Westminster Education Forum policy conference:
Next steps for GCSE reform in England
Timing: Morning, Monday, 16th March 2026
Taking place online

Draft agenda subject to change

8.30 Registration

9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian

9.05 **The future of GCSEs in England - key recommendations from the *Curriculum and Assessment Review*'s final report**
Senior commentator
Questions and comments from the floor

9.35 **Priorities for reforming the curriculum at ages 14-16 - breadth, balance, access and accountability**
assessing evolving curriculum content | engaging educators in curriculum design | supporting a broad and balanced curriculum | engaging with in-depth learning | enabling teacher workload reduction | potential impact of EBacc removal on subject uptake | strategies for teacher recruitment and retention to enable subject entitlements | supporting teacher and learner mental health and wellbeing | improving access to vocational, technical, and creative subjects | implications of performance indicators and accountability frameworks for curriculum breadth and access
Senior representative, school
Senior representative, subject association
Senior representative, teaching union
Senior commentator
Questions and comments from the floor

10.20 **Chair's closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian

10.25 Break

10.35 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian

10.40 **Priorities for assessment reform - digital delivery, standards, and access**
Senior representative, regulation

10.50 **Next steps for GCSE assessment - volume, modular options, digital delivery and AI**
proposed reductions in exam volume and content | leveraging technology to improve assessment accessibility | on-screen and digital assessment | impact of AI use on assessment reliability | equity, bias and transparency in AI-assisted tools and marking | ensuring equity in access to technology, including for students with SEND and disadvantaged backgrounds | supporting teacher confidence in utilising AI tools | priorities for professional development and training in the use of digital and AI-assisted tools | international comparison to GCSE attainment | modular assessment options | implementing modular approaches without fragmentation or added complexity | workload, planning time and resource allocation for assessment reform implementation | collaboration between schools, FE, employers and subject leaders on content reduction and structural change
Senior representative, school
Senior representative, EdTech
Senior representative, union
Senior representative, awarding body
Senior commentator

11.15 Questions and comments from the floor

11.45 **Supporting learner progression into further study and future employment**
exploring the value of GCSEs and how to maximise this | GCSE maths and English retake reform options | ensuring GCSEs prepare students with skills for a modern world | alignment with post-16 qualification pathways | developing parity between academic, technical, and vocational qualifications | potential impact of EBacc removal on post-16 options | strengthening progression pathways | supporting smooth transitions at 16 and between stages | addressing resit pressures and supporting learners at risk of disengagement | ensuring students are not disadvantaged by changes to accountability and performance measures
Senior representative, school
Senior representative, further education
Senior representative, employer
Senior representative, higher education
Senior commentator
Questions and comments from the floor

12.30 **GCSE reform moving forward and policy priorities**
Oliver Longworth, Assistant Director, Qualifications Strategy and Policy, Department for Education
Questions and comments from the floor

12.55 **Chair's and Westminster Education Forum closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
Sean Cudmore, Westminster Education Forum