

Westminster Education Forum Keynote Seminar: A-level reform - next steps for policy

Timing: Morning, Tuesday, 16th October 2012

Venue: Johnnie Walker Room, The Caledonian Club, 9 Halkin Street, London SW1X 7DR



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Agenda subject to change

- 8.30 - 9.00 Registration and coffee
- 9.00 - 9.05 **Chairman's opening remarks**
Simon Wright MP, Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of State for Schools
- 9.05 - 9.35 **Quality and standards - A-levels regulation and plans for change**
Jeremy Benson, Deputy Director of Policy, Ofqual
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.35 - 9.55 **How do A-levels compare internationally and what can be learnt?**
Dr Tina Isaacs, Programme Director, MA in Educational Assessment, Institute of Education, University of London
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.55 - 10.05 **University involvement in the development of A-level course content**
Paul Steer, Director of Partnerships, OCR
- 10.05 - 10.55 **Reforming the structure and development of A-levels**
Will Government's proposed reforms succeed in tackling the structural causes of 'grade inflation' and improve the university, employer and public perception of A-levels? Will the greater involvement of Russell Group universities in the development of A-level curriculums better prepare students for the transition for university? Should non-Russell Group universities and employers be involved in the development of A-levels? Would the proposed move away from modularisation and AS-levels, towards a more linear approach with exams sat at the end of 2 years study, be the best model for all subjects, or should the structure be more flexible to fit the specific needs of each subject? Could the removal of modules and AS levels have a negative impact on efforts to widen participation in Higher Education? What would be the likely impact of proposed limits on the number of re-sits that can be taken? Has the A grade been effective in helping universities differentiate the most talented pupils? Should the A* grade be awarded only to a fixed percentage of top students, and if so, would this aid universities and employers in identifying top performers?*
Dr Andrew Bell, Admissions Tutor, Gonville and Caius College, University of Cambridge and Deputy Chair, University Admissions Forum, University of Cambridge
Pam Tatlow, Chief Executive, million+
Adrian Barlow, Chair, The English Association
Darren Northcott, National Official, Education, NASUWT
Questions and comments from the floor with **Paul Steer**, Director of Partnerships, OCR
- 10.55 - 11.00 **Chairman's closing remarks**
Simon Wright MP, Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of State for Schools
- 11.00 - 11.30 Coffee
- 11.30 - 11.35 **Chairman's opening remarks**
Kevin Brennan MP, Shadow Minister for Schools
- 11.35 - 12.25 **Rounded learning in Key Stage 5**
Will the introduction of 'more rigorous' multiple choice questions, combined with the removal of modularisation and AS Levels, encourage schools to teach a greater breadth of subject knowledge and not 'teach to the test' as Government suggests? Do current A-levels adequately prepare students for the analytical researching skills required at undergraduate level? Should the study of Maths and English be compulsory for A-level students, and if so, what form should this take? Would a structure for Key Stage 5 learning more akin to the International Baccalaureate or Welsh Baccalaureate - with wider skills being assessed alongside the specific subjects - improve the university/employment-readiness of students? What is the future role for General Studies? Should A-levels be purely academic or contain vocational elements and work-based learning? Should universities be required to publish the list of A-levels which are 'not preferred', and should the range of subjects available at A-level reflect these preferences?
Julian Metcalf, IB/IBSCA UK Recognition Manager, International Baccalaureate
Michael Li, Young Adviser, StudentVoice and Student, The Manchester Grammar School
Professor Mary Malcolm, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), University of Bedfordshire
Sue Street, Chair, Secondary Education Committee, NAHT and Advisory Headteacher
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.25 - 12.55 **The way forward for A-levels**
Anna Paige, Deputy Director, Qualifications Systems and Reform Division, Department for Education
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 - 13.00 **Chairman's and Westminster Education Forum thanks and closing remarks**
Kevin Brennan MP, Shadow Minister for Schools
Jonny Roberts, Senior Producer, Westminster Education Forum

Seminar supported by

