently contains greater cognitive challenge than another.

I'm sorry, I have forgotten the original question.

Q34 Nic Dakin: I am merely asking whether, given the apparent success of the vocationalisation of the curriculum, one route would be having some sort of technical Baccalaureate, which could stand alongside the EBac with equal value.

Andrew Chubb: My suspicion would be that if you were to have three Baccalaureates—EBac, technical and vocational—you would have a hierarchy of Baccalaureates, with vocational at the bottom, technical in the middle and EBac at the top. As much as anything else, that is to do with our ingrained and entrenched national prejudices about the value of engineering. One question I would have—I ask MPs—is if a requirement of getting into university were the ability to strip an engine or service your car, how many people would have got to university? I certainly would not have done. I dearly wish I could service my car better. That is what I mean; I would find it cognitively extremely challenging to have to strip the engine of my car. Having three Baccalaureates would create that hierarchy and, in my view, it would be a false hierarchy. My answer would be not to have three Baccalaureates, but to have a Baccalaureate with what the French call “*filières*”—different streams, or different selections of subjects—but which included all the other skills that are needed for the good of society or for our economy, and so on. That would be a Baccalaureate worthy of the name.

Matt Brady: If you look at the success of the International Baccalaureate, which is now being offered in many post-16 institutions, I think that is a much better model than the introduction of more Baccalaureates at this level, as Andy suggests. We need to look at the composition of the Baccalaureates, use this as an opportunity to redress the balance, if you like, but then look at a skills portfolio that is part of the International Baccalaureate and which could be used to benefit young people.

Q35 Nic Dakin: Picking up that point, the ASCL, which represents something like 15,000 members, has said that, “As an over-arching qualification, the E-bac is seriously wanting.” Do you agree? If the EBac is to be there, how might we improve it, or begin to talk

about improving it, so that these young people get something of value?

Hugh O'Neill: Personally, I think it comes back to something that Andrew said earlier. Fundamentally, there are questions about the whole system of assessment and qualification, which return again and again. It seems to me that whenever standards are driven up and the pass rate goes up, the immediate question that comes up in the newspapers and among politicians is, “Are standards falling?” If we drive up the pass rate at GCSE or A-level, the automatic assumption is that somehow we've done something wrong because it must be easier to get those passes.

The EBac seems to redress that balance to the liking of some people, because the national pass rate at the moment is 15%, and I estimate that if we drove lots of students we could get up to about 25%, which would be a nice way of creating an elite of passes at GCSE. But is that what we need? It seems to be what this debate more and more turns around. I am unhappy about the idea that having a qualification that we know 60% or 70% won't pass is the way forward.

Q36 Nic Dakin: Can we have an EBac that isn't flawed, or is it in its very nature flawed? Is this a good idea that could be made to work, or is it just a bad idea?

Hugh O'Neill: If you want a measure that makes sure that more than half the population can't get it, it is excellent, but if that is not the intention I am not sure what you will gain from it.

Q37 Damian Hinds: Like a degree.

Hugh O'Neill: Yes. But unlike a driving test, where the assumption is that anyone should be able to pass and you want your driving population all to have a standard, in education we seem to be stuck on the idea that we really don't want everyone to have a level of qualification because that will somehow devalue the very thing that we are trying to work towards.

Andrew Chubb: I think we should be looking at international models. Singapore, for example, is a very exam-centric country and I believe that the Secretary of State draws some inspiration from its system. If you look at the heart of the baccalaureate qualification there you'll see civic participation, work-related learning skills, personal learning and thinking skills and so on and so forth. I absolutely agree with what Hugh said; the debate should be around what we are actually trying to achieve through this.

It is not a qualification—that's another thing I'd like to nail; it is a collection of subjects. There is nothing additional about it; that is all it is. Are we out to try to create some kind of educational Berlin wall or to produce something that is really going to benefit young people, our society and our economy? If what the Secretary of State has done is to launch a debate along those lines, that is a very valuable thing to have done and I think it's what we need to do. We need to take this opportunity and say, “How can we create a baccalaureate that will really add value to the education that our students currently have?” That's an excellent question to ask, and one on which we as a profession would like to engage with the Secretary of State at some length.

Q38 Craig Whittaker: Good afternoon. The general consensus that I've very much been hearing this afternoon is that the EBac is too narrow in focus. In fact, evidence submitted by Universities UK suggests that, and it is indicative of some of the evidence that we have received. What I will say to you though—I want to think about this from a different angle—is that over the months that I have been attending this panel the one outcome that everyone seems to want for our young people is a positive economic impact on society eventually, bearing in mind that we have almost 1 million NEETs in our society. Only last week, or the week before, we had a group of college principals in front of us who said, "It's not us gov, because they're not getting to us." They very much put the blame on your sector. Bearing that in mind, as well as the fact that the current curriculum is much more open than you would have us believe the EBac is going to be, and the fact that we are falling down the international comparative league tables in virtually every subject all the way down, is a narrow focus not a bad thing?

Caroline Jordan: As I have said, to have a narrow focus, but the right focus, is the right thing to do, and that is why it's just about getting the subjects. To have an academic focus for many young people is a good thing to do, but it's more about what is inside that.

Andrew Chubb: The issue of NEETs is a very important one, and you are absolutely right to flag it up. We have managed to reduce our own NEETs percentage rate to about 4.6% this year, which is about 3.5% below the national average, and that's in an area where traditionally the number of NEETs has been very high. The reason I mention that is that we've achieved it by personalising learning, and by personalising learning through key stages 3 and 4, we've managed to increase participation post-16. What we have found in our own academy is that it is them, gov, sometimes. The answer is that sometimes it's us and sometimes it's them. People do drop out, and when people drop out before Christmas of the year in which they start a year 12 course, that figure goes into the school's figures. On occasions, if they don't integrate well into the college, that is seen as the school's responsibility as well. Whose fault it is may be open to question. The point is that bringing in a metric that narrows and is more likely to lead to disengagement pre-16 is only going to increase the number of NEETs post-16.

I will end by making this point. There is a very worrying statistic going around at the moment. If you take those who are NEET at 16, within 10 years one in four is in prison and one in seven is dead. It's a very serious statistic and a very serious issue, and one that I think the EBac is going to make far worse.

Matt Brady: A simple answer to your question about whether the narrowing of focus is beneficial for subjects that are in national decline and are essential to the rounded education in this country is yes, that is a good point. With the EBac, there are some positives to be drawn in terms of a narrowing of focus and looking at subjects that are in national decline. Clearly, the debate will rumble on in terms of which subjects are in or out of that measure. Clearly, there will be winners and losers—there is this unfortunate

term "collateral damage—but I think it's necessary, at least in the short term.

Q39 Craig Whittaker: I'm sorry, Hugh, I know you haven't answered yet, but could I just ask Matt Brady what those positives are?

Matt Brady: In terms of languages, they are raising the profile of languages and making sure that our young people are more internationally competitive. It goes some way to redressing the benchmark that was set in the Barcelona agreement of 2002, which talked about the mother tongue plus two. In this country, we are nowhere near the benchmark of mother tongue plus two, but I believe, again, that the narrowing of focus will enable us to get near that measure, although not to achieve it. As a linguist, I think that it would be great to achieve that measure, but we are nowhere near it. Again, it's about closing the gap, at least in the short term.

Q40 Craig Whittaker: Will it help our NEETs?

Matt Brady: I think so. You can look at the children targeted by the Aimhigher programme, for example. We do a lot of work in our school with a group of socially disadvantaged children who want to gain access to higher education. With this range of subjects, you're looking at a suite of subjects that is recognised by the Russell group as its preferred cohort, if you like. I think there's scope to look at a group of students who are currently underachieving and there's the ability to raise their aspirations.

Hugh O'Neill: As I said, in my estimation, no more than 50% of the student population would be able to aspire to get the EBac as it is. I really think it's the ones left behind, outside the EBac, who are going to be the NEETs of the future. I don't think anyone who is able to get the EBac is going to be a NEET the following year. It is most unlikely that anyone would progress from having that sort of GCSE pass rate in that way. The NEETs in my area are the ones who get zero qualifications.

Q41 Craig Whittaker: In your opinion, will the EBac make the figure for NEETs higher than it currently is?

Hugh O'Neill: No, I just don't think it can do anything to improve it.

Q42 Craig Whittaker: I want to turn your attention to religious education. I know we've touched on it very briefly. The Secretary of State has said that RE is not included as a qualifying subject in the EBac "because it is already a compulsory subject". This argument has been described in submissions as "disingenuous" and "illogical". What's your view?

Hugh O'Neill: I've read the submissions, so I'm aware of the arguments and I think they're quite right. It seems to me that if the argument was that a subject that is core should not necessarily be in the EBac, it would take out English, maths and science. Either you want an EBac that represents optional subjects and students having a set of choices, or it can include core subjects, as it does at the moment. As I said before, I don't believe that the profile of religious studies has

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been anything other than badly damaged by being left outside the EBac, if it stands as the measure it is.

Q43 Craig Whittaker: Even though it's a compulsory subject?

Hugh O'Neill: It is not compulsory to do it at GCSE and most schools, apart from faith schools, only offer it as an option and only within a humanities block. That is the general pattern.

Caroline Jordan: I think it's a statutory subject, but there is no statutory content. What happens in reality is that when it's not offered as a GCSE, it is offered through PSHE and there are a lot of other calls on that time as well, and the timetable allocation is not equal to GCSE. So the sort of rigour that you would get in a RS GCSE you will not get in a general RS lesson that will also be done with "sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll", if you know what I mean. All these things are really important and it's delivered in a completely different way. I don't think that it's a good argument at all.

Andrew Chubb: I would agree. It is disingenuous to say that's the reason for leaving it out. We already know that schools across the country are dropping RE or significantly reducing the amount of RE being taught, at precisely the time that we need more RE and not less of it. I say that irrespective of the fact that our own academy is a Church of England academy. It is quite clear from picking up any newspaper that we need to be able to understand people of other cultures, other religions and other faiths, and just to drop, or effectively marginalise, a subject as crucial as RE, by revaluing other subjects, is foolish.

Matt Brady: I would agree as well. I believe that RE should gain parity in terms of its relationship with history and geography, and I totally support that view.

Q44 Craig Whittaker: I have a final question on RE. It has also been missed out on the curriculum review going forward, because it is a statutory responsibility. Is that a mistake or not?

Hugh O'Neill: To continue to have it as a statutory—?

Craig Whittaker: No, to leave it out of the curriculum review that is going on. Is that a mistake?

Hugh O'Neill: Yes.

Chair: Is that four nods? Yes.

Q45 Charlotte Leslie: I will start with a very basic and rather blunt question. My apologies if it has already been asked and my apologies too for being late. I just thought it might help me to contextualise what we are talking about. It is a simple question. Do the members of panel feel that children from less advantaged backgrounds are by their very nature, by virtue of being from a less advantaged background, less suited or less able to take part in an academic curriculum?

Hugh O'Neill: No.

Q46 Charlotte Leslie: Following on from that, how do the members of the panel explain the very large difference between children on free school meals at schools from less advantaged areas when measured up against schools from better-off areas with advantaged

children in them who perform much better on the EBac standard retrospectively?

Andrew Chubb: Of course, there is nothing intrinsic in somebody from an area that faces significant deprivation that makes them less able to achieve academically. We have to be ever so careful with this notion of what is "academic" and what isn't. I come back to the point that there seems to be this false link that geography, history and science are academic, and that music and whatever are not academic. You also have to look at how you build on students' experiences, because when we learn we are relating information that is given to us to what we already know and understand. That whole process takes a lot of time to construct and it needs to be carefully constructed. People have different starting points.

Q47 Charlotte Leslie: Let us look at, say, the top universities—the Russell group universities. I think that we would all agree that any child from any background should have equal opportunity to go to them. There is probably a section of subjects that those universities would look at, see them on a CV and say, "Yes". If we were to call "academic", for the sake of it, the kind of subjects that would be a child's ticket to go to a Russell group university—if we can keep the concept of "academic" at that level—perhaps that will help.

Andrew Chubb: For me, it comes down to personal choice. Our academy is in an area of very high deprivation and there are students there who love languages, history, geography, English, maths, science, RE and so on and so forth. There are also students whose interests lie with music, art and drama. There are students whose interests lie in health and social care.

Q48 Charlotte Leslie: Do you feel that that is income-based or deprivation-based? Are children's natural propensities across any demographic dictated or influenced by their background? If they are influenced by their background does that explain why there is less retrospective interest in the EBac in deprived schools? If not, how can that difference be right? I know it is a difficult question.

Andrew Chubb: It is difficult. I can only answer by saying that our academy looks at the individual and where their interests lie. We have an extensive programme of information, advice and guidance on what the implications of particular subject choices are and how various options can lead to various paths. Then we support our students and give them high levels of challenge on the path they choose to follow. I would no more advise someone down an EBac path than I would say that what they really need to do is music, art, drama and plumbing. What is really important is that we have excellent information, advice and guidance. If that is well delivered and students are given good opportunities to reflect on what their choices are and where they lead, it should be an issue of personal choice. Another aim of the Secretary of State seems to be that now everybody has to go to university. That is great. I am not decrying that all. There was the recent announcement that schools will be judged on the number of students who

go to university, but that is not necessarily the best place for all people.

Q49 Charlotte Leslie: That is very interesting. The increase in apprenticeships is also interesting in that context. Something I really grapple with is the reason why in schools—you run a good academy—across the board there is such a link between deprivation and equivalence. Some schools have retrospectively performed well on an EBac that they did not know existed.

Hugh O'Neill: In a sense social deprivation has its impact on all aspects of people's lives, including their educational attainment, their aspirations, their average income and their life expectancy. Those are huge social issues which you grapple with as politicians all the time. I would be very sorry to hear that schools somehow made an assumption of low expectation based on the fact that they served a deprived area. I am sure that in Andrew's case that is exactly the opposite of what happened. I am sure there are the highest expectations. Nevertheless, you cannot but recognise that people will die younger if they come from deprived backgrounds because that is the nature of social deprivation. They will achieve less and we will do everything we can within the school sector to give them the best opportunities, but we cannot fight against inequalities.

Q50 Charlotte Leslie: In that sense would you say that if they are achieving less, that subjects outside the EBac were in any way are achieving less? That seems to be an implication that it would be easy to draw from what you have just said.

Hugh O'Neill: Possibly. I would place less value on what the retrospective EBac figures tell you. My own experience is in a school that is high achieving and was top of the county on all the other measures, yet it is bottom for this. There are probably some very serious blips in what the figures tell you. If it averages out that schools that on the whole have promoted a more vocational curriculum have scored less on EBac it hardly surprises me.

Q51 Charlotte Leslie: Secondly, to what extent do you feel that the EBac is a response to something that may lie with the concept and the value of equivalence? To what extent is the EBac a response to something that lies with equivalence and how many GSCEs it is worth rather than the merits of an EBac itself?

Andrew Chubb: On that one, without wishing to be flippant, we are being asked to read the Secretary of State's mind. I can see how it could be construed as that. I can understand why that would be the case. Undoubtedly there have been some qualifications that would seem to have too much equivalence, for whatever reason they were given that equivalence. But the answer is not to introduce the EBac. If that is the problem, the solution is to look at those qualifications that had too much equivalence and say, "Actually, this isn't right." We need either to remove or revalue those qualifications in some way, so that they have the correct equivalence. The answer is not to introduce

something else which will lead to a different type of gaming.

Matt Brady: I think the two are intrinsically linked, and it would be false to assume that they are not. However, the EBac sets out to achieve something slightly different, and that is not a resetting of the standard in terms of equivalence; it is looking at broadening the core curriculum in our schools. On that basis it is valuable. Clearly the debate about equivalence will rumble on, and obviously that's another story, but in terms of the two measures, I believe that they set out to achieve slightly different things.

Andrew Chubb: The other point worth making is that in language colleges nationally I think 30% of students have achieved the EBac, whereas across everybody else nationally it was 15%, so there is an element of misleading information there. Are language colleges on average twice as high-performing as other schools? I would suggest not. It just so happens that that was the choice that was made—I speak as somebody who took a school into language college status many years ago. Past curriculum choices now seem to be having an impact that says something about choice, but not necessarily about quality. It could be misleading.

Matt Brady: I would hasten to add that our language college achieved 17% in the EBac measure, and I believe the national average is 15% so we are very much in line.

Q52 Chair: Andrew, you said earlier that you thought the introduction of the English Baccalaureate would lead to an increase in the number of young people not in education, employment or training. I can see how you don't like the English Baccalaureate because it goes against the personalised education that you have come up with, and which you think is really delivering for your young people. However, I don't see how, in itself, it will drive more people into being NEET. As I think Hugh said, anyone who gets the Baccalaureate is not going to be NEET, and it is unlikely to affect those who have no chance of getting it.

Andrew Chubb: It won't in our academy because I am not going to alter things as a result of this. I think the risk is that—I say this non-judgmentally—when head teachers feel constrained to make curriculum choices for the sake of a perceived position in a potential performance table, students' interests are damaged in some way or other. Particularly at the lower-attaining end, where there is an especially high risk of disengagement if the choice isn't good, those students are going to be much more at risk of disengagement through the curriculum being distorted to meet this new metric. It is those students, who are most at risk of exclusion anyway, who will potentially become more likely to be NEET, in my view.

Q53 Chair: But surely schools will seek to maximise the percentage of their pupils who get the Baccalaureate? The people who become NEET will, for the most part, never be considered by heads as being in the group likely to get the Baccalaureate, so they will not really be the focus of attention. Is it that

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the whole of the school curriculum for all pupils will be so distorted by the Baccalaureate that it will lead to completely inappropriate provision? Are schools not flexible enough to provide appropriate education? Surely the Secretary of State's idea is that there are those who, for the institution's interest, are shoved on to courses that the school knows they'll pass, when they could actually be challenged and brought up to doing more rigorous courses if the school put in enough effort and support? That is the Secretary of State's rationale for the Baccalaureate, as I read it. I still don't see how it leads to more NEETs.

Caroline Jordan: You're making a decision at 14 about which route they're going to go down—that's what you're saying. They can either go down the English Baccalaureate route or not. Suddenly all of their choices will be limited by that. It comes back to your question about a 14-to-19 advanced Baccalaureate, which you mentioned at the beginning and which has suddenly appeared. I worry that we are suddenly going to end up with an advanced Baccalaureate and we're going to have to do English and maths in it. Before we do that, we need to make sure that we take on the views of the head teachers, among many others.

Hugh O'Neill: I think I would also bring the question back to the concept of equivalence. I return to the point that I am wary of the idea that equivalence is an evil that needs to be stamped upon, or that people are getting too many qualifications. All that we know of assessment that has come out in the last 15 years suggests that if students cannot get a sense of achievement, their effort, involvement and engagement with education will go down. So the idea that there are easy courses that students must be stopped from getting because they provide a false picture is a route to increasing NEETs.

Chair: Alison Wolf said that 350,000 young people were shoved on the course to give them a sense of achievement. Great—the school does well, ticks the box for performance and they end up unable to get anywhere. They cannot get a job and they cannot go

on to progress in education, which would suggest the exact opposite conclusion to the one that you have just given.

Hugh O'Neill: Possibly. If they had left without the qualification, I do not see how that would improve their lot. They may be more disappointed, I suppose, but I can't see how that has made their life chances worse.

Andrew Chubb: When I read the Wolf report, I was interested to see that an awful lot of the criticism appeared to be directed at training providers who were coming in and giving courses which did not lead anywhere. It was actually a lot less critical of schools than I was led to believe it was going to be. So you can't necessarily surmise that it is schools that are putting lots of students through courses that don't lead anywhere—it was particularly training providers.

Q54 Nic Dakin: I have had lots of correspondence from people about music. Do they protest too much, or will music be damaged by the EBac proposals?

Andrew Chubb: The evidence is that it is already being cut. In my own submission, 60 out of 95 schools polled by the National Association of Music Educators found that students were being discouraged from taking a music option for EBac. That was two thirds of that particular group of schools—not a particularly scientific study—but, no, I don't think they do protest too much.

Q55 Damian Hinds: Of the respondents?

Andrew Chubb: Yes.

Damian Hinds: To be clear, not even of the group of students polled but the respondents, who presumably are going to be the ones who are most motivated to talk about music?

Andrew Chubb: Yes.

Chair: It is always good to have evidence not only from such a distinguished panel but also from members of the Committee. Thank you for giving evidence to us today.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Professor Les Ebdon CBE**, Chair, Students, Quality and Participation Policy Network, Universities UK, and Vice Chancellor, University of Bedfordshire, **Chris Morecroft**, President, Association of Colleges, **David Bell**, Chief Corporate Development Officer, JC Bamford Excavators Ltd, and **Susan Anderson**, Director of Public Services and Skills, Confederation of British Industry, gave evidence.

Q56 Chair: Good afternoon. Thank you all for joining us today to discuss the English Baccalaureate. I will start with a question for Chris and the others may or may not want to come in on this one.

Will the English Baccalaureate contribute to an increase or a decrease in the number of young people who end up NEET—not in education, employment or training—or is it largely an irrelevance to the people in that group?

Chris Morecroft: Talking on behalf of the Association of Colleges, which includes sixth-form colleges and general further education colleges and some specialist colleges in England, the general consensus is that it may have some impact on driving up the numbers of

NEET young people. That is purely around the number of people who are not engaged in the subjects that are deemed to be appropriate for an English Baccalaureate. Therefore those who may have their eyes set on a career as an apprentice or as a painter and decorator or in construction would not see the relevance. To start that range of qualifications therefore in English Baccalaureate as a compulsory element of their programme would be seen as an irrelevance and they would drift away and increase truancy. That is not the case for all young people but we would expect to see a marginal increase in the NEETs.

Chair: Susan, have you any thoughts on that?

Susan Anderson: From a business perspective, EBac is an unknown quantity at the moment. We see it as a useful wrapper, not as a new qualification.

We are busy consulting our members at the moment. We represent all businesses, large and small, and we are busy consulting them. I am giving you a provisional perspective. At the moment, the view we are getting from businesses is that to the extent that the EBac cements literacy and numeracy—English and maths—and to the extent that it requires the study of three separate sciences, leading to three separate GCSEs, there is a lot of value in it. Personally, off the cuff, I don't see why it would lead to any increase in the number of NEETs, but it depends what is included in the EBac. At the moment, our view is that that should be English, maths and three separate sciences, rather than the two separate sciences presently included.

The curriculum review is a separate exercise, and as part of that review we would certainly wish to see the use of IT, and the creativity that comes from studying subjects such as art, music and humanities. We would like to see them there as options, but when it comes to the core of what the EBac should do, to be frank, English, maths and three separate sciences would deliver a lot of delight to the business community. That doesn't quite answer your question, but it was a good opening statement.

Q57 Chair: One can always identify a problem and come up with an attempted solution to it, but one of our jobs is to try and work out the perverse or unforeseen consequences, possibly negative ones. Most of the time, hopefully, Government initiatives deliver vaguely in the direction intended, but it is about working out what was not intended but might ensue. David, any thoughts?

David Bell: Only that we struggle to get apprentices. I am principally okay with the English Baccalaureate, but I still think it's a bit too narrow and I would like to see a technical or an engineering element. We need high-level people to be apprentices. Since yesterday's meeting, we have 57 engineering vacancies. We could employ more people, but I don't think the English Baccalaureate will help us do that. Whether it will lead directly to more NEETs I would not know, but it doesn't help a manufacturing company in terms of the qualifications we are looking for to take people on.

Q58 Pat Glass: Do you think that the English Baccalaureate will be useful to you as employers as a measure against which to measure potential employees? Is it going to help you at all?

David Bell: Not me—I don't see it at all. We look at the subjects that people take. My point is that if this is what good looks like, I'm going to have fewer people doing the subjects that I want them to be doing. Hugh, I think, said that people are going to drop out of doing D and T and engineering courses because they are going to focus on this. That would be my issue. I don't have enough people today and I could have fewer in the future. But I don't think whether they've got the English Baccalaureate or not is going to matter. I'm looking at whether they have physics,

maths and English. I would like them to have some engineering qualification.

Susan Anderson: As would be expected, there is a great degree of agreement between us. This is not a new qualification, it is a wrapper that wraps up existing qualifications. We would expect students to have good literacy and numeracy as indicated by an A to C grade in English and maths. That is already there. We are concerned that too many pupils do double science, which is leading to fewer students going on to do A-level physics, chemistry or biology. That is why we are concerned about having only two separate sciences. Our concern is that schools would deliver chemistry and biology but not physics.

Chair: Sorry, but if you do two separate sciences you cannot pass two and qualify for the English Baccalaureate. It is a requirement of the Baccalaureate that you have to take all three separate sciences. It is a bit confusing because of double science and the rest, but you have to take all three and get two of them in order to fulfil requirements if you do separate sciences.

Susan Anderson: That will be great. The key thing for us is that more state schools are offering three separate sciences. At the moment, too many of them only offer double science, which is not a good preparation for A-level. To the extent to which it drives school behaviour—it should do if there are three separate sciences—we in business would think that is a good thing, because we do not think that enough schools are offering three separate sciences. Double science just isn't good enough. To the extent to which the well rounded pupil will also have a modern language, Greek and Hebrew are all very well, but we would like them to be able to converse in the BRIC countries. To the extent to which there are some good vocational qualifications particularly around engineering, or art and design, we think the well rounded student should be making some sensible choices around that. We think that will be covered through the curriculum review. We don't think there is a need to shoehorn so much into the EBac that, for example, you couldn't do the very good engineering vocational diploma.

Q59 Pat Glass: Would it be useful to employers to have an alternative technical baccalaureate; something that had three good sciences, ICT, engineering, business studies and that kind of thing?

Susan Anderson: I don't think we see the need. We already have a good suite of qualifications, and we have some good vocational qualifications now; I would say the engineering diploma was one of the better ones. We are not interested in having new qualifications. The EBac is a wrapper. We don't want a whole new set of qualifications. BTECs, for example, are good qualifications.

Q60 Chair: I think it is a technical wrapper that was being suggested. Can we go to Chris? I think the Association of Colleges is a proponent of this idea.

Chris Morecroft: Yes, we would like to see a technical baccalaureate, in the sense that we think it is more motivating for quite a number of individuals. There is a discussion to be had also in terms of what

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employers need. It is not just about the content of the curriculum; there is a great danger of teaching to the test and making sure you get the qualifications. There needs to be a debate on the content of any qualification. If you talk to the CBI, they often talk about the need for young people to have the right attitude; to get up in the morning; to be able to work in teams; and to know their place in an organisation. That debate is not here in the English Baccalaureate. There needs to be a discussion about how we assess young people within whatever qualifications they do to ensure they have the behaviours that are required for young people to operate effectively in the employers' market.

Q61 Charlotte Leslie: The debate about employability and employability skills always fascinates me. I wonder whether the panel sees employability and all those right attitudes—teamworking, discipline and all that—as something that gets taught primarily through the school environment and cultural expectations within the ethos of the school, which we always say is very important, or whether it is something they put on like add-ons on each subject in the curriculum. Is it culture or curriculum that teaches you how to do that?

David Bell: Certainly, at the JCB Academy, which I am not actually representing today, all of that will be built into the core curriculum. The children are working in teams; they have a team leader; they are team members; and they have different roles in those teams. We see that as essential to turning out young people who have employability skills.

Q62 Charlotte Leslie: It's a kind of culture that comes out of the school and covers everyone, whatever subject they are doing, that's within the school and the way it works.

Professor Ebdon: I think universities discovered years ago the importance of integrating employability skills into the curriculum. If you have it as an add-on, students ask the question, "Is it for me?" If it is among the lecturers, the professors and the teachers whom they respect, they will see it as an important part of what they have come to learn.

Susan Anderson: Can I just make a contribution on that? It is absolutely about integrating it into the schools. Part of the problem, though, is that the language that schools sometimes use is not employers' language. They talk about personal thinking and learning skills. If a young person, or indeed an older person, came along to a business and said, "I have personal thinking and learning skills," an employer would not be terribly impressed. If you say, "I am a good teamworker; I am a problem-solver; I have some business awareness,"—we are not asking for a qualification in it, but we are asking schools and indeed universities to be a bit savvy and give them the right language to use. Good schools are embedding teamworking and problem solving. You get it from the academic qualifications and you get it from the vocational qualifications. We are certainly not looking for new ones, but use employers' language.

David Bell: The TechBac is better than nothing, in my view. My only fear is this deep culture that we have

in this country that the EBac will be for the bright kids, and the TechBac will be for the less bright kids. We need bright engineers to solve the problems of the future. We have huge problems and we want the brightest kids doing those qualifications. That is my only fear, that it might be seen as second rate to the EBac. I would rather have a technical element in the EBac.

Chris Morecroft: I don't think the AOC would go against that. Essentially, we also believe that English, maths and science form the important core to the EBac. After that, there is great merit in defining the rigorous qualifications—vocational, technical and academic—that would apply to creating an EBac. It is important that we don't reject the importance of art and design, music, the arts, science and technology. They hold equal importance because they motivate young people.

Q63 Nic Dakin: I am hearing a lot of common ground about what the core should be, in terms of maths, English and science.

David Bell: And language.

Q64 Nic Dakin: So, we are saying we also want language in the core. I hadn't heard that before.

Susan Anderson: I think it should be part of the core curriculum. We should recognise that if you are setting this for a test for schools, given that they have not been funded and they are not staffed to deliver a modern language, we would have to accept that there will be competencies around teachers at the moment. It has disappeared from the core curriculum; it needs to be put back and then maybe added to the EBac.

Q65 Tessa Munt: I want you to explain what you meant about language. What does language mean to you?

David Bell: Language to me is a modern language. I do not see Latin and Greek. However, the BRIC country languages are important: Mandarin, Portuguese, Spanish. Clearly French and English are important subjects. From an employer's point of view, if I were employing somebody who had those languages, that would be a big tick in the box for me. If they had Latin and Greek it would probably be a big negative tick in the box.

Chris Morecroft: We would support that but we would also like to see rigorous but applied language. It could be business language for travel and tourism. It would not necessarily have to be rigorous GCSE French or German or Mandarin. It could be an applied language, and there are plenty of examples of that.

Q66 Damian Hinds: Don't they do a version of English that is not quite as hard in Germany and China?

Chris Morecroft: Yes, but it's useful.

Q67 Nic Dakin: You seem to be saying that the EBac is likely to produce fewer people to take on as apprentices.

David Bell: I think it will.

Q68 Nic Dakin: Can you explain why?

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David Bell: A school has a restricted budget. If this EBac gains legs and momentum, you will be thinking about where to put your students. There is a danger. It does not bother me in terms of the academy; we all score zero as well. I am not bothered about scoring zero. I am bothered about other schools changing their curriculum. We have heard the head teachers talking about changing curriculum. If they do that and subjects such as D&T and the engineering diploma—which is a superb qualification—are dropped and count for nothing, that worries me. We need engineers.

Q69 Nic Dakin: In your judgment, not good for engineering, not good for manufacturing.

David Bell: In my judgment, it is not good. It is more about what it says: what is good is good. Clearly if it is not there, I can only assume it is not good. Maybe that's narrow but that's how I see it.

Q70 Nic Dakin: We are interested in your evidence. I would like to move on to asking Les about university admissions. Parents and young people are obviously concerned about whether this will become part of the template of university admissions. What is your view?

Professor Ebdon: Universities welcome a broad qualification at this level. They really see this—in the expression that has been used—as a wrapper. It is an award not a qualification. Universities are nearly always going to look inside the wrapper for what is there. The component parts will be looked at. I know that parents and students have expressed some concern that universities might start to use the EBac without giving them a chance to make decisions ahead of time at school. The answer is, “No, we won't.” We appreciate the importance of not destroying opportunity for young people by retrospectively introducing a qualification. Each university makes its own autonomous decisions about admission, and universities will continue to look in the wrapper for the qualities they particularly want. If people are worried about that, there is something called the UCAS course profiles, and if they look there they can see exactly what qualifications—what GCSEs, what A-levels—particular universities prefer for particular courses. I would advise any worried parents to do that.

Q71 Nic Dakin: I'm a young person in year 8, so by the time I come to do my options next year the EBac will have its legs, won't it? My parents are keen for me to go to a Russell group university; would it be wisest to take an EBac choice to maximise my chances of going to one?

Professor Ebdon: It would be wisest to look at the course profiles on UCAS and see what those courses ask you to take. The Russell group, and indeed the 1994 group—the two most selecting university groups—have indicated that they won't particularly use the EBac qualification. They are very challenged to be more socially inclusive in their selection, and it may well be that many schools to which disadvantaged young people go are unable to offer the EBAC or to achieve as much in it as other schools.

Q72 Nic Dakin: One of the measures of their social inclusion, to please the Government, might be to take more people who haven't got the EBac is what you're suggesting.

Professor Ebdon: That's quite possible. In terms of a measure of the performance of schools, universities and the National Council for Educational Excellence have advocated a measure that looks at the progression of students into higher education. Why go for surrogates if we can measure the real thing?

Q73 Nic Dakin: Chris, what about at 16? Will EBac be helpful?

Chris Morecroft: We're not saying it's not a helpful guide, but essentially both sixth-form colleges and general further education colleges assess all young people who are leaving school, to determine what is the most appropriate programme for them. A good example is that I used to teach A-level sciences, and in my last school, Worcester college, we determined that anyone who wanted to do A-level physics who didn't have a B in maths at GCSE was probably going to struggle with it. It's a wrapper again, and you've got to go inside it. If you want to do A-level law, a better than grade C in English is probably required to do well, because of the use of language and the technicalities of language and so on. Although we're not completely dismissing it, the English Bac might not be sufficient to get into some sixth-form colleges. The colleges are so competitive in terms of people trying to get in that Cs across the board in an English Bac possibly wouldn't get you into some of them.

Q74 Nic Dakin: Are you saying that the English Bac is helpful or irrelevant? I'm trying to work out where you are on that.

Chris Morecroft: It's less relevant than doing individual benchmarking of young people when they come in to make sure that they're going for the right things.

Q75 Nic Dakin: So, back to independent advice and guidance, really.

Chris Morecroft: Yes.

Q76 Chair: A lot of criticism. The predecessor Committee in its report on testing and assessment looked at teaching to the test and at focusing on those on the C/D border. We've got a different border now, haven't we? We've got people whom schools will look at and think, “Can they get the EBac, or can't they?” The Government have suggested that that might become the key measure. They have said that for now they're not getting rid of the A to C measures, suggesting that they might in the future. If that is the key determinant of success as a head, isn't there a danger that schools will pour all their effort into those people and thus lose focus, and interest in the progression of others?

It is not a problem with our system that we're not good at educating our elite; it's the rest who we have historically been pretty poor at educating. Is there a risk that the English Baccalaureate will focus attention on those who need it least, and take it away from those

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who need it most? Susan, before you go—I know that you might have to go any minute.

Susan Anderson: I can stay.

It depends on the proportion of the time that the EBac takes up. Under our preferred option, EBac would probably take up just less than half the time, because it would be English, maths and three sciences. That would give students the time to do, for example, the engineering vocational diploma. So we don't see it as driving and that may be at the advanced level, or they may be getting the lower level. So we don't see it as an "either/or".

Q77 Chair: I think you are answering a slightly different question, Susan. I was not asking so much about the subject space, although that is a fascinating area. It is more about the pupils who schools will evaluate as having no chance whatsoever of getting the English Baccalaureate. Is there a risk that focus, attention, best staff and even resource might be concentrated on those pupils that will allow schools to reach the performance measure that makes them look good, and are taken away from those who historically we have been weakest at serving?

David Bell: It's a danger, isn't it? If there is a measure and that measure is going to be what your school is judged on, there is a danger. In business, we always say, "You get what you measure." If you measure certain things, that's what drives behaviour. If this is the measure, it is bound to drive behaviour. I cannot see why it won't.

Professor Ebdon: One assumes that it was introduced to drive behaviour—that that was the intention of introducing it. Therefore we shouldn't be surprised. One often talks about "unintended consequences." Perhaps these consequences are intended. One intended consequence is to broaden the base. I think that's a good thing. An unintended consequence is clearly to damage a number of subjects that are not included in the English Bac. We have heard evidence about applied sciences. I'm sure you had evidence earlier about religious studies, music, performing arts, the creative industries and design. Those subjects that are not included will feel in some ways devalued and indeed we will probably see fewer students advancing to university to study those subjects.

Q78 Chair: Yes. That's about the subject as opposed to the pupil. There are organisations, from the top, driving and focusing on things—we all know that. We have seen it in policy. In education, if you turn a spotlight—this Committee has historically turned the Government's spotlight—on a group of pupils and everybody starts looking at that group, magically it seems that their performance starts to improve. Will the EBac put the focus on exactly the wrong part of our education system and let down those who most need help? That's the kind of perverse consequence that I'm interested in.

Chris Morecroft: I will try to answer that. There is a danger, because league scores are always based on getting more pupils above the threshold, that you will concentrate on those who are at the threshold. However, if you want more people to study medicine, getting grade Cs at GCSE in sciences isn't good

enough; you've got to get Bs and As. So, you've got to make sure there is an equal concentration on young people to maximise their performance, because they will need those skills when they get to those higher levels. So there is a danger if schools concentrate a lot on trying to get more scores.

Q79 Craig Whittaker: We have had a plethora of things coming out. We have had the Wolf report about things such as apprenticeships and the Government have said that the 14 to 19 agenda will be transformed, with a massive investment in that area. We know that there will be a curriculum review. We have talked about university technical colleges. Shouldn't the English Baccalaureate then be taken in the context of the whole agenda rather than just being a single focus, which everybody seems to be doing?

Susan Anderson: I would say that they should absolutely be taken together. If we look at some of the things that are presently in the EBac, for example studying one humanity, it would be an adverse unintended consequence if we ended up with fewer students having the ability to do design and technology or one of the other more creative subjects, whether it is music, art or whatever. We would like students to do one creative option and you can get that through history and geography. However, we are saying that there is an irredeemable core that needs to be there—three sciences, English and maths. There are other things where there can be some options. We would put in a humanity; an art and design subject—design and technology is another option—and a modern language, which we think should probably be part of the compulsory core. This debate needs to take place as part of the curriculum review. As others have said, it would not be a good result if we end up with more students doing humanities and not doing, for example, the engineering diploma.

David Bell: My overall fear is how these things are perceived. If the UTCs and the technical side are perceived as they were before—if you passed your 11-plus you went to grammar school, if you didn't quite make it you might go to technical school and if you didn't make that, you went to secondary modern—that is an unintended consequence we really do have to be against.

Chris Morecroft: I am most concerned about EBac being part of the league table system. Schools should not be measured on the basis of the number of young people who get the EBac qualification. If we are going to measure schools at all, it is about progression on to appropriate programmes. That is how we should measure it. Some 15% to 20% of young people have learning difficulties, depending on which school you go to. How would you feel as a parent if you are basically written off because your kid is never going to be able to get an EBac? Those young people are just as important. It is a major achievement for Down's syndrome young people, with supported learning in the workplace, eventually to get employment. We should not go away from that. It is about progression. To put it simply, the number of NEETs that your school has not allowed to happen would be a better measure of how successful the

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education system is. It is not about how many get the EBac.

Chair: That's my favourite crude proxy for a successful education system. It shows that it is not doing as well as it should.

Q80 Damian Hinds: A number of times this Committee has tried to address the question of how you ensure that you measure the progress of every child, rather than just any particular subset. David, you mentioned a moment ago the old maxim, "What gets measured gets done." In business terms, you will recognise that when you focus on one particular key performance indicator, others tend to suffer. If you go for sales, your profit margins drop; if you then say, "We need to work on the average profit margin," you'll abandon potential profitable markets. If you say, "I want to bring the sales forward," quality will start to suffer and you won't invest enough in training and so on. That is why businesses came up with the idea of a balanced scorecard so that you measure people on the lead indicator of their performance tempered by making sure that other things are moving along nicely, too.

I wonder whether so much of the debate that we have had today, with both this panel and the earlier panel, is really a product of focusing and whether the overall plan is for the system to do the same—to focus on one measure. If you had a suite of measures, as Alison Wolf recommends, part of which is traditional, straightforward GCSE results and part of which is this English Baccalaureate, we could measure how many children are doing what most of us would recognise as an academic core. We could also ensure that the bottom quintile are being progressed, challenged and pushed, as well as those at the very top. If a child's EBac was effectively in the bag at age 11, you still want that school to be pushing and pushing that kid to do the best they can do. Is the answer to have a range of measures?

David Bell: It could be, as long as there is not the perception, "This is the elite measure, and these others are not as good." That to me is the danger. If you have a range, very quickly people will think, "That's the one that counts." That is why I am with Susan. For most of us here maths, English and sciences are key for the future. I think a language is quite helpful for the future. It is just whether underneath we can have a bit more choice, rather than this very restrictive system. Humanities has just three subjects. There are languages and there are also some surprising subjects in there from my point of view. If it could be broadened out, I think we would have general consensus.

We all want children to come out with proper qualifications that have rigour. I have been the victim at work of the so-called level 2 qualifications provided by training providers. They're a load of rubbish. We know they're not level 2. I want some proper qualifications that have rigour, but I am worried that we'll have an elitist old grammar school type qualification and then some others that are seen as lesser qualifications.

I'll come back to it. At JCB we have to design engines that meet tier 5 and we have to design hybrid

transmissions. We have to design challenging things for the future, and we need people with skills. Right now we have 57 vacancies. We are looking at putting programmes—honestly—in India and China, because what is the point of doing a programme here if we can't get engineers? That is a real issue today. Yesterday's debate was, "Can we do these programmes?" Can we do them?

Q81 Chair: We conduct inquiries, take evidence—written and oral—and then write reports, with recommendations for the Government. I always ask my witnesses—normally earlier in the meeting than this—to bear that in mind and to help us with recommendations and messages that we should be giving to the Government.

The key question is, will the English Baccalaureate help or hinder our education system, and will it ensure that, as Damian rightly and often says, we focus on metrics so that we value every child's progress throughout the system? Just to finish—is it a good thing or a bad thing?

Professor Ebdon: I don't think it will contribute very much, other than it is yet another initiative that education has to chase after. It has a confusing name, because it is a level 2 qualification, at GCSE level, whereas the other Baccalaureates—we have a Welsh Baccalaureate, a Scottish Baccalaureate, a European Baccalaureate and an International Baccalaureate—are all at level 3, which is the same level as A-levels. It is very confusing, if not dumbing down, to have an English Baccalaureate at a level below everybody else.

Q82 Chair: It's dumbed down. Is it a gimmick?

Professor Ebdon: It has some sense of that. It is of little value to universities, because we will look—

Q83 Chair: I can't quote you in our report if you don't let me put words in your mouth. Sorry—carry on.

Professor Ebdon: Universities will look in the box. You can put as shiny a box around people's GCSEs as you like, but we will open the box and see what's inside.

Chris Morecroft: While we don't think it's massively damaging, we don't think it's hugely helpful. Again, we will look in the box. It's important that all young people at 16 are given the proper opportunities for progression—progression into colleges or sixth-form colleges, or staying on in a school sixth form. Whatever is appropriate and right for them is the important thing. There's a danger that the wrapper may take the focus off. Again, employers—"You've got the wrapper; therefore you must be okay"—have got to look inside the wrapper, too. So, I am not sure how useful the wrapper is.

David Bell: I think it is potentially damaging for the needs of rebalancing the economy, if we value engineering and manufacturing.

Susan Anderson: From a business perspective, we care about outcomes. At the moment, we are not getting enough young people getting to good standards of English and maths, which is A to C. We have another cohort that does not even get to literacy

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and numeracy, so we need to teach it and we need to give it a qualification. Too often, if people haven't got a GCSE in English and maths they are regarded as a failure, so we need to teach them literacy and numeracy.

If this were to lead to more schools studying three separate sciences at GCSE, we think that would be a good outcome. Not enough schools are delivering three separate sciences at GCSE; if this leads to that, it would be a good thing. We are not convinced it needs to cover quite as many subjects as it does at present.

Q84 Chair: But you are a businesswoman, Susan. If your key measure was delivering the English Baccalaureate, would you devote your best resources and greatest focus to trying to get those kids, who are in that cohort of not having numeracy and literacy, up

to that level, even though you knew they were not going to contribute to your key measure, which is the Baccalaureate? Or would you focus on those who could help you increase your percentage for the Baccalaureate? In other words, could this have the perverse outcome of doing the exact opposite of what you most want, which is to give basic skills to those at risk of leaving 11 years of full-time education—for now—without them?

Susan Anderson: We have just over 50% of students currently achieving five good GCSEs including English and maths. That is an unacceptable situation for the UK. We are an advanced economy. If the Baccalaureate delivers more students who achieve a good GCSE in English, maths and three separate sciences, that would be a good result.

Chair: Thank you very much to all four of you for giving evidence to us today.

Wednesday 27 April 2011

Members present:

Mr Graham Stuart (Chair)

Neil Carmichael
Nic Dakin
Damian Hinds

Ian Mearns
Tessa Munt
Craig Whittaker

Examination of Witness

Witness: **Mr Nick Gibb MP**, Minister of State, Department for Education, gave evidence.

Q85 Chair: Good morning, Minister. Thank you very much for joining us today to discuss the English Baccalaureate. We have just heard from Professor Wolf, in her evidence, that if you put too much emphasis on one measure, whether in business or, indeed, in education, that leads to gross distortions. What are your plans for accountability measures in education, and why should we believe that the English Baccalaureate will not lead to another set of distortions to add to the previous ones that our system has enjoyed?

Mr Gibb: The purpose of the English Baccalaureate is to try to remedy some of the perverse incentives that have existed in our performance tables. It's not an accountability measure. That remains five or more GCSEs, including English and maths. The long-term objective of the Government is to publish as many data as possible, to create greater transparency and to enable parents and other users of those data to find out what they want to find out about the performance of schools. So this is just one measure among many that we envisage for the future.

Q86 Chair: May I gently say to you that I don't see how it's credible to say that it's not an accountability measure?

Mr Gibb: The issue in terms of the floor standards that we look at when judging whether a school is a cause for concern will remain 35% achieving five or more GCSEs, including English and maths. There will be no intervention measures from Government for schools that are achieving a low percentage in terms of the English Baccalaureate. This is a measure to give information to parents, and it's for parents to judge a school on that. If other organisations—the Royal Society of Chemistry or the Institute of Physics—want to draw up their own list based on the data provided by the Department for five or more GCSEs including physics or chemistry, they can do so.

Q87 Chair: Doesn't that suggest a certain naivety about the way the education system works? Since this was announced, head teachers have given evidence to us in public, as well as people speaking privately, about deconstructing their existing curriculum. Someone who gave evidence said that they did split, short-course geography and history and that worked really well, with people going on to do A-level history or geography and getting really good results—it appeared to do no harm to their long-term prospects—but they're dismantling it at that school simply

because without that dismantling, their pupils will get zero in the English Baccalaureate. It feels like an accountability measure. It looks like an accountability measure. I think it quacks like one as well.

Mr Gibb: This is a slightly different issue. This is how schools react to the fact that we are publishing a set of data. Obviously, schools have a concern about how parents will react to that. We believe, generally, that a greater proportion than 15.6% of young people are capable of and would benefit from taking the English Baccalaureate subjects, and it worries us that there is a skew away from taking these subjects for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds. One of the overarching and overriding objectives of the Government is to close the attainment gap between those from poor and wealthier backgrounds. If you look at the free school-meals figure, only 8% of children who qualify for free school meals are entered for the English Baccalaureate, and 4% of pupils who qualify for free school meals achieve it. This compares with an entry figure of 24% for pupils who do not qualify for free school meals, of whom 17% achieve it. That is a worry. There are very able children who are being dissuaded from taking, for whatever reason, or not being offered the opportunity to take this core of academic subjects to GCSE because they happen to go to a school in a disadvantaged area, and that is a concern.

Q88 Chair: But can I just question your logic there? Would you expect, in the fullness of time, a higher percentage of people to qualify to get the English Baccalaureate than currently get five good GCSEs? Do you expect it to be a lower or a higher percentage?

Mr Gibb: We are not going to set a target figure.

Chair: I'm not looking for a target, I'm just asking for your assessment.

Mr Gibb: Our assessment is that a higher proportion than the 15.6% that achieved it in 2010 are capable of and would benefit from taking and being entered for the English Baccalaureate. If you just look at the figures of schools, if you take the whole cohort of those schools that have no children qualifying for free school meals, 56% of pupils attending those schools achieve the bac. Two thirds of pupils at those schools were entered for the bac. If you take schools where between 1% and 5% of the pupils qualify for free school meals, 36% were entered for the English Baccalaureate and 26% achieved it. Now, if you go down to 46%, to 50% of pupils qualifying for free school meals in a school, of that only 5% were entered for the English Baccalaureate and only 2% achieved

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it. That is the worry and I don't believe that in those schools, with that proportion of free school meals, there aren't a significant number of children who ought to have been offered and entered for those subjects that lead to progression. If you then ask why the obsession these subjects, it is because they lead to progression to A-level and to further and higher education.

Q89 Chair: I entirely understand the objective. I agree with the objective, I just don't understand the means. I don't think you have thought it through fully, because the children on free school meals will very often—a great number of them, in any school—be seen as unlikely to achieve the English Baccalaureate. So, if it is seen as a key driver for the school to meet the target it might set itself for the English Baccalaureate, it is going to remove attention from and support to the progression of those people because they haven't got a cat in hell's chance of getting the English Bac. So, could it not have precisely the opposite outcome to the one you hoped for and intend; that is, it would lead to less support for and less focus on the lower-achieving, because they are never going to get the English Bac?

Mr Gibb: No, because this is not a compulsory set of qualifications. It is compulsory to study all these subjects to the age of 14—to the end of key stage 3. Of the English Baccalaureate subjects, English, maths and science are compulsory to 16. So, we are only talking about history, geography and a modern language for two years. If the school feels that it is not appropriate for those young people to be entered for those subjects, they should not be entered for those subjects. Our concern is that, in the past several years, children have been entered for subjects that are not appropriate for them. They have not been entered for those qualifications because that is in the best interests of the pupil—they have been entered for them because it is in the best interests of the league table position of the school. We have introduced this new measure to try to address that—to redress that.

Q90 Chair: But as a measure, schools will focus on getting people to pass who they fear might not. It will get people on the borderline, just as five good GCSEs gets you focusing on the C to D grade pupils. Surely the same will happen, except at a slightly higher achievement level, for those who can be brought up to meeting the bac?

Mr Gibb: I don't believe that it will, because this is one of many measures. We still have the five or more GCSEs figure, including English and maths.

Q91 Chair: For now. The Government have suggested that it is for now and that it might be replaced by the English Bac. Have you changed your mind on that?

Mr Gibb: Our long-term objective is to have more measures, not fewer, as we publish more and more data and as we produce league tables that are more sophisticated in terms of how they can be manipulated by the public and by interested parties. There will be more of these accountability measures, not fewer, in the future.

Q92 Chair: Do you have the English Baccalaureate, Minister?

Mr Gibb: I am so old that I have O-levels.

Chair: We'll take those as equivalents. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Gibb: Thank you. And I would qualify, yes. I hope so.

Chair: Excellent. Neither the Clerk nor I have the English Baccalaureate.

Q93 Ian Mearns: Good morning, Minister. You reeled off a range of statistics about those youngsters who were entered into the English Bac and those who got it and those who didn't. But since you introduced it retrospectively, do those statistics actually have any legitimacy really?

Mr Gibb: These subjects are entitlement subjects. We didn't say astrophysics was one of them. According to the 2006 Act, these are subjects to which all students are entitled to be taught if they wish to study them at GCSE. Most of them are actually compulsory and must be studied to the age of 16. And yet there are 175 secondary schools where no pupils were entered for all the English Bac subjects; there were 169 schools where there were no French entries, and there were 137 schools where no pupils were entered for geography.

You talked about the English Bac being retrospective. This isn't an accountability measure. So the five or more GCSEs will remain the measure that we look at in the Department for schools that are underperforming. In a way, this is a baseline and I anticipate that, as a consequence of an early announcement of this performance measure, we will see a rise in that percentage in the years ahead.

Q94 Ian Mearns: You say that it's not an accountability measure, but the fact that it is published in league table format automatically makes it such a measure in the eyes of the public, who are making judgments about which schools they want to send their children to. How can it not be an accountability measure?

Mr Gibb: I think that it will be an accountability measure in that sense, but if we had come up with a figure that had no resonance with parents then it would have no effect on parents. But this is a measure that we believe parents are interested in and the way that many schools have reacted to it confirms that view that it is something that parents are interested in. I think head teachers recognise that.

Q95 Ian Mearns: We are already seeing evidence that schools are trying to cram youngsters through history in just over a term, in order to qualify for the English Bac. Do you actually see that? If it's not an accountability measure, why are schools doing that?

Mr Gibb: They shouldn't be doing that. They shouldn't be changing subjects mid-way through a course. That is not in the interests of students and I think that it would be a minority of schools that are doing that. What we are trying to do here is to redress perverse incentives in the performance measures whereby students have been entered into subjects that are not in their best interests.

Q96 Ian Mearns: Given the power of hindsight, do you think that the retrospective introduction was wise? And do you think that the timing of the EBac introduction was wise, given that we have got a national curriculum review going on at the same time?

Mr Gibb: It was the right thing to announce it when we did, because there are some serious issues that we are trying to address. For example, modern foreign languages was one of our main drivers for doing this. In 2002, something like three quarters of the whole cohort took a modern foreign language to GCSE. Last year, that figure was 43%, and if you strip out the independent sector it is just above a third. That is a concern. Geography has fallen from 45% of students taking it in 1995 to 26% of students taking it in 2010. History is down from 39% to 31%. So we are trying to address some very real concerns and some schools will need to go out and recruit French teachers and other modern language teachers. The earlier that we can get this measure in the ether the better, so that schools can start to equip their staffing.

Q97 Ian Mearns: We heard from Alison Wolf this morning. In her report, she stated that “distinctive curricula and innovation are highly desirable and will be facilitated by the scaling back of the National Curriculum to which the government is committed.” Doesn’t the prescriptive nature of the EBac undermine that to a certain extent?

Mr Gibb: Again, it isn’t prescriptive. People had been saying for a while, “Why don’t you make modern languages compulsory? Why isn’t history compulsory to 16?” and that is something that we’ve asked the Curriculum Review to look at. It isn’t prescriptive in that sense, and the Curriculum Review is reducing prescription, particularly in how to teach. Even when you take into account the whole of the English Baccalaureate, it’s either six or seven GCSEs—seven if you have triple science, and six if it’s the double award science. There is plenty of scope beyond that to study other subjects, such as music, art, RE and vocational subjects, in addition to those core academic subjects.

Q98 Ian Mearns: A last one from me, Minister: in terms of the EBac and its introduction, what consultation took place and with whom?

Mr Gibb: We made it very clear before the election that we were concerned about perverse incentives in the league tables, and I was mooting a range of options, including taking the five or more GCSEs from a given range of GCSEs. We didn’t go down that route; we decided to go down the English Baccalaureate route. I think that we made it very plain before the election that we were minded to do something with the performance tables to remove the perverse incentives, but I repeat that the accountability measure remains the five or more GCSEs, and if we were to change that there would be much more consultation.

Q99 Ian Mearns: If the accountability measure remains the five GCSEs including English and maths, why do we then publish tables that include the English Bac? I just don’t understand that logic.

Mr Gibb: Because the tables include all kinds of measures anyway. Lord Adonis introduced the English and maths components, and he then introduced a science element as well, which is also one of our concerns, by the way, because if you look at the five or more GCSEs at A to C, including English, maths, science and a modern language, the figure fell from 27% in, I think, 2002, to 22% last year. While the GCSE figure has been going up, that figure has been falling. The league tables contain a number of columns with all kinds of different permutations, and what we’re saying is that we think this is a permutation that will interest parents, but we’re interested in other permutations that other interested bodies and parents might want.

Q100 Ian Mearns: The bottom line is that it depends on which ones the headline writers focus on; that’s where everyone takes accountability from, isn’t it, really?

Mr Gibb: Yes, I agree with you there, and that really will be what the perception is that parents are interested in.

Q101 Chair: Minister, I am confused. You said, “It’s not an accountability measure,” and now you’re saying that parents use it as an accountability measure. When Ofsted goes in, is it going to be issued with a special plaque to put over the page so that it doesn’t look at it? Will there be special league tables for Ofsted officers, who will be instructed not to look where parents might look just in case they walk in and start using this as an accountability measure?

Mr Gibb: We want Ofsted to have a lot more focus on what’s happening in the classroom and in the school, although it will look at the attainment achievements of schools. We want them to move away from desktop inspections, and to look at what’s actually happening in the classroom, but they will be interested in what the parents think of the school, and I’m sure that they’ll look at the English Baccalaureate figures as well as at the five or more GCSE figures.

Q102 Chair: So if you were that head who came before us who had the split mini-courses in history and geography that I didn’t even know about—that shows my ignorance—which were leading to great results at A-level, would you have just carried on? Would you have stuck to getting 0% of your pupils under that measure, and have gone, on that particular measure, from being one of the highest-performing schools in the county to the lowest-scoring one on this new Government measure of the English Baccalaureate? Is that what you’d have done? Would you have stuck to your guns?

Mr Gibb: No, I’m sure I wouldn’t have. I’m sure that for the year 9 options I would be encouraging the students to take a full GCSE in history or geography. We will look at the 2011 league tables, and we are listening to people and to their concerns, and we will address the issue of the half-GCSE—the short-course GCSE in geography and history—to assess whether it should count towards the English Baccalaureate. We’ll keep these issues under review, but if I was that head teacher I would want a range of options that were in

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the best interests of my students. If I thought that that was in the best interests of the students, I would retain it, and if I thought that the full GCSE in history and geography or both—

Q103 Chair: Sorry, I thought you just said that you wouldn't retain it. I thought you said that you'd put them in for the full course. Which is it? Would you retain it or not?

Mr Gibb: I would do what was in the interests of my students. If I took the view that the full GCSE was in the interests of my students, I would enter them for it, and that would then achieve the English Baccalaureate. If I were absolutely determined that the half, short-course GCSEs were in the best interests of pupils, I would stick with them.

Q104 Chair: But you also have the interests of the institution, and if you are perceived by parents to be a lousy school because you get such low results in the English Baccalaureate, which apparently is the core entitlement for every child and it's a disgrace that so few are getting it, then you could put at risk the institutional interest and the opportunities that your institution provides for people—the income. Surely you're painting a very confused picture.

Mr Gibb: You alight on a detail of what is in the humanities element of the English Baccalaureate, and we will look at whether we ought to include the half-course for the 2011 tables. Generally speaking, I think that it is right for schools to encourage a greater proportion of their students to study the English Baccalaureate range of subjects because they lead to progression, and too few pupils take that range, particularly those from poorer backgrounds.

Q105 Damian Hinds: I was keen to follow up the point about the suite of measures that exist, and there are a lot of them. There is the five-plus C-plus, with maths, English, a foreign language and so on; uncapped scores and contextual value-added; and, more recently, the English Baccalaureate, of course. In the report on the strategy on social mobility, there is talk about a focus on the "basics qualifications"—I am not fully clear about what they are. We also, quite rightly, talk about tracking the progress of the most disadvantaged pupils. Our Select Committee report that came out a couple of weeks ago recommended that all Ofsted reports have a particular focus on all the different quintiles of achievement. That is a lot of different measures. I am sure you're right that, at the end of the day, whatever parents gravitate towards will be the most significant measure, but what can Government do to assist in getting through the mire of different measures to ensure that the things that the DFE particularly value—for example, the progress of the most disadvantaged children—come further up through the media lens?

Mr Gibb: We can help. The position of columns—which come where—and what we highlight in our comments on the performance tables when they come out in January and December can steer the media; there is no question about that. We are particularly interested in how those pupils who qualify for the Pupil Premium in one school compare with those in

another. That will be something that we highlight once the Pupil Premium is in place. You are right: we can influence what is focused on. A key thing that we are trying to do is increase the transparency. There are parents who will be interested in knowing which schools do well in modern languages—more interested in that than in science. We want to enable parents to find out that information.

Q106 Damian Hinds: It may go against the principle of granularity and allowing people to drill down, because you can have all that detail and not all parents will be equally equipped or interested in it to go into all of it. Alongside all the individual measures, have you considered some sort of blended measure—you wouldn't have it as a number, but perhaps a grouping or grade letter—that takes all the different measures and puts them together into something that is easily accessible, so I can see if a school is a top performer for all of its kids or less so?

Mr Gibb: That's something that the previous Government proposed with the report cards, and in opposition we were against them. We remain against them, because that approach can confuse things by being over-simplified. We saw a similar proposal in New York, and 80% of schools there were graded A. We need granularity—the detail—for those parents who want the information. Over time, other organisations will start to publish their own league tables of schools that do certain things. As I said earlier, the Institute of Physics might produce a science version that highlights those schools that are doing really well in the three sciences.

Q107 Nic Dakin: You have been honest and open in your answers today, but there is still some confusion. I would like to return to Ian's question about consultation. In answer to that, you said it was clear in the Conservative manifesto that this was the direction of travel, but of course the outcome of the election was uncertain, to say the least. The Government have been committed—rightly in my view—to a very localised approach for developing things, and to listening to people and opposing some of the centralising of the past, which hasn't always been beneficial. I want to check who you consulted before determining the outcome of where the English Bac would be, in terms of parents, the educational community and employers.

Mr Gibb: As I said, there was not a formal consultation process in coming up with this measure, because it is not an accountability measure. We looked very carefully within the Department at what its component parts should be. We made it very clear that it was for the 2010 league table—

Q108 Nic Dakin: So it's a top-down view of what the English Bac should be, without drawing on the expertise of the people out there at this point. I recognise that in your answers, you are saying that you're listening—perhaps two half-GCSEs could go together in the future—and that you're in listening mode, which is very welcome, but at the moment it is a top-down descriptor, which is both not accountable

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and accountable, as we have heard in our discussion today.

Mr Gibb: Yes. We made it clear that we want more information out there, and this is more information out there. It is not an accountability measure, in terms of determining what is an underperforming school and when intervention measures will take place. This is the first of many such measures that we want to put into the public domain. I do not see it as something requiring the formal consultation that you are talking about, but we wanted to make an early decision because the computer people and technicians wanted to be able to publish something in time. We took a decision based on careful analysis of what the component parts should be, bearing in mind that most of the English Baccalaureate subjects are already compulsory until the end of Key Stage 4. We really had to make decisions about modern foreign languages and the humanities. There will be much more data in the future.

Q109 Nic Dakin: Can we pick up on humanities? I suspect that all of us had a lot of correspondence related to religious studies not being an appropriate humanity in that respect.

Mr Gibb: I'm quite sure you've had 20 or 30 letters from me setting this out. Our concern with dropping geography and history is that 45% took geography in 1995 and that dropped to 26% in 2010. There was a trend there that saw no sign of changing until this announcement. The same was true of history: 39% down to 31%. However, religious studies rose from 16% in 1995 to 28% in 2010, and religious education is compulsory to the end of Key Stage 4, so pupils are already required to be taught and to study RE throughout their school career until the age of 16. Our concern was that if you included RS or RE as a component part of the humanities, some schools—and we thought it would be the schools that we were most concerned about, and that were already not offering the full range of history, geography and modern languages to their pupils—would use RS to tick the box for humanities.

Nic Dakin: Having religious studies as part of the compulsory Key Stage 4 curriculum, in order to tick that box quite correctly, is very different to delivering a GCSE in religious studies. It's a very different animal in curriculum terms, isn't it? You have given the standard answer, but it does not address that clear, key point, because religious studies as a GCSE, I would suggest, meets what you are saying about subjects that lead to progression, post-16. It is a very strong GCSE that leads to strong progression in the same way that geography and history do. Your answer does not really address that.

Mr Gibb: I agree with you. It's a very valuable subject, and nothing that we have announced about the EBac should lead anyone to believe that we don't believe that. It is a very valuable subject, and we want it to continue to be taught.

Q110 Nic Dakin: But not necessarily to GCSE?

Mr Gibb: And to be taught to GCSE. There is plenty of scope outside of the EBac subjects to continue with these subjects. We kept the EBac deliberately small—

six or seven GCSEs—in order to enable other subjects to continue beyond that as well. An element of curriculum time already has to be devoted to religious education—albeit a number of schools only enter youngsters for the short-course GCSE—so there is scope to continue the improvement of the increasing proportion taking the religious studies GCSE, even with the EBac.

Whenever you come up with these performance measures, you have to consider the unforeseen consequences. One of them, which we were trying to foresee, was whether including RS in the humanities might actually lead some schools that are already doing history and geography to drop it, because they could tick the box on the humanities with the religious education fulfilment. That was our worry, and that was why we didn't include it. It was because of a simple logistical worry about what would happen as a behavioural consequence of the EBac that we took the decision not to include RE.

Q111 Nic Dakin: The Church of England says that this will do so much damage to the subject that it is hard to see how it might recover. You're confident that it is wrong.

Mr Gibb: I think that it is wrong because, as I said, you already have to teach to RS in the curriculum, so some time is already allocated to it. There is nothing to prevent students from continuing to take the short-course GCSE or, indeed, more time being allocated to it and having students taking the full RE curriculum in addition to the EBac.

Q112 Nic Dakin: But we're likely to see the percentage doing RE at GCSE that was quoted earlier reduce as we go forward. That is in a sense an outcome that you've determined is probably the lesser of the evils.

Mr Gibb: I'm not sure that that is going to happen. It's very difficult to predict. The five or more GCSE figure is still important, and the religious studies GCSE still counts towards that figure, so we will have to see what happens. I hope that it doesn't happen. It is not our intention to see a reduction in the proportion taking religious education at GCSE.

Nic Dakin: But there are always unforeseen consequences, and this looks like a foreseen consequence.

Q113 Craig Whittaker: I don't particularly agree with the Church of England, because I think that it is being a little bit over-dramatic, but I also don't agree with the way in which schools pay lip service to religious studies in education at present. I don't think that the Government are recognising that either. In today's world, with the ways things are, I think that RS is more important than it ever was. What are the Government doing to recognise that and to make schools treat RS as a compulsory subject?

Mr Gibb: That's a different issue for a whole different discussion. The purpose of the EBac was not to address that issue, and I don't believe that anything that we have done with the EBac will damage the trend of increasing numbers taking RS, but I could be wrong.

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Chair: You're quite right, Minister, and we have so little time today that I am afraid that we must stick to the English Bac.

Q114 Ian Mearns: In an answer to a question from Nic, Minister, you referred to the English Bac as a performance measure, but it is not an accountability measure. I'm terribly sorry, but if it swims, if it flies, if it has feathers, if it quacks and if it eats bread in the park, then it's an accountability measure.

Mr Gibb: Yes, but there is no consequence. There are 175 secondary schools where no pupils at all were entered for the EBac but, in terms of the schools that the Department is monitoring and is concerned about, we are not looking at those 175 unless they also happen to be in the group that is achieving less than 35% getting five or more GCSEs, including English and maths. That's why there is a difference between a performance measure and an accountability measure.

Q115 Ian Mearns: Down the line, you just cannot see a scenario where Ofsted is making judgments of schools against the English Bac?

Mr Gibb: I'm sure Ofsted will look at a whole range of performance measures, and I am sure it will look at the English Baccalaureate as well as the five or more. It will look at how pupils are achieving in vocational subjects, music and art, sport and the whole range of the broad curriculum in a school.

Q116 Nic Dakin: This is an attempt by the Government to move the curriculum in a particular direction, which is a Government's prerogative, but it is a top-down attempt. When the Secretary of State spoke to Westminster Academy in September, he talked about humanities "like History or Geography, Art or Music." Why were art and music dropped?

Mr Gibb: The definition of a humanity in the 2006 Act—

Q117 Nic Dakin: I am just using the Secretary of State's words.

Mr Gibb: Sure. The definition of a humanity in the 2006 Act is geography and history. It just refers to those two. It is a difficult judgment call whether to include music and art as well, but what we did instead was to keep the Baccalaureate small so that there is plenty of time in the curriculum for students who have an interest in music or art to continue to study those subjects to GCSE. They are compulsory to the end of Key Stage 3.

Q118 Nic Dakin: There is an argument to make the Baccalaureate a little bit tighter, so that it is essentially maths, English and science. Tightening it to that extent would give the flexibility to head teachers, whom we trust, who are working with the communities they know and the students they know to deliver a curriculum that delivers for them.

Mr Gibb: Yes, that's why those subjects are compulsory to 16. Our worry was the fall in modern languages. A third of students in state schools taking a modern language is not acceptable in a modern world where Britain is a major global trader, so we are worried about that. We are also worried about the

year-on-year decline in history and geography, which are important subjects in terms of progression and keeping options open. Alison Wolf talked in her report about other countries in the developed world delaying specialisation and maintaining this study of core academic subjects through to 16. If you look at countries such as Singapore, France, Japan and Canada, they have exams that incorporate these core subjects: social studies as well as a modern language and English, maths and science.

Q119 Nic Dakin: So you would reject the suggestion from David Bell of JCB to include a technical subject in the English Bac for the very reason that that can be done outside it?

Mr Gibb: Yes. There is plenty of time in the curriculum—20% or 30%, or more time—after the English Baccalaureate to study a vocational subject, music and art, RE and so on.

Q120 Nic Dakin: But you fully understand the impact of this on curriculum planning and what will actually go on with those subjects such as music and art? They will tend to be squeezed as a result of this, because they will be competing in a smaller element of the curriculum for choice rather than the larger element in which they are currently competing for choice. The impact of this will be to the detriment of those subject areas and to the benefit of history, geography and modern languages. That is, in a sense, a choice that Government are saying is the right one for the country at the moment.

Mr Gibb: If you're saying that as a result of the English Baccalaureate more students will be studying a modern language, geography and history, of course something has to give on the other side. These are difficult choices that schools have always made and will to continue to have to make. Our concern is that students are spending too much time doing too many subjects that are from one category. If they are doing music, art and drama at the expense of a modern foreign language, we think that is not making the best for some students.

Again, the English Bac is not compulsory. If a head teacher or a teacher believes that it is not in the best interests of a student to study these subjects, they will not be required to do so, other than English, maths and science. We believe that too few pupils are being offered the opportunity to take these subjects, and we believe that that is particularly so in areas of disadvantage. As part of our overall objective of closing the attainment gap between wealthier and poorer children, this is a key component of that strategy.

Q121 Nic Dakin: One of the positive things about the English Bac is that it has opened up anew this large debate on what should be in that curriculum. How will you take consultation forward, given that this was announced with no consultation at all? It is a top-down view of Government, but you recognise reasonable concerns and issues are being raised. How do you see this being taken forward into the future, so that the English Bac can evolve into something that

both Government and people on the front line feel is of benefit to students?

Mr Gibb: We continue to listen. We have had meetings with people who have very strong views about certain subjects that they believe should be in the language component or should be in the humanities component. We will continue to do that between now and when we announce what will be in the 2011 tables before the summer recess.

Q122 Tessa Munt: I have two quick questions. First, there is evidence from the teaching profession to suggest that EBacc subjects may disengage those students who might be at a greater disadvantage—the group that traditionally would have had low attainment. Is that criticism fair?

Mr Gibb: If a teacher believes that encouraging or forcing a student to study geography or history or, indeed, French would result in their disengagement from their education in total then they should not enter those youngsters for those subjects. Again, it is not a compulsory set of subjects. We want teachers and schools to continue to do what is in the best interests of their students. We believe that the way the league tables have been constructed in the past has resulted in that very thing—students being entered into subjects that are not suitable for them. For example, the Sutton Trust says that a highly able student in a school in a disadvantaged area is 10 times more likely to be entered for a vocational subject than a highly able student in a school in a wealthy area. That can't be right. We should be entering students for the subjects that are in their best interests. That continues to be the case with the English Baccalaureate. If a teacher does believe that and if it is the case then they should not enter students into subjects that will disengage them from education.

Q123 Tessa Munt: The Committee heard evidence from universities, further education and employers that the EBacc might not help pupils to progress in education or employment as much as a broad mix of good GCSEs. What is the incentive for pupils to take the EBacc?

Mr Gibb: We are working on some form of certification at some point. If you talk to people like the Russell Group, they have implicitly been saying that they would regard those sort of subjects that are in the English Baccalaureate as the best preparation for going to a Russell Group university. That is the incentive.

Q124 Chair: But those sort of subjects—not those specific subjects.

Mr Gibb: Actually, those subjects. Don't forget, the English Baccalaureate is not a qualification. It is the underlying GCSEs that are the qualification. If the universities sector says—now more openly than before, which is welcome—that it believes that the best preparation for university is to keep the options open and to study this broad range of academic subjects then that is an incentive.

Q125 Tessa Munt: I accept what you are saying, but you are talking about those students who are going to

be heading for the Russell Group universities and have some recognition of what they are. I want to tie that back to those pupils who come from a disadvantaged area and who have traditionally ended up as NEET. How do we incentivise pupils to move themselves out of that and head for this? Where is the incentive for the pupil who doesn't have parents with high aspirations or whatever?

Mr Gibb: That's what we are trying to do. We are trying to encourage schools to encourage pupils if they believe it is in their best interests to study this wider range of subjects. It is about what Alison Wolf said in her report. It is about delaying specialisation until 16 and keeping options open as long as possible, so that people are not closing down opportunities post-16. There has been a tendency, because of the league tables, for some students to be entered into qualifications that close down those options. They are being entered for those qualifications solely because of the league table position of the school. It is trying to redress that perverse incentive that is part of the reasoning behind the English Baccalaureate. We want the school to provide the incentive.

Q126 Neil Carmichael: Can I ask two quick questions? First, is there not a risk that the English Baccalaureate might become the summit of most people's ambitions? Driving towards that is perhaps all they will do when they could have achieved more. Professor Wolf certainly hinted that was what she thought had already been happening with the five A* to C grades in certain schools.

My second question is, essentially, if schools are going to be focusing on the English Baccalaureate, will there not be prices to pay—for example, taking the focus off free school meal pupils? Will it be all about schools ensuring that they look good in the league tables, rather than delivering a more across-the-board education?

Mr Gibb: Those are good questions, which are continually on our mind. At some point, we also want to bring in a destinations table, on where youngsters are going when they leave the institution or the school, so that the schools focus on how we best equip the young person for the best that the young person can achieve.

It might be that the young person ought to be doing really high-quality vocational education—the Government value vocational qualifications, both pre and post-16, but we want to make sure that they are of a very high quality. That is why we asked Alison Wolf to look into that. She does not want an over-emphasis on vocational qualifications before the age of 16, but she thinks that there is a place for high-quality vocational qualifications for some pupils. We agree with that, and we will respond to Wolf more formally soon.

You are right. I don't think that youngsters should be put into the English Baccalaureate subjects if it is not in their interest. As I said earlier about the pupil premium, we want to have a performance measure that looks at how schools are performing in educating pupils who qualify for the pupil premium. We will have a column, or four, five, one or two—that is yet to be determined—to compare how schools perform.

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The pupil premium money, which is very significant, will help schools fund high-quality education for those pupils.

Mr Gibb: A performance measure, Chair.

Chair: Thank you for that clarification and for giving evidence to us today, Minister.

Q127 Chair: Will that be an accountability measure, or just a performance measure?

Written evidence

Written evidence submitted by J C Bamford Excavators

1. From the point of view of JCB, one of Britain's leading Manufacturers and Exporters, the content of the English Baccalaureate is both worrying and extremely disappointing.

2. The Coalition Government claims to be intent on "rebalancing the economy" and is extolling the value of Engineering and Manufacturing as academic disciplines that can play a leading role in our nation's response to the current financial crisis. As a result, Skills and Technical Vocational education are understandably high on the agenda of BIS and the Department for Work and Pensions, which raises the question:

How does this new standard align with this vision?

3. The English Baccalaureate has no technical element whatsoever. It will encourage schools to put their brighter children through the subjects covered by the Baccalaureate. It will therefore perpetuate the current misconception that subjects such as Engineering are second best, which in turn diminishes the future prospects of the manufacturing industry in this country.

4. JCB finds it extraordinarily difficult to find talented engineers. We are currently searching for 80 engineers to help with development programmes that will make significant improvements in machine efficiency and in doing so support a low carbon economy, which is very high on the BIS agenda. Such research, design and development is essential if we are to maintain our technical leadership over the low-cost emerging economies, lower the overall cost of machine ownership by reducing fuel consumption and meet the demanding challenges of climate change. Unfortunately, we will be left with little choice but to outsource this work to overseas locations if we cannot find the talent in the UK, which makes no business sense whatsoever when 11 of our 18 factories are located in Great Britain.

5. The most disappointing aspect of this is the apparent fundamental disconnect between this new standard for schools and the skills and education needs of Industry employers in the real economy. In Germany, Engineering is seen as a desirable career choice and Engineers are held in high regard, however in this country we appear to undermine their potential value in our society, and as a consequence, the gap between what employers actually need and the education that is provided by our schools is perpetuated. One can only conclude that, despite the current rhetoric in Government about rebalancing the economy, the deep changes in philosophy required to make this fundamental change happen are simply not understood.

6. It is therefore our view that this new standard is damaging to what 'good' looks like in terms of an educational standard, but more importantly, it is damaging to the long term future of the UK as a place where some of our most talented students aspire to be the Engineers and Technicians and become equipped to help solve some of the key challenges our national economy faces in the 21st Century.

7. Incidentally, as a result of this new standard, the widely acclaimed JCB Academy, which was created to inspire young people to build a career in Engineering and Business will score zero!

Written evidence submitted by Association of Colleges

SUMMARY

1. The Association of Colleges (AoC) represents and promotes the interests of Colleges and their students. Colleges provide a rich mix of academic and vocational education from basic skills to higher education degrees. AoC represents the 352 Colleges in England incorporated under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, including 94 Sixth Form Colleges and 258 Further Education Colleges.

2. Colleges play an important role in diversifying the education system, in providing a breadth of high-quality choices for young people and in preparing them for higher education and adult life. Colleges educate 831,000 young people aged 16 to 18, twice as many as schools.¹ This includes 187,000 young people taking A-levels and 644,000 young people aged 16 to 18 taking vocational courses.² Colleges also train approximately one third of the total 174,000 apprentices.³ In addition, they have a role in the education of those of compulsory school age, including 59,500 14 to 15 year olds taking part-time courses and 3,500 studying full-time.⁴ Thirty Colleges are now involved in sponsoring Academies, six as the main and sole sponsor.⁵ Colleges account for 38% of entrants to higher education.⁶

3. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Education Select Committee's inquiry into the English Baccalaureate. Colleges have an interest in the new measure of attainment because of its impact on the 63,000

¹ AoC analysis of Individual Learner Record (ILR) 2008–09; The Data Service analysis of Individual Learner Record Data 2008/09; DfE Statistical First Release—Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16–18 year olds in England.

² *ibid*

³ The Data Service analysis of ILR Data 2008–09.

⁴ 2009–10 Learner Responsive ILR dataset.

⁵ DfE list of open academies.

⁶ UCAS dataset of Applicants and Acceptances in England for 2009 entry.

under-16s studying at least part-time in College and because of its effect on the demand for courses for those aged over 16.

4. Colleges support a broad-based Baccalaureate model, which could accredit both academic and vocational qualifications, as well as wider personal and employability skills. Whilst we understand the rationale for the new English Baccalaureate, we are concerned that without a Technical Baccalaureate of equivalent worth it will undermine high quality vocational qualifications for 14–16 year-olds and focus students on a narrow range of academic subjects that will not be appropriate to all students.

5. We believe that young people should have a choice of rigorous and high quality academic and vocational subjects from the age of 14, and that they should be able to make an informed choice about which subjects to study based on independent objective advice related to their future educational and employment interests. The Education Bill makes some positive proposals with regards to careers advice but we have concerns that the new duties placed in schools may not be enforceable.

6. While the range of subjects in the English Baccalaureate may be right for some students, particularly those going on to study academic A-levels, a different range of subjects would be more appropriate for those keen to pursue apprenticeships and other vocational or practical options.

BACKGROUND

7. AoC has supported earlier proposals for Baccalaureate-style qualifications. We supported the recommendation of the 2004 Tomlinson Inquiry into 14–19 education that “achievement within 14–19 programmes should be certified by diplomas available at the first four levels of the National Qualifications Framework.” His proposal would have seen every young person accredited both for their work in specialist academic or vocational subjects and core learning, including functional and personal skills.⁷ We were part of the Nuffield Review of 14–19 Education and Training which supported the development of a more unified system of qualifications for young people, with a certificate similar to the Welsh Baccalaureate, where personal and employability skills are accredited alongside any mix of A levels, Diplomas and vocational qualifications.⁸ Colleges have also worked to develop Diplomas and a growing number offer the International Baccalaureate for 16–18 year-olds.

8. The English Baccalaureate was introduced into the January 2011 league tables as an indicator of GCSE achievement. In future years, students will receive a certificate if they meet its requirements which are a C grade or higher in English, Maths, Double Science, History or Geography, and a modern or ancient language. An aggregate figure for schools showed that 15.6% of students achieved this mix of subjects in 2010.⁹

THE PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THE E-BAC AND ITS VALUE AS A MEASURE OF PUPIL AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

9. The DfE argues that the English Baccalaureate will “encourage and facilitate a more rounded educational experience for all students.” In the White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*, the DfE also states that “schools will retain the freedom to innovate and offer the GCSEs, iGCSEs and other qualifications which best meet the needs of their pupils. Pupils will, of course, be able to achieve vocational qualifications alongside the English Baccalaureate.”¹⁰

10. The Education Secretary has said that the E-Bac is modelled on the system in countries like Singapore, where students take a similar range of O-levels. He has also cited the range of subjects expected in countries like Germany and the Netherlands.¹¹

11. However, evidence suggests that schools respond to signals given by Ministers through league tables, regardless of whether the measure is in the best interests of their students. In some cases, this can be argued to be beneficial. From the 2006 league tables, the main measure of GCSE achievement included English and Maths, leading schools to place more emphasis on attainment in those subjects. However, an earlier decision in 1997 to give some vocational qualifications the equivalent of 4 GCSE grades led some schools to focus on these subjects at the expense of subjects like English and Maths. It is clear that league tables drive behaviour in schools and we understand some have already changed their curriculum offer for September to meet the E-Bac requirements.

12. It is important therefore that the signals being sent through the league tables are the right ones for every student. While we understand that Ministers may wish to change the tariff for high quality vocational qualifications we believe that they should be given some accreditation in what may become the main measure of achievement in the league tables.

⁷ <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/documents/Final%20Report.pdf>

⁸ www.nuffieldfoundation.org/14-19review

⁹ <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000985/index.shtml>

¹⁰ “The Importance of Teaching” (DFE, 2010) pars 4.20–4.24.

¹¹ Speech to the Education World Forum, 13 January 2011 from DfE website

 THE CHOICE OF SUBJECTS INCLUDED IN THE E-BAC

13. In addition to English, Maths and Science, the only subjects to be accredited in the proposed E-Bac are History/Geography and languages. At present, there is no technical or vocational equivalent, nor is there any proposal to accredit other subjects.

14. While we support opportunities for more young people to study languages, history and geography through to age 16, we also know that for other students, their chance of accessing further education or apprenticeships is more likely to be enhanced with a different mix of subjects. We also recognise the need for rigorous vocational qualifications that have a strong practical element, and cater for those who prefer an applied learning style.

15. While there is some agreement that all students should study English, Maths and Science through to age 16, there is no consensus about the other subjects that should be studied. For example, many church schools argue that religious education should be regarded as a humanities subject in addition to history and geography.¹² Others have argued that art and computer science should be included, given their importance to creativity and innovation.¹³

16. Equally, Colleges are concerned that functional skills qualifications in English and Maths will not be accredited, nor will vocational science courses. Functional courses focus on the communication and writing skills of most value in the workplace, for example. There are also no plans to accredit practical language courses where young people could develop skills directly related to important industries such as tourism.

17. Many of the 63,000 14–16 year-olds studying full or part-time at College do so because of the opportunity it offers them to access vocational courses with practical hands-on facilities. Colleges help them to gain vocational qualifications that enable them either to go into further education or to gain apprenticeships and work-based training. This can lead directly to employment. This provision has been praised by Ofsted in the latest Annual Report.¹⁴

18. Requiring all students to take GCSE courses in humanities and languages would not allow sufficient time to teach practical and technical courses, and could increase their disaffection with mainstream education. It could also add to the growing number of young people not in education, employment or training.

19. The Association of Colleges believes that consideration should be given to introducing a “Technical Baccalaureate” of equal value to, and which could run alongside or within, the E-Bac. This might accredit achievements in English, Maths and Science (academic or applied) as well as from a menu of high quality technical, design and technology, ICT or computer science qualifications. The Government’s aim of encouraging more young people to become apprentices could be enhanced by the promotion of strong vocational qualifications through a Technical Bac, with the same league table status as the E-Bac.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE E-BAC FOR PUPILS, SCHOOLS AND EMPLOYERS

20. AoC recognises that it is important that students have qualifications that are worthwhile and properly recognised by employers and for progression into further and higher education. It is also important that qualifications are rigorous and that school and college accountability properly reflects their value.

21. The English Baccalaureate may benefit students who plan to pursue an academic degree course at university after studying A levels and it may be welcome as a useful indicator of academic achievement.

22. However, the range of subjects proposed will also limit opportunities for other students to gain further education. Vocational qualifications for 14–16 year-olds can encourage practically-oriented young people to continue learning beyond the age of 16 and to pursue further education or apprenticeships. This is of benefit to those who may otherwise be disaffected with school—especially where they can see a direct relationship with the world of work—and to those whose talents are more practical. A wider choice of subjects would benefit a wider range of students.

23. When considering how the E-Bacc might impact on post-16 options it is important to bear in mind what 16 year olds are doing currently:

16–18 YEAR OLDS IN ENGLAND, END 2009

	<i>16–18 numbers</i>	<i>%</i>
Further Education College	621,600	31
Sixth Form College	157,000	8
School Sixth Form	400,400	20
Academies and City Technology Colleges	23,000	1
Independent School	83,900	4
Higher education institution	178,200	9
Apprenticeship/E2E	118,300	6

¹² “RE teaching time slashed in English Bac scramble”, TES, 4 Feb 2011.

¹³ “Next Gen”, Nesta (2011).

¹⁴ HM Chief Inspector’s Annual Report, 2009–10, Paragraph 525.

	<i>16–18 numbers</i>	<i>%</i>
Other education and training	64,000	3
Employed	160,200	8
Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)	183,200	9
Total 16–18 population England	1,989,900	100

24. For schools and colleges, the E-Bac is likely to narrow the curriculum options for 14–16 year-olds. While it is right that young people wishing to study an academic higher education course are encouraged to do the right subjects at GCSE and A-levels, over 60% of young people do not go into higher education after school. By reducing vocational options, schools could see a significant group of young people disengaging from education and potentially dropping out where they don't see the relevance of the curriculum to their future work plans. This will be particularly important when England adopts participation in education or training through to age 18 from 2015.

25. While employers may welcome a broad indicator of academic achievement, there are likely to be concerns that the E-Bac does not accredit the sort of personal and employability skills, such as teamwork, project work, communication and time management, that they say are essential in the modern workplace. Equally, those that offer opportunities to young people often want practical skills and experience in addition to good English and Maths. This is not accredited by the E-Bac either.

INTERNATIONAL COMPARATORS OF THE E-BAC

26. The Secretary of State has compared the E-Bac with qualifications in other countries, including Singapore, Germany, the US and the Netherlands.¹⁵ However, in doing so, he has ignored the vocational and technical opportunities available to young people in other countries and opportunities within those countries for vocational education, often from the age of 15. Each system has evolved in different ways for historical reasons.

27. For example, around one in four South Korean students attends a vocational high school from the age of 15. While the proportion of such students has fallen in recent years, it remains a significant part of the education system, with nearly half a million students. The Ministry of Education says that “The government is striving to devise measures to develop and support vocational high schools and to expand their roles as industry has become very scientific and highly sophisticated.”¹⁶ Students in Singapore secondary schools have the option of a more academic or a more vocational curriculum. There is a common core, including English, Maths and their mother tongue, but those on the technical courses study more arts and design and computer and technical courses rather than humanities. They are examined in these subjects at N-level. In 2008, 26,722 out of 217,081 secondary students were enrolled on technical courses.¹⁷ Germany and France both have strong vocational routes from the age of 15—with technological and vocational *lycées* in France and many German Länder start students in vocational schools or *Berufshochschule* from age 15.¹⁸

28. We recognise the importance of international comparisons at a time of strong global competition. However, our competitiveness will depend as much on our capacity to innovate and develop technical ingenuity, while our economy particularly requires sufficient technicians and paraprofessionals, as well as graduates. It is important that the accountability framework recognises these diverse requirements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

29. We believe that the Government should consider an integrated 14–19 qualifications framework that accredits academic and vocational qualifications, as well as personal and employability skills.

30. The E-Bac may be a useful indicator of academic achievement for some students. However, as it is likely to become a significant league table indicator, it is important that there is a certificate of equal value to recognise the achievements of young people in technical and vocational subjects, alongside the core subjects. A technical baccalaureate should be introduced—which could include achievements in vocational qualifications—with schools credited for achievements in both the E-Bac and Technical Baccalaureate.

31. We also believe that the Government should look again at the range of subjects accredited in the E-Bac, in particular at art and design & technology, where students can develop their creativity and innovative side.

32. Opportunities for more young people to study full time at college from the age of 14 should be expanded, particularly for those pursuing vocational and technical courses.

33. Rigorous applied and practical alternatives to GCSEs should be properly accredited and given a tariff appropriate to their difficulty in the league tables. This includes applied courses in science and languages. We recognise that this may mean a lower tariff than has been the case until now. However, unless they are given

¹⁵ Speech to the Education World Forum.

¹⁶ Korean education ministry at <http://english.mest.go.kr/>

¹⁷ Singapore Ministry of Education; <http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/education-statistics-digest/files/esd-2009.pdf>

¹⁸ Eurydice reports on national education systems and policies at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php

status in the league tables, schools will reduce these options, increasing truancy and the number of young people not in education, employment or training.

21 March 2011

Written evidence submitted by St Benedict's Catholic School

1. The decision to publish E Bacc statistics without prior warning was unfortunate and unfair to all schools. There are enough targets for schools to try to meet without additional ones being introduced and then published simultaneously.

2. This school did particularly badly under the E Bacc methodology adopted by the DfE. We score 0% on the measure this year. We will again score 9% in 2011 and 2012, because the changes we have been forced to make to our curriculum, for no reason other than to meet the E Bacc requirement, do not come into effect until September 2011, and will not be visible in the Performance tables until that cohort of students completes examinations in 2013. We therefore face the humiliation of three years as a lowest performing school before we can remedy a situation of the Department's making.

3. In all other measures we are a top-performing school, with our 5A*-C pass rate at 69%, and other key measures all putting us near the top of our Local authority tables. The E Bacc measure is "showing up" a school that does not deserve this treatment.

4. Our score of 0% is extremely unusual, and probably unique for a high performing school. It is caused by our policy of requiring that all students who choose History and Geography options take both subjects—which we fit in by offering Short GCSE courses in History and Geography. These, you will know, are equivalent to Half GCSEs. Our reason for using this approach is that, rather like the Secretary of State, we strongly value both subjects, and by having all students do both, we keep alive an interest in both subjects through to A Level. Over many years, we have found that the Short courses offer an excellent introduction to further study. We have a very high average A Level grade in both subjects, and several students are currently studying History or Geography at university, one at Oxford.

5. About two thirds of every year group take the History/Geography Short courses, each obtaining roughly 75% pass rate. Our E Bacc score, had the Short courses have been counted, would have been above 30%.

6. My main point about the Short course issue is not to ask the DfE to reconsider counting them. We have assumed that this represents a move to devalue Short courses by the DfE, and have moved to full courses for Year 10 in 2011. My key point is that the counting methodology gives three years of misleading, potentially damaging statistics for this school, which has supported the very ethos of the E Bacc that the Secretary of State wishes to promote. I am, to say the least, highly disappointed that our predicament has not merited any response in over two months.

7. We are also victim to the Secretary of State's decision to exclude Religious Education from the E Bacc. As a Catholic school, we ensure that 100% of students take the subject at GCSE, and have a pass rate of about 75% each year. Our situation as a Faith school clearly means that we will continue to make RE a "core" examination subject. I am aware of several non-faith schools whose students take RE within the Humanities options. For those schools, RE will become an unsustainable choice. Students will be offered History or Geography instead.

8. In my several discussions with the Department on the E Bacc, I was troubled by the obvious gap between statements made by the Secretary of State and the reality being created. In particular, I was assured by a member of the DfE Civil Service that schools were free to choose the curriculum that suits their students. This has been a particular theme of the discussions around Academies and Free Schools. These are hollow words. If our schools are to be publically judged on the range of subjects that students pass examinations in, then any local flexibility is diminished. I and my team are convinced that the Short Course approach we adopted many years ago was a very successful and appropriate one for our students. We have now abandoned that approach, simply to get ourselves a respectable position on the League tables in 2013. We are entirely unconvinced that the full courses will have any beneficial effects on the students, at GCSE, at A level or beyond.

9. A further point to make is that all DfE indications of subject priorities have "knock-on" effects which may be unanticipated. Two years ago we were urged to offer Triple Science to all able students—three Science GCSEs instead of two. Which GCSE subjects were to be sacrificed to make room for more Science. Now, all able students are expected to choose a Modern Foreign language and History or Geography. What subjects should be dropped to make room for this? Design Technology and the Arts are showing the biggest falling away for our students in 2011. Was that the Secretary of State's wish or intention?

10. In summary, I have tried to emphasise these points:

- (a) The decision to publish the E Bacc measure without warning or consultation will leave most schools unable to significantly improve the figure until 2013, when the impact of revised option choices will first be felt. This school will have three successive 0% scores as a result.
- (b) The decision not to count pairs of Short courses is responsible for this school's 0% figure.

- (c) The decision to discount RE as a subject is arbitrary, and will have a significant impact on how widely this subject is taken at GCSE in future.
- (d) Creating the E Bacc does the opposite of freeing schools to develop curriculum solutions that suit their students. Curriculum design has become even more constrained by the need to get the maximum numbers taking Modern Languages and History and Geography at GCSE.
- (e) Other non-core subjects will struggle to find space in a crowded curriculum.

11. At this stage I believe it is very difficult to judge whether any employers or universities will set much store by E Bacc. The problem for schools is that we cannot afford to risk future students' life-chances by ignoring it. It would however seem fair that those groups are actively discouraged from using E Bacc as a means of selection for at least five years. Students having E Bacc upon leaving school in 2012 aged 18 will have it by happy coincidence. As I have shown, it will only be in 2015 that the first students leave our schools with a qualification which they had some means of seeking and working towards.

12. I cannot believe that any of us would wish to see our young people's futures decided arbitrarily by a qualification which they had no means of knowing about or securing.

21 March 2011

Written evidence submitted by Archbishop Sentamu Academy

ASA was launched as a sponsor academy in September 2008. After just two years of operation, we had achieved a 39% increase in the number of students achieving five good GCSE grades including English and Maths in comparison to the predecessor school, and standards are on target to rise much higher still this year. For the past two years, we have also been at the 4th centile nationally for overall student progress.

Our values "Aspire, Serve, Achieve" are expressed through insistence on the following principles:

- A traditional uniform worn correctly at all times.
- Courtesy, respect and good manners being shown to all people at all times.
- The highest expectations of student progress, underpinned by rigorous individual target-setting, tracking and intervention strategies.
- A highly personalised curriculum which allows students to play to their strengths.
- A highly focussed drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning, underpinned by exacting quality assurance processes and a highly personalised staff development programme.

THE PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THE E-BAC, THE CHOICE OF SUBJECTS INCLUDED, AND ITS VALUE AS A MEASURE OF PUPIL AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

As an academy, we welcome the Secretary of State's proposal that there should be a baccalaureate award in this country. Correctly designed, it could give schools and academies the opportunity to design curricula that are truly "world-class", drawing on the best of international practice and raising our expectations of all students. In short, a well-designed baccalaureate could give another "boost" to our efforts to improve our international competitiveness. We recognise just how important this is, and want to be supportive of such efforts.

However, in its current format, the E-Bac falls well-short of achieving these very worthwhile aims. There are many reasons for this:

- The choice of subjects is very restrictive—with the omission of the Arts, RE, and Design Technology being key examples.
- Consequently, the E-Bac restricts pupil choice. For example, in a Church of England or Catholic school, RE would be compulsory to GCSE level. To achieve the E-Bac in such a school, pupils would have to study two humanities, cutting down the time available for a more rounded set of options, which might include arts or technology subjects for example.
- The method of examination is very restrictive, with its insistence on GCSE. We agree with the Secretary of State that some vocational qualifications have been over-valued, and that this situation needs to be addressed. However, there are many rigorous vocational qualifications that students value, and find engaging, and we believe that these should also be included. An example of this would be vocational languages (either Business or NVQ languages)—demanding qualifications that would be of great use to students who wanted to use their languages in a business context.
- The range of areas covered is very restrictive. Other baccalaureates (see international comparators below) require, for example, extended projects, civic participation and enterprise skills to be a part of the award; our academy would want the same opportunities for our own young people.
- The E-Bac appears to re-establish the dichotomy of "knowledge versus skills", with a strong emphasis on valuing the former over the latter when in fact both are important. This is not likely to promote well-rounded, independent learners.

- As a consequence of the above factors, we believe that the baccalaureate is of no value whatsoever as a measure of pupil performance. Whilst the particular combination of subjects chosen would suit the needs of some students (probably a small minority), it would not suit the large majority. It is therefore not suited as a general measure of pupil performance.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE E-BAC FOR PUPILS, SCHOOLS AND EMPLOYERS

For the reasons given above, we would argue that “failure” to achieve the E-Bac is irrelevant—yet by creating a de-facto new metric, there is a very real danger that the majority of students in the country will be labelled exactly that. We understand that there is no requirement for students to follow an E-Bac, but this view is at best naive; already, schools across the country are altering their curricula for students in Year 11 just to meet what is widely perceived as a new target (a practice which the White Paper itself condemned when referring to schools who “ramped up” the number of vocational qualifications purely for league table purposes). The following examples illustrate this point:

In a survey by the National Association of Music Teachers, 60% of respondents said their departments had already been adversely affected by the EBac. Music teachers in 57 out of 95 schools said their schools plan to reduce opportunities to study music from this September.

The National Association of Teachers of Religious Education polled almost 800 schools and found that nearly one in three secondary schools are planning to cut time spent teaching RE as a result of the English Bac.

The National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD) polled over 100 teachers. Over 60% of art teachers told NSEAD they thought fewer pupils would start art GCSE courses this autumn because of the introduction of the English Bac. John Steers, general secretary of the society, said it felt as if the government had launched an “assault” on art and design. “Clearly the ministers don’t value the subjects... ..It is particularly strange because the creative industries employ so many British people.”

We would therefore argue that the E-Bac is bad for pupils, and bad for schools. Moreover, the Secretary of State should not underestimate the anger felt by headteachers that has been provoked by making it a retrospective measure, nor by the same token, the deep mistrust about its true purpose, no matter what its current stated purpose may be. Securing the good will of the professionals involved in delivering any government policy is crucial to that policy’s long-term success, and this has not been the case with the E-Bac hitherto.

Our extensive experience of working with employers brings no further comfort; time and again, we are told that this vital group of stakeholders value personal, team and enterprise skills, along with the ability to think for yourself, act on your own initiative, research problems and be creative problem-solvers. The E-Bac does not encourage these crucial competencies to be addressed and/or validated. As such, we feel that the E-Bac misses an important opportunity to improve our pupils’ employability skills—skills that are vital for our nation’s long-term economic prosperity.

INTERNATIONAL COMPARATORS FOR THE E-BAC

As an academy, we have discussed the issue of the E-Bac extensively with the Curriculum Foundation. This section has been produced by them, but I have re-produced it in full here as it also represents the views of ASA.

Making a like-for-like international comparison with the E-Bac is problematic. This is due to the lack of clarity about the purpose of the E-Bac. In different speeches the Secretary of State gives various reasons for its introduction. These include:

- to stop schools “gaming” league tables;
- to encourage more students to follow academic subjects;
- to ensure more students from poorer backgrounds have access to the best universities and “the most exciting careers”;
- to allow school-to-school comparison to inform parental choice’ and
- to “secure a school-leaving certificate which shares many of the virtues of the European baccalaureate approach”.

In its current form the E-Bac is no more than a new accountability measure based on a selection of a five “preferred” GCSE’s. It is certainly not a well-considered programme of learning in the usual sense of a baccalaureate.

COMPARISONS

For the purpose of the inquiry we feel that it is possible to compare the E-Bac in three ways:

- (a) As a programme of learning for 11–16 year olds—comparable with the International Baccalaureate Middle Years programme or a National Curriculum entitlement for secondary education in other countries.

- (b) As a programme of learning and associated suite of examinations that lead to an “over-arching” accreditation—such as The international Baccalaureate Diploma programme, The European Bac, The French Bac or the Welsh Bac.
- (c) As a public measure for school accountability.

AS A PROGRAMME OF LEARNING

Most programmes that use the term baccalaureate have been developed as carefully designed programmes of learning. For example, the IB middle years programme sets out its credentials as follows:

The IB Middle Years Programme, for students aged 11 to 16, provides a framework of academic challenge that encourages students to embrace and understand the connections between traditional subjects and the real world, and become critical and reflective thinkers.

The IB seeks to promote the “education of the whole person through an emphasis on intellectual, personal, emotional and social growth.” In addition to languages, mathematics, sciences, humanities it embraces the study of the arts, physical education and technology. Students also engage in a personal project and there is a community service component requiring action and reflection.

Many educationalists regard the IB as a well-conceived and balanced programme of learning. One that builds on the main traditions of learning while at the same time being futures orientated. Unlike the recent White Paper, the IB is not troubled by the mention of skills and attitudes. The IB encourages the study of individual subjects and transdisciplinary areas. It promotes inquiry as the leading pedagogical approach, focuses on developing the skills of learning and promotes civic participation.

By comparison the English Baccalaureate is deficient in many ways. By failing to embrace the arts, technology, RE and PE it does not have a similar breadth of learning. By focusing exclusively on a limited number of academic subjects it is questionable how well it will contribute to develop young peoples practical, personal, social and emotional growth. Having no equivalent to the personal project, civic participation or enterprise activities as components the E-Bac puts insufficient emphasis on applied learning.

We are of the view that the Secretary of State has fallen into the trap of perpetuating an unhelpful false dichotomy. The almost complete absence of the word “skills” in the white paper and the remit for the national curriculum review is testament to how entrenched such a position has become in the minds of education ministers.

Education should not be a battleground between two camps; knowledge versus skills, subjects versus multi-disciplinary projects, teacher-led versus student-initiated and academic versus vocational. These are false opposites that are not seen in the design of the IB, or for that matter, in the curricular of high performing jurisdictions such as Singapore, Finland and New Zealand.

The Singapore Curriculum places “Life Skills” at its centre, including cross-curricular work, community involvement and project work as important components. This is in addition to traditional domains such as languages, mathematics, science and technology, humanities and the arts. The Singapore Ministry describe their mission as:

“Our schools are striving to provide students with a holistic education, focused on both academic and non-academic areas. We want to give our students a broad range of experiences and help them make the most of their years together in school where they will interact with one another and form strong friendships for life. As they grow up, we want to provide them with the full opportunity to develop the skills and values that they will need for life. Besides judging our students’ performance through examinations, we are also looking at other and broader measures of how well they do in education.”

Ministry of Education, Singapore

The New Zealand Curriculum, in addition to the traditional domains of languages, the arts, health and PE, mathematics, science, social sciences and technology, lists the important skills of managing-self, relating to others and thinking skills as key competencies. The curriculum framework describes, community and participation and sustainability as important aspects of learning. The New Zealand curriculum framework embraces all aspects of learning:

“Young people who, in their school years, will continue to develop the values, knowledge, and competencies that will enable them to live full and satisfying lives”

New Zealand Ministry of Education

In Finland, in addition to the traditional domains, the curriculum framework includes important cross-curricular themes. These include growth as a person, media skills and communication, citizenship and entrepreneurship and responsibility for the environment, well-being and a sustainable future. These are seen as important aspects of their curriculum. The curriculum framework states “cross curricular themes represent central emphases of the educational and teaching work.”

The Finns describe ‘the conception of learning’ as ‘an individual and communal process of building knowledge and skills.’ They recognize the importance of learning to learn saying ‘in addition to new knowledge and skills, both learning and work habits are to be learned that will serve as tools of lifelong learning”.

Mr Gove appears keen to compare learning in England with that in other high performing jurisdictions. However, the evidence he chooses to support his ideas is often partial and selective. Well designed baccalaureates and curricula from high performing jurisdictions such as Singapore, Finland, and New Zealand recognize the importance of breadth and balance and the importance of developing skills and attitudes as well as knowledge and understanding. The idea that these goals are in some way at odds with each other is untenable.

The introduction to the current curriculum review states “The Government believes... ..the inclusion of skills development and the promotion of generic dispositions, have distorted the core function of the National Curriculum.” The foundation sees such a view as unfounded. Such an analysis does not reflect the curriculum priorities of high performing countries. We believe that such a view does a serious disservice to young people and their parents.

AS AN OVERARCHING QUALIFICATION

The second international comparison that might be made when evaluating the E-Bac is as an “over-arching” or “modular” qualification.

In this case the E-Bac might be compared to the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, the French Baccalaureate, The Welsh Baccalaureate or the European Baccalaureate.

However, it should be noted that these awards are not designed as ‘school leaving certificates’ for 16 year olds or as school accountability measures. They have been designed as learning pathways and qualifications for university entrance and life beyond school. (16–19)

The IB diploma programme, for example, is designed for 16–19 year olds. Over the course of the two-year programme, students study six subjects chosen from the six subject groups from the major domains, including the arts. Choice and breadth of study are the touchstone.

For example in the humanities strand students can choose from:

- business and management;
- economics;
- geography;
- history;
- information technology in a global society;
- philosophy;
- psychology; and
- social and cultural anthropology.

In the arts strand students can choose from

- film;
- music;
- theatre;
- visual arts; and
- dance (from 2011).

In the second language strand there are three options available to accommodate students with different backgrounds:

- Language courses for beginners (that is, students who have no previous experience of learning the language they have chosen).
- Language courses for students who have had some previous experience of learning the language.
- Language courses are designed for students who have a high level of competence in the language they have chosen.

In addition to the traditional programme there are three core requirements that are included to broaden the educational experience and challenge students to apply their knowledge and understanding. They include:

- Creativity, action, and service require that students actively learn from the experience of doing real tasks beyond the classroom.
- Theory of knowledge is a course designed to encourage each student to critically examine different ways of knowing (perception, emotion, language and reason) and different kinds of knowledge (scientific, artistic, mathematical and historical).
- The extended essay is a requirement for students to engage in independent research.

Awards are gained through a mix of external and internal assessments and include a variety of methods including essays and short response questions as well as oral work, field-work and performances. The highest total that a Diploma Programme student can be awarded is 45 points. The diploma is awarded to students who gain at least 24 points, subject to certain minimum levels of performance across the whole diploma and to satisfactory participation in creativity, action and service. Generally about 80% of Diploma Programme students are awarded the diploma each examination session.

With a pass rate of about 80% the International Bac is recognised by universities in nearly 140 countries with some 120,000 Diploma Programme graduates entering university each year. As a qualification for 16 year olds the E-Bac has no currency, and is so narrowly conceived that only 15.6% of pupils achieved what Mr Gove would call a pass this year.

In our view, as an over-arching qualification, the E-Bac is found seriously wanting. It is too narrow in its scope, fails to include the arts or technology, and over-emphasises one aspect of learning. It makes no attempt to connect learning to important aspects of education such as civic participation or student autonomy. It has not been piloted or undergone any of the tests that would be required of a genuinely credible qualification.

Similar observations about the E-Bac could also be made when comparing it to the French, Welsh and European baccalaureates. Young people in England deserve access to a baccalaureate that compares favourably to those on offer elsewhere.

AS A MEASURE FOR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

Generally baccalaureates are not used as an additional metric for school accountability.

Once again if we compare top performing jurisdictions with England it is worth noting that neither Finland or New Zealand use the narrow metric of tests and exams to construct school v school leagues tables.

Finland, in particular, have eschewed the accountability movement in education that assumes that regular high-stakes testing and performance tables is the key to raising student achievement. The only standardised, high-stakes assessment occurs at the end of general upper secondary school, before students enter tertiary education. Before this no external tests are imposed on Finnish classrooms.

“The purpose of schooling remains focused on holistic development of personality including knowledge, skills, values, creativity, and interpersonal characteristics. Schools are places for learning and caring, where learning comes before testing; achievement is defined in relation to one’s own development and growth, rather than in relation to universal standards.”

Pasi Sahlberg, PhD

A short history of educational reform in Finland

In Singapore, qualifications do form part of the public accountability framework. The Ministry has been providing information on the performance of secondary schools since 1992. The School Achievement Tables replaced ranking lists in 2004 and are intended to provide a more holistic view of the performance of schools with the focus on both academic and non academic subjects. MOE does not rank primary schools.

In addition Singapore have introduced a “Teach Less, Learn More” project which focuses on developing learning skills to counter some of the negative consequences of teachers focusing excessively on test results and qualifications.

It is worth noting that it is countries, such as the UK and USA, that have chosen to use league tables in a public way, that have seen their PISA standing fall over recent years.

Current research (Watkins, C (2010) “Learning, Performance and Improvement”) indicates that a narrow focus on testing and qualifications leads to a narrowing of the curriculum. This focuses student attention on practice and performance in tests rather than on deepening understanding and developing learning skills. Over time, this not only damages students’ appetite for learning but also depresses the results they achieve in tests. Alternatively, if Ministers are not convinced by current research they might like to take a lesson from history.

“...we hold that in several important respects the influence of the examination and the process of preparation for it are inimical at present to the healthy growth in mind and body of a large number of children who pass through the Grammar School.”

“This examination (The School Certificate) now largely determines the curriculum for pupils under the age of 16”

Extracts from the The Spens Report (1938)

Secondary Education with Special Reference to Grammar Schools and Technical High Schools

CONCLUDING REMARKS—TOWARDS A “BETTER BACCALAUREATE”

At the start of this paper, we stated that we supported the Secretary of State’s desire to introduce a baccalaureate into our Education system. However, we believe that the E-Bac is deficient in every respect to its international comparators, and that overall, its introduction will be damaging to our pupils’ education. As an academy, we are however working hard with a number of partners nationally to develop a “better

baccalaureate". Details of this project can be found on our web-site: www.abetterbaccalaureate.org. We would be delighted to work with the Secretary of State and other ministers to develop an award worthy of the baccalaureate title, which had the potential to offer our students truly world-class opportunities, rather than a simple "badge" awarded for students who opt for a very narrow set of qualifications.

21 March 2011

Written evidence submitted by Matt Brady, Assistant Headteacher, Tile Hill Wood School & Language College

1. The proposed English Baccalaureate (E-Bac) is to be considered as a purposeful "wrapper" of qualifications for schools to use as a valuable measure of pupil and school performance. For too long, schools have been able to use an almost infinite list of qualifications to satisfy performance criteria in order to position themselves favourably within school league tables. Although many of the qualifications previously used have an educational value, assessment criteria have varied too greatly to provide a meaningful academic benchmark. We support the E-Bac, because the suite of qualifications which satisfy the criteria is not only reduced in size, but it is clearly defined to a group of subjects with similar assessment criteria, thereby ensuring much greater parity in terms of performance assessment.

2. The choice of subjects included in the E-Bac is to be seen as transparent, clearly understandable by any educational stakeholder (parents, teachers, governors, pupils, community leaders and policy-makers) and limited to a suite of five defined subject areas (English, mathematics, science, languages and humanities). Pupils passing all E-Bac subjects with a good level 2 pass (ie A*-C at GCSE level) will be able to demonstrate a defined level numeric, linguistic and social understanding. It is fair and reasonable to expect that all English pupils should have access to these subjects at school, regardless of social background, and they should be challenged to meet the E-Bac standard in order to be able to deal with the demands of the modern information economy. Schools and policy makers need to recognise that the current proportion of English school leavers able to provide evidence of higher order skills in the five defined subject areas is lower than it should be for a competitive, developed economy, and change to improve this proportion is overdue.

3. Pupils who pass all the relevant component parts of the E-Bac will undoubtedly be better prepared to deal with the more profound learning aspects of post-16 education. Gifted pupils will be given a defined minimum academic standard to pursue at Key Stage 4, with a broader base to a challenging core curriculum. Pupils in schools which have chosen to allow Key Stage 4 options in languages and humanities will again find greater impetus to pursue courses of academic rigour. Schools will need to ensure that all pupils who are capable of achieving the E-Bac standard can do so, at the same time as conforming to a performance standard which cannot be manipulated by an almost infinite choice of qualifications. Employers will be able to rely on one reliable measure of pupils' core academic credentials, as well as opting, if they wish, to include an appraisal of a student's performance in other non-qualifying subjects.

4. The French Baccalaureate was the precursor to the International Baccalaureate now operated successfully in many English schools. The E-Bac has greater potential to be recognised as a the gold-standard of academic achievement in England than any other measure of scholastic achievement used thus far. Its ability to be recognised internationally has already been proven by the global understanding of the "Baccalaureate" brand. It must be embraced by all schools.

23 March 2011

Written evidence submitted by Department for Education

INTRODUCTION

1. The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) was introduced as a performance measure in the 2010 performance tables. It is not a qualification, although we are developing a mechanism for issuing certificates to recognise where individual pupils have secured a relevant combination of GCSEs. The measure recognises where pupils have secured a C grade or better across a core of academic subjects—English, mathematics, the sciences, a language and either history or geography. To qualify for the science element pupils need to take and gain an A*-C grade in both core and additional science or take all three single sciences and gain an A*-C grade in two. The language element includes all modern foreign languages, Latin, Ancient Hebrew and Classical Greek.

2. Last year 22% of pupils took the required subjects and 15.6% of pupils achieved the English Baccalaureate.

THE PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THE EBACC

3. The recent expansion of qualification options has distracted some schools from offering options based on the value of the qualifications for progression to further study and work. The "equivalence" attached to different qualifications based on broad level and, especially, size for performance measurement purposes has exacerbated this, incentivising schools to offer pupils (especially less able and lower achieving pupils) qualifications of

limited value to the individual in terms of progression, but high league table value to the institution. Since 2004, the number of non-academic qualifications taken up to age 16 has risen from about 15,000 to about 575,000, with a higher take-up of vocational qualifications by young people from deprived backgrounds. Many of these simply do not carry real weight for entry to higher education or for getting a job. They have provided an apparent levelling up of attainment pre-16 but, in reality, have simply served to hide continuing inequalities in terms of longer-term progression.

4. In particular there has been a decline in opportunity to take some core subjects in Key Stage 4. GCSE entry data indicates that pupil entry in modern foreign language (MFL), history and science GCSEs has been declining in recent years. The proportion of pupils not entering any MFL has been increasing steadily since 2002, when around three quarters of pupils attempted an MFL, in 2010, this figure was just over 43%. (It must be noted, however, that in September 2004, MFL was removed from the core curriculum at Key Stage 4, so was no longer compulsory.) The number of pupils entered for history GCSE has declined. In 2010, it stood at 198,200, compared to 205,500 pupils in 2004. 2009 was the first year since 2004 that the number of pupils entered for history had fallen below 200,000. This represents a decline of 1% in the proportion of the cohort entered for history GCSE. It is important to note, however, that the 2010 cohort had around 3,000 fewer pupils than in 2004 (DfE, 2010). Science (single, double or additional sciences) also fell by roughly 60,000 between 2006–07 and 2009–10.

5. This situation disproportionately affects pupils from the poorest backgrounds or attending schools in disadvantaged areas. Research by the Sutton Trust in 2009 found that highly able pupils attending the most disadvantaged schools were ten times more likely to take a vocational qualification than highly able pupils in the most advantaged schools, even though they might be expected to opt for more academically focused courses.¹⁹ Similarly poorer pupils are far less likely to take individual academic subjects—in 2009 just 4% of free school meal (FSM) pupils took chemistry or physics. Fewer than one in five did history and fewer than 15% took geography or French. 24% of FSM pupils entered an MFL subject compared with 43% of non-FSM pupils doing likewise.

<i>School Type</i>	<i>Total No Pupils</i>	<i>Proportion entering EBacc</i>	<i>Proportion achieving EBacc</i>
All Maintained schools	569,761	23%	15%
All Maintained mainstream	559,605	23%	15%
Special	10,156	0%	0%
Academies and CTCs	20,736	11%	7%
Grammar	22,524	75%	67%
Maintained Mainstream (excluding Grammar)	537,081	21%	13%

6. The picture of inequality also shows in the figures for those taking and achieving the EBacc in 2009–10. There was a large drop in the achievements of pupils qualifying for free school meals (FSM): only 8% of FSM pupils took the EBacc, with 4% achieving it; whilst 24% of non-FSM pupils took the EBacc and 17% achieved it. And in schools too the opportunity to take the EBacc varies widely depending on the type of school, as shown in the table below.²⁰

7. And as the proportion of FSM pupils in a school increases the number of students either entering or achieving the EBacc drops dramatically.²¹

<i>FSM Proportion</i>	<i>Total number of pupils in cohort</i>	<i>Number of pupils achieving EBacc</i>	<i>Proportion of pupils achieving EBacc</i>	<i>Number of pupils entering EBacc</i>	<i>Proportion of pupils entering EBacc</i>
0%	7,579	4,265	56%	4,974	66%
1%–5%	175,394	45,268	26%	63,289	36%
6%–10%	148,473	20,163	14%	31,466	21%
11%–15%	86,543	7,605	9%	13,032	15%
16%–20%	50,994	3,997	8%	6,759	13%
21%–25%	31,657	1,757	6%	3,240	10%
26%–30%	23,437	1,303	6%	2,228	10%
31%–35%	13,526	617	5%	1,231	9%
36%–40%	10,476	459	4%	986	9%
41%–45%	6,140	218	4%	429	7%
46%–50%	5,151	121	2%	278	5%
51%–55%	3,481	175	5%	350	10%
56%–60%	2,851	117	4%	224	8%

¹⁹ Sutton Trust, (2009). Attainment Gaps between the most deprived and advantaged Schools. A summary and discussion of research by the Education Research Group at the London School of Economics.

²⁰ Based on 2008/09 figures.

²¹ Based on 2008/09 figures.

<i>FSM Proportion</i>	<i>Total number of pupils in cohort</i>	<i>Number of pupils achieving EBacc</i>	<i>Proportion of pupils achieving EBacc</i>	<i>Number of pupils entering EBacc</i>	<i>Proportion of pupils entering EBacc</i>
61%+	4,059	113	3%	221	5%
Totals	569,761	86,178		128,707	

8. It is this situation that the EBacc aims to address. Through the introduction of the EBacc measure in the 2010 performance tables, which allows parents and pupils to see for the first time how their school is performing against these key academic subjects, we hope to encourage schools to ensure that all schools offer a core of academic subjects and open up opportunities to all of their pupils.

THE CHOICE OF SUBJECTS IN THE EBACC

9. The focus on a core of academic subjects pre-16 is seen across many other high performing countries as set out in the international comparators section below. As Professor Alison Wolf discusses in her Review of Vocational Education,²² this is a manifestation of the tendency for other developed countries to delay specialisation. In practice it means that young people in such countries tend to follow an overwhelmingly or entirely general education curriculum until the end of (roughly) Key Stage 4, with vocational options postponed until after this stage.

10. The subjects included in the EBacc have been included to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to study a broad core of subjects, ensuring that doors are not closed off to them in terms of studying the right subjects post-16 to take them on to university. It has been tacitly understood for a long time that the EBacc subjects are a necessary grounding—independent schools have not restricted their offer of these subjects for good reason. We very much welcome the subsequent Russell Group guide on making informed choices for post-16 education²³ that makes this explicit, identifying “facilitating subjects” at GCSE level. These are the subjects most likely to be required or preferred for entry to degree courses and so choosing them will help keep more options open at university. The subjects they identify are those included in the EBacc—mathematics, English, physics, biology, chemistry, geography, history and languages (classical and modern).

11. The EBacc is intended to secure wider opportunity to study in and beyond the vital core of English, mathematics and the sciences. It therefore has a particular focus on key subjects which have been withdrawn from Key Stage 4 by some schools, even where pupils might benefit from them. These include, for example, languages, where research has shown that there are clear advantages in terms of cognitive skills and understanding,²⁴ and history and geography, all of which are in decline. We have restricted the definition of the EBacc in order to ensure that it is effective in supporting this core study. Other subjects do not face the same issues. So, for instance, we are clear that it is important for all pupils to study religious education, because we recognise the many benefits that such study can bring to pupils. However, the study of RE is secure, as RE is a compulsory subject throughout a pupil’s schooling and it will remain so. That is why it has not been included in the EBacc.

12. It is important to note that the EBacc is about a core of subjects and qualifications in those subjects which provide a real basis for progression to higher study. At present only Ofqual regulated GCSEs or iGCSEs count toward the EBacc. Edexcel iGCSEs were not included in the 2010 performance tables as they had not been accredited by Ofqual.

13. That does not mean we want schools to restrict options to just this academic core or to force these qualifications on pupils for whom they are clearly not suitable. The core has deliberately been kept small to allow the opportunity for additional study—whether that is in other GCSEs or vocational qualifications. There are valuable and rigorous academic qualifications that are not in the EBacc that pupils need to be free to take, according to their personal interests, aptitudes and ambitions. Equally there are valuable and rigorous vocational qualifications that should be available to pupils. Teachers, pupils and parents need to know which these are. Nevertheless it is important to recognise that by closing off any area of the EBacc a pupil’s future options are restricted and schools need to consider this carefully.

THE IMPACT OF THE EBACC

14. *For pupils*—There are clear benefits to pupils in taking the subjects combined in the EBacc. Pupils who have achieved the EBacc combination of subjects have proved more likely to progress to A-levels than those with similar attainment in different subjects. They have also attempted a greater number of A-levels. This holds true even when equivalents are not counted.

²² <http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00031-2011>. In particular Appendix IX: Extending the common core: the trend to delayed Specialisation.

²³ <http://russellgroup.org/Informed%20Choices%20final.pdf>

²⁴ For example, a large-scale study of performance on a standardised test in Louisiana by Lang (1990, cited by Taylor-Ward, 2003) showed that pupils who had studied languages scored significantly higher in English language arts and reading tests compared to pupils who had not studied languages. This effect was most evident for pupils who were functioning at or below age-related expectation.

<i>KS4 outcome</i>	<i>No of pupils</i>	<i>Attempted at least one A level</i>	<i>Average no of A level entries</i>
Achieved 5 A*–C (including equivalents)	360,888	66.6%	2.3
Achieved 5 A*–C including English and maths (including equivalents)	275,780	75.2%	2.5
Achieved 5 A*–C (full GCSEs)	270,375	76.7%	2.5
Achieved 5 A*–C including English and maths (full GCSEs)	248,138	78.5%	2.6
Achieved English Baccalaureate	88,159	94.9%	3.1

15. They have also achieved better results.

<i>KS4 outcome</i>	<i>Average Points score</i>	<i>Achieved 1+ A grade</i>	<i>Achieved 3+ A level grades</i>
Achieved 5 A*–C (including equivalents)	753.2	18.5%	5.5%
Achieved 5 A*–C including English and maths (including equivalents)	785.5	23.8%	7.2%
Achieved 5 A*–C (full GCSEs)	787.0	24.4%	7.3%
Achieved 5 A*–C including English and maths (full GCSEs)	799.2	26.2%	8.0%
Achieved English Baccalaureate	890.9	43.7%	16.0%

16. We will also take steps to ensure the quality of vocational qualifications and to recognise pupils' achievement appropriately in the performance tables following on from Professor Wolf's report on vocational education for those pupils for whom the EBacc is not the best route.

17. *For schools*—The biggest impact for schools will be on the change of the curriculum and the impact on staffing in terms of deployment and training. We recognise that this will not necessarily be a simple task and may take time for some schools to achieve, particularly if they need to recruit teachers in areas where shortages already exist, such as physics, or areas where we would expect there to be high demand, such as language teachers. This is why the EBacc measure is not being used to hold schools to account. We are currently working with the Training and Development Agency for Schools to increase the number of newly trained teachers coming into key EBacc areas where there is likely to be high demand.

18. *For employers*—We want employers to be confident that schools will be offering pupils a core of basic knowledge. A 2010 CBI report states that skills shortages may hold back growth—45% of employers are currently having difficulty recruiting STEM staff, rising to almost six in ten employers (59%) expecting difficulty in the next three years. Students achieving the EBacc are more likely to go on to further study in mathematics, English and, in particular, science. Currently 71% of employers are not satisfied with school and college leavers' foreign language skills and 55% are not satisfied with their international cultural awareness. Better language skills could help increase overseas trade. The CBI have supported the introduction of the EBacc: "Businesses want students to leave school with high-quality qualifications which are recognised and understood. The 'English baccalaureate' could be a good way of encouraging more young people to study academic subjects, such as languages, which businesses value".²⁵

19. *For universities*—We need to be honest with students about what really gives a grounding to go on to university. The Russell Group guidance shows the extent to which this combination of subjects is already part of the process. Of course some vocational qualifications and programmes (not least Apprenticeships) can also provide a high quality route through to higher education and we need to build on Professor Wolf's report to identify and incentivise these.

INTERNATIONAL COMPARATORS

20. There are broadly similar arrangements to the English Baccalaureate in a number of countries:

21. *Singapore*—Singapore has compulsory O levels in English language, mother tongue, mathematics, combined humanities, science and one other subject. Pupils take these examinations at around age 17, following on from N (Normal) level examinations at age 16.²⁶

22. *Germany*—Attainment of a certain standard in a range of subjects at the end of year 10 of the *Gymnasium* (academic secondary school) is required to proceed to the *Gymnasiale Oberstufe* (roughly equivalent to sixth-form college). For example, students at *Realschulen* in Nordrhein-Westfalen, who receive the mark "good" ("gut") (grade 2 in the national 6-point marking scale, where 1 is high and 6 is low) in German, mathematics and English, or "satisfactory" (grade 3) in German, mathematics, English and three other subjects, may proceed to the *Gymnasiale Oberstufe*.²⁷

²⁵ CBI press notice on the School White Paper, 24 November 2010.

²⁶ (Source: *Education in Singapore*, Ministry of Education) <http://www.moe.gov.sg/about/files/moe-corporate-brochure.pdf>

²⁷ INCA table *Germany: Assessment Arrangements*) <http://www.inca.org.uk/1435.html#6.3.3>

23. *France*—Education at the level of *troisième (collège)*, which ends at age 15, is validated by the national *brevet* diploma created in 1987. It is awarded based on the average of the grades obtained in continuous evaluation and a written examination consisting of tests in French, mathematics and history-geography-civic education and, since a law of 2005, integrates the results of physical education and sport and takes into account other courses taken by pupils according to their abilities and interests. It includes a “school behaviour” grade. Since 2008, the *brevet* also takes account of computer science (though not science more widely) and a modern foreign language. The *brevet* is a high-stakes test in that it influences access to the next stage of secondary education, but it does not have labour market cachet.²⁸

24. *Japan*—Japan tests all students at the end of junior high school, age 15. Tests may cover Japanese, social studies, mathematics, science and English, depending on the prefecture. It is not a labour-market relevant public exam; rather a diagnostic assessment that is important in influencing student admission to post-compulsory upper secondary education.²⁹

25. *Sweden*—At age 16, a passing final grade in Swedish, English and mathematics is required for children to receive the school leaving certificate (*grundskolabetyg*) and be able to continue to post-compulsory upper secondary school.³⁰

26. *Canada*—In Alberta there are compulsory tests at age 15 in mathematics, science, social studies, English and French. These are not public examinations, but diagnostic/evaluative tests along the lines of key stage assessments.³¹

27. *Netherlands*—In general terms, the qualification obtained at the end of the second cycle (age 16, 17 or 18, dependent on the type of school/course) determines the opportunities open to students on leaving secondary school. The *VMBO* certificate grants access to further vocational education/training (known as secondary vocational education, *SBO*) or employment. Dutch, English, social studies, physical education and two subjects relating to their sector are compulsory for all *VMBO* pupils. The *HAVO* certificate grants access to higher professional education (*HBO*), access to *VWO* courses (see below), or employment. Mandatory subjects for all *HAVO* pupils are Dutch, English, social studies, physical education, and culture and the arts. The *VWO* certificate grants access to university, higher professional education (*HBO*) or employment. Mandatory subjects for all *VWO* pupils are Dutch, English, second modern foreign language, social studies, physical education, culture and the arts or classical culture, and general science. These are all grouped examinations in the sense that there is a single certificate listing grades in a range of subjects.³²

24 March 2011

Written evidence submitted by Universities UK

1. Universities UK (UUK) welcomes the opportunity from the Education Select Committee to submit evidence to its inquiry on the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). We have been asked to provide feedback on the higher education sector’s response to the award in relation to admissions and progression to higher education.

2. UUK understands that the EBacc is an award (not a qualification) which is given to a candidate who obtains GCSE grades of A*–C in English, maths, science, a modern language and a humanities subject. On this basis, we assume that this is a performance measure for schools and is not intended—at least at present—to be used as a progression device.

3. At the outset, it may be helpful to set out briefly how students are admitted to higher education. Universities consider each application carefully on its merits, taking into account the educational, professional and personal experience and aspirations of the applicant when making a decision. This may include Level 2 (GCSE and equivalent) qualifications, as part of an holistic assessment of an application (where this is the case these would be specified in the GCSE entry requirements for each programme). However, the chief indicators for assessing merit are Level 3 qualifications (A-level or equivalent qualifications). Reference may also be made to other additional and contextual data such as prior learning, personal statements, interviews and school performance data. Universities work hard to ensure that the right match is obtained between the applicant, the institution and the course.

4. On the basis that it is for each institution to determine its own admissions criteria for each programme offered, it is not appropriate for Universities UK to offer a view on how the EBacc should be considered in

²⁸ Eurydice Eurybase, *Organisation of the education system in France 2008/09* and INCA table *France: Assessment Arrangements*;

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/FR_EN.pdf
<http://www.inca.org.uk/1384.html>

²⁹ *Compulsory assessment systems in the INCA countries: Thematic Probe, May 2007*
http://www.inca.org.uk/pdf/Compulsory_assessment_systems.pdf

³⁰ *Compulsory assessment systems in the INCA countries: Thematic Probe, May 2007*
http://www.inca.org.uk/pdf/Compulsory_assessment_systems.pdf

³¹ *Compulsory assessment systems in the INCA countries: Thematic Probe, May 2007*
http://www.inca.org.uk/pdf/Compulsory_assessment_systems.pdf

³² INCA table *Netherlands: Assessment Arrangements* <http://www.inca.org.uk/1342.html#6.4.7> and Eurydice Eurybase, *Organisation of the education system in the Netherlands 2008–09*
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/NL_EN.pdf

relation to entry to higher education. We can, however, provide an indication of some of the approaches being adopted by a number of universities. The request to submit evidence to this inquiry is timely, as a number of institutions are currently considering their policy statements on the award. However, given that the EBacc is relatively new, it is still too early to state with precision how the award will impact on the higher education sector.

5. This response provides the latest information available to UUK and draws attention to the merits of the EBacc as well as a number of concerns that have been raised by institutions. Overall, it would appear that there is currently a limited appetite within the higher education sector to use the EBacc in university admissions processes, entry requirements or selection criteria.

6. Universities have, however, recognised the benefits of the award in terms of the breadth of study it offers. It is acknowledged that this could provide a good foundation for further study and has the potential to help maximise a young person's options and thereby facilitate progression to higher education. Institutions have also endorsed a renewed focus on "the basics", particularly English and maths and the specification for a language. The latter is deemed particularly important given the recent decline in the number of applicants with languages.

7. Notwithstanding the above, there are, however, a number of wider considerations which have been brought to UUK's attention and which may be of interest to the Committee. These are outlined below:

- All universities are committed to widening access to and increasing participation in higher education. To support these goals university admissions systems are flexible and take account of a broad range of qualifications, which include not just academic but vocational qualifications, as well as other contextual information. This is important as applicants wishing to enter university apply with a variety of capabilities and different learning styles and will demonstrate their potential to succeed in a number of different ways. From this perspective the EBacc could be seen as insufficiently inclusive and could potentially disadvantage some applicants. Not all young people will be able to achieve well in the mix of subjects denoted in the EBacc. There is also concern that for those students for whom the EBacc is achievable, it will not leave time for young people to study subjects in which they are interested and can do well, and which will complement their learning styles, as well as supporting them to achieve their long-term ambitions (for example around employability skills).
- Universities need well-qualified applicants at GCSE level, including in English and maths, to provide a broad foundation for further study and are keen for applicants to be able to keep their options open. Although the EBacc is one way to achieve this, it is important to note that this is not the only way of doing so. Some universities already ask for a minimum of five or six GCSEs at grade C or above, including English and maths. However, they do not specify what the other GCSEs should be on the grounds that they would not wish to penalise or place barriers in the way of applicants who have already opted to study a range of arts and humanities subjects. Moreover, it is still possible to assess the profile of the applicant by reference to individual GCSE subjects that they have taken. As such, it is not clear what further value the EBacc would add beyond what can already be gleaned from the constituent qualifications.
- Some institutions state that it would not be appropriate to include the EBacc as an entry criterion for admissions because there is a possibility that not all young people will have had access to the broad range of subjects encapsulated within the EBacc—for example, there is no compulsion on schools to offer a language at GCSE. Others note that the current subject mix would not be relevant to the subjects offered by the university.

8. We also understand that there is some concern amongst universities that the inclusion of the EBacc in school performance tables is strongly incentivising the take-up of it. It is argued that this could impact detrimentally on students from disadvantaged backgrounds by shifting resources away from young people who may not be engaged by or stand to do well in the EBacc. This could also mitigate against young people having the opportunity at Level 2 to opt for their preferred subject choice for which they have an aptitude and enjoy, and potentially limiting their options at A-level and possibly their degree and career choices.

9. Given that the EBacc emphasises traditionally academic subjects, it has been argued that this could serve to further widen the gap between academic and vocational subjects. There is also concern that the EBacc could encourage a shift away from arts-related subjects such as music and drama, and broader humanities and social sciences such as religious studies, economics and law.

10. Some universities have queried the use of the term Baccalaureate, on the grounds that this could be confusing for potential applicants. It is not a true Baccalaureate but a collection of existing subjects and as such could give rise to misconceptions both in the UK and abroad. In the UK we have Welsh, Scottish, European and International Baccalaureates being taught at Level 3 which are qualifications and, as such, form part of the higher education admissions requirements. The English Baccalaureate, however, is at Level 2 and is only an award and generally not a requirement by universities. UUK, together with some universities, have already received expressions of concern from potential applicants and parents that not completing EBacc subjects will undermine their child's chances of progression onto universities, particularly the more highly competitive courses and institutions.

11. In light of the above, universities are aware of the importance of ensuring that if an institution were to change their entry requirements and include the EBacc this would require giving potential applicants sufficient notice to make the correct GCSE choices. Some universities have also stated that they will not use the award unless they had gathered evidence which indicates that it proves to be a good indicator of applicant performance.

12. To conclude, it is too early to indicate the impact of the EBacc on higher education. Universities endorse the opportunity for young people to increase the breadth of their study at Level 2 and for a renewed focus on English and maths. It is important that universities have access to well-qualified applicants, and the EBacc may support this. However, it is also clear that universities can also achieve this in a variety of other ways.

13. In general, at this point in time, there appears to be a limited appetite to include the award as part of a university's entry requirements or selection criteria. There is, however, an awareness of the award and universities will continue to monitor developments. From a higher education perspective it has been drawn to our attention that it may be helpful to have a school performance measure which is linked to student progression and destinations, as currently happens in Scotland.

14. Given the significant changes to the funding and support arrangements in higher education in 2012, it is important that applicants are clear about the use of the EBacc by universities both now and in the future. UUK will work with the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions programme³³ and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service in raising awareness of the EBacc and in encouraging universities to make their policy on the award clear and accessible to all potential applicants.

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³³ The Supporting Professionalism in Admissions programme supports universities in professionalism and good practice in their admissions policies and processes. Further information can be found at www.spa.ac.uk