

# Westminster Education Forum Keynote Seminar: The future of the qualifications and assessment system - A-Level reform and university entrance

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2010

Venue: Central London

Draft agenda subject to change

- 8.45 - 9.00 Registration
- 9.00 - 9.05 **Chairman's opening remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 - 9.55 **The future of A-Levels - key purposes and the state of public confidence**  
*Themes: What are the aims and key purpose of A-Levels? Are A-Levels a reliable indicator of a student's knowledge and understanding of a subject? Why has the qualification been held in lower regard in recent years? Are A-Levels currently meeting the needs of universities and employers? What is the current state of confidence amongst students and the wider public in the qualification? Will the adoption of the A\* grade allow better distinction between high-achieving candidates? What would be the impact of a move away from AS-Levels and modularisation towards a more traditional structure?*  
**Simon Lebus**, Group Chief Executive, Cambridge Assessment  
**Dr Christopher Ray**, High Master, The Manchester Grammar School  
**Professor Alice Rogers**, Professor of Mathematics, Kings College London and Deputy Chairman, ACME  
**Salil Bhate**, Student Representative, ESSA (English Secondary Students' Association)  
**Dr Mike Nicholson**, Director of Undergraduate Admissions, University of Oxford  
Senior representative, employer  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.55 - 10.20 **The view from the exam regulator**  
**Isabel Nisbet**, Chief Executive, Ofqual  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.20 - 10.25 **Chairman's closing remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.25 - 10.45 Coffee
- 10.45 - 10.50 **Chairman's opening remarks**  
**Iain Wright MP**, Shadow Minister for Education
- 10.50 - 11.20 **The view from UCAS**  
**Mary Curnock Cook**, Chief Executive, UCAS  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.20 - 11.40 **The use of the SAT® for university entrance - a UK validity study**  
*Theme: The results of a five-year study into the use of standardised university admissions test*  
**Catherine Kirkup**, Project Director, NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research)  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.40 - 12.30 **University entrance - time for change?**  
*Themes: Should universities have a more direct role in deciding the content of the qualification? Should there be greater freedom for awarding bodies in deciding the structure of A-Levels? Is a move towards the development of a standardised university admissions test to supplement A-Levels desirable? If introduced by Government, what should a university admissions test measure? Should there be a deregulation of the current system with universities, awarding bodies and employers encouraged to develop alternatives to A-Levels? If alternatives are introduced, what would be the likely effect on A-Levels? Can an alternative to A-Levels be made to support the needs of both academic and vocational students?*  
**Tim Oates**, Group Director, Assessment Research & Development, Cambridge Assessment  
**Shane Chown**, Vice-President (Further Education), NUS (National Union of Students)  
**Janet Graham**, Director, SPA (Supporting Professionalism in Admissions)  
**Professor Dame Athene Donald**, Professor of Experimental Physics, University of Cambridge and Education Committee Chair, The Royal Society  
**John Morgan**, Immediate Past President, Association of School and College Leaders and Executive Headteacher, Conyers School  
Senior representative, university  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.30 - 12.55 **The current political context**  
Senior representative, **Department for Education**  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 - 13.00 **Chairman's and Westminster Education Forum thanks and closing remarks**  
**Iain Wright MP**, Shadow Minister for Education  
**Sean Cudmore**, Senior Producer, Westminster Education Forum

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