

## Ofsted inspections to focus more on the curriculum

“Our intention is to place the curriculum back at the heart of inspection and to view performance measures more in the context of the quality of education”. This is the clear message from Amanda Spielman, Chief Inspector, as she set out Ofsted’s plans for the future of school and college inspection.

The new [draft education inspection framework](#) aims to make sure that inspection values and rewards effective education, placing less emphasis on data and more on the curriculum; how are providers deciding what to teach and why, how well are they doing it and is it leading to strong outcomes for young people?

The quality of teaching, learning, test and exam outcomes will still be judged during inspection visits but in the context of the provider’s curriculum as a whole rather than in isolation.

“Outcomes clearly matter” continued Amanda Spielman, “and will of course continue to be considered, in the context of what is being taught. But we all know that too much weight placed on performance measures alone can lead to a degree of distortion, both in what is taught and not taught, and in other aspects of how a provider is managed”.

The draft framework talks of “evolution not revolution”, not expecting providers to design new curriculums from scratch or imposing an ‘Ofsted curriculum’. Ofsted’s aim is to bring the inspection conversation back to the substance of education and training to treat providers as experts in their field and not as data managers.

The current consultation on the draft framework closes on 5 April 2019. If adopted, the new framework will come into force in September 2019.

## What should a post-16 maths curriculum look like for GCSE re-sit students?

Mathematics in Education and Industry (MEI) has been awarded funding to investigate the feasibility of a new maths [GCSE curriculum](#) for post-16 re-sit students.

Over 170,000 young people re-sat GCSE maths last summer, with only 23.7% achieving at least a grade 4 or equivalent. The success rate of the November 2018 re-sits was also down on the previous year.

The aim of the MEI project is to give fresh consideration to appropriate maths content and qualifications for GCSE re-sit students, in line with the recommendations of the [Smith Review](#) of post-16 maths.

MEI will work in consultation with key stakeholders to develop a new maths curriculum for post-16 GCSE re-sit students with a greater emphasis on applying

mathematics in realistic contexts to manage practical problems encountered in the workplace and other aspects of life.

A small-scale study will then be conducted to assess the suitability of the curriculum as a basis for an alternative to the existing GCSE maths. The project will report towards the end of 2019.

This announcement came as the Association of Colleges launched its [five-point plan](#) to support post-16 maths and English in colleges, calling for more resources, more flexibility to do what is best for students and some adjustments to the way progress in English and maths is measured. “Delivering on the current English and maths policy continues to be a major challenge”, says the AoC.

## Update to English and maths GCSE re-sit policy

Full-time students with a grade 2 or below in maths or English GCSE must study towards either a Level 2 pass in Functional Skills or a GCSE grade 9 – 4.

In a [change to the original policy](#), from September 2019, once either of these has been achieved, there will be no requirement to undertake further maths or English qualifications to meet the condition of funding.

This change in re-sit policy will allow providers and students to choose which Level 2 qualification is most appropriate for them.

Students with a grade 3 in maths or English GCSE must still study towards a GCSE qualification.

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## Ofqual reviews moderation and verification

Ofqual has published a [consultation](#) on proposed changes to the way Awarding Organisations manage and oversee centre assessments. These changes are intended to ensure that appropriate controls are in place so that standards are consistent, whenever and wherever an assessment is taken.

The consultation recognises that centre assessment is central to the way many different qualifications function, and does not look to end it. Instead, it proposes to:

- Clarify the existing definition of moderation, and provide a new, separate definition for verification
- Require Awarding Organisations to produce centre assurance strategies that explain how their centre assessment arrangements work
- Set minimum requirements in certain qualifications
- Set minimum requirements for Awarding Organisation verification processes, including a minimum of two monitoring visits and an additional unannounced visit per centre every year.

A summary of the proposals is available on the [Ofqual website](#).

## Committee on malpractice calls for evidence

As part of its evidence gathering, the Independent Commission on Examination Malpractice has launched a [call for evidence](#).

The aim of the Commission, which was launched last summer, is to consider the nature, extent and drivers of malpractice in the exam system. The Commission will make recommendations to all stakeholders on improvements that can be made to reduce and deter malpractice.

The Commission, although supported by the Joint Council for Qualifications, is independent. It comprises leaders in

the field of education, training and assessment. Its scope covers both general and vocational qualifications and aims to identify key drivers for malpractice.

It will also explore what more awarding organisations, school and college leaders and other stakeholders can do to keep abreast of emerging practices, including technology and social media, identify improvements to processes and systems, and consider whether existing sanctions are appropriate and effective.

## IfA becomes IfATE

The Institute for Apprenticeships has now officially become the [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#), as it takes on key parts of the T Levels programme.

From 31 January 2019, the Institute became responsible for the Technical Qualifications within T Levels including

arranging the approval of outline content, issuing contracts to awarding organisations, and approving the final T Levels ready for providers to teach.

The Institute will continue to lead on the roll-out of new apprenticeship standards.

## T Level providers invited for 2021

Further Education providers have been invited to apply to deliver the second wave of T Levels to be taught from 2021 – Health, Healthcare Science, Science, Onsite Construction, Building Services Engineering, Digital Support and Services, and Digital Business Services.

Together with wave one T Levels, this will bring the total pathways to be delivered by 2021 to ten.

Detailed [information](#) is available for schools and colleges wishing to apply to deliver T Levels, with the qualifying criteria including:

- A good or outstanding Ofsted rating
- A minimum of 10 current students per T Level subject area applied for
- A minimum of 100 current students across all path-

ways applied for

- Satisfactory financial health.

In the event that there is significant interest from providers, the DfE will increase the minimum student number, whilst still aiming to establish a “manageable number” of selected providers.

Whilst details of the transition year for students not ready to start T Levels at age 16 have yet to emerge, the DfE has confirmed that it is not planning a separate expression of interest process for providers to apply to deliver the transition offer. Schools/colleges must be successful in becoming a T Level provider in 2020 or 2021 in order to offer the transition year.

## Inquiry examines the role of employers

The list of roles for employers in education and skills continues to grow, but what is working well and where are the tensions in the system?

A new [inquiry](#) from the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Youth Employment will consider these questions, focusing on the asks of employers by Government, particularly around T Levels, apprenticeships, work experience and careers education.

As the scale of employer support grows, the inquiry will explore whether all young people are able to access the quality support they need from employers. It will ask whether employers are at saturation point and how prepared schools and colleges are to engage with employers.

The inquiry will be an opportunity for businesses to share their experiences, and to explore what might be done at a local and national level to support employers.

## Qualifications market: the stats

11.5 million certificates were awarded in England in GCSE, AS, A Level and vocational and other qualifications in 2017-18, according to Ofqual's latest annual [qualifications market report](#). This represents a fall of 8% compared to the previous year, continuing the trend seen over several years, with AS Levels having the biggest percentage drop.

Other trends emerging from the report include:

### Certificates

- For GCSE, AS and A Levels, a quarter of all certificates were awarded against just 4 qualifications.
- 5.8 million certificates were awarded in vocational and other qualifications, a drop of 4% compared to the previous year. 7% of these were in technical qualifications.

### Qualifications

- 20,800 regulated qualifications were available in the academic year 2017-18, an 8% decrease on the previous year.
- The largest increase by qualification type was seen in vocationally-related qualifications.
- The top 10 highest volume GCSE subjects accounted for 75% of all GCSE certificates.
- The top 10 highest volume A Level subjects accounted for 64% of all A Level certificates.

### Awarding Organisations

- There were 3 fewer awarding organisations in 2017-18 compared to the previous year bringing the total to 158.
- The top 5 awarding organisations by number of certificates issued, accounted for 69% of all certificates.

## Trends Shaping Education 2019

In our quickly changing modern world, education cannot prepare for the future using only lessons of the past, says the OECD's latest [Trends Shaping Education](#) report.

According to the report, there are three mega-trends affecting the future of education:

- **Globalisation:** As international mobility continues to rise, education systems will be under more pressure to integrate diverse students from all backgrounds. This is already one of the biggest challenges for teachers and this challenge will increase in the next 5-10 years. Also within the next ten years, the majority of the world's population will consist of the middle class, a trend that is largely driven by China and India. This will increase pressure to provide better education for more people and place higher expectations on education from more demanding customers.
- **Ageing:** Life expectancy continues to rise across the 34 [OECD countries](#) and the share of people aged 65 or older is expected to grow significantly. The pressure will rise for access to lifelong learning; high-quality re-skilling and up-skilling opportunities.  
  
There is also an increasing need for digital literacy not just for young students. In many countries, older adults have inadequate skills to manage digital information.

to take advantage of the tools and strengths of new technologies while addressing concerns around potential misuse, such as cyberbullying, security and privacy issues. "We need to think more about how human skills can complement the artificial intelligence of computers".

*Trends Shaping Education* explores major economic, political, social and technological trends affecting the future of education. It aims to inform strategic thinking and stimulate debate on the challenges facing education.

# The Last Word

Paul Steer, Head of Policy, comments on some of the issues featured in this issue.

Ofsted's new draft inspection framework has been welcomed by many in the education community with positive comments about an apparent shift away from prioritising test and exam results towards a greater emphasis on the quality of a school's curriculum. Could this be the antidote to what many feel has become a high stakes, low trust accountability system?

This shift of emphasis is characterised by a number of things Ofsted says it wants to put a stop to, including:

- The burdensome collection of low value data on pupil performance
- Teaching to the test ("the curriculum is not a pop quiz" as Amanda Spielman recently said)
- The tracking back of assessment objectives for GCSE as far as Year 7 with the consequence that pupils drop some other subjects aged 12 or 13
- The 'off-rolling' of low achieving pupils
- And gaming in which pupils are put in for qualifications against their best interest in order to rack up performance points for the school.

The new framework describes what it sees as the features of a good curriculum and how these will be judged during an inspection. At the same time, Ofsted is at pains to point out that it will not mandate curricular and pedagogical approaches - it is interested only in what works for a given school. The headlines are that Ofsted expects a curriculum to be ambitious, to provide young people with 'the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life', and to be 'coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills'. A quality curriculum should enable pupils 'to grow as active, healthy and engaged citizens' and should provide equitable access to a wide range of subjects.

In its commentary, Ofsted denounces the long-standing debate about whether a curriculum should be skills or knowledge-based, arguing that it is never a matter of one or the other. Nevertheless, whilst it sets much store on acquisition of skills, there is an undeniable emphasis on knowledge. The curriculum should provide for the recall of 'baked in' knowledge, securing a memory of key concepts and building on those. Much of the emphasis is at subject level and there are future plans to develop subject level indicators so elements of the curriculum can be judged at subject level. Overall, the curriculum will be judged by its intent, implementation and impact.

This interest in subject-based knowledge is brought out in statements about the importance of the role of subject teachers. A key indicator looks at how schools manage "the alignment of continuing professional development for teachers and staff with the curriculum, and the extent to which it develops teachers' content knowledge over time".

So will the new proposed framework succeed in its aims? Some have argued that plans to introduce the framework from September 2019, are rushed. Others have questioned whether, given resource and time constraints, Ofsted will have the capacity to judge schools effectively or frequently enough.

As for schools, given the on-going challenges of teacher workload and funding, are they in a position to respond to a new framework? Developing, maintaining and evaluating a broad, inclusive and coherent curriculum is no mean feat and although many schools are already in that place, others will struggle to get there. Ofsted admits that there will be a requirement for more CPD for teachers..."Too many teachers and leaders have not been trained to think deeply about what they want their pupils to learn and how they are going to teach it". And during a pilot of the new framework, Ofsted found that nine schools judged outstanding under the current framework were judged to have weak or poor curricula under the new.

Perhaps the most crucial question is whether the framework can really create a meaningful shift away from a focus on outcomes. As Amanda Spielman said recently: "Try telling any teenager that their GCSEs don't matter". Nor are parents or politicians likely to give up the habit of judging by results. She went on to acknowledge that inspection reports will *complement* what is shown on performance tables and that pupil attainment and qualifications will always be important.

Through its consultation, Ofsted has called for an open and healthy debate, with a commitment to consult and listen. The volume of speeches, reports, blogs and events which have accompanied the consultation so far demonstrate its commitment to being a transparent and *available* body. This augurs well, but the new framework is intended to bring new challenges and opportunities and it will be interesting to see how this plays out.