

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The DfE should distinguish clearly between those qualifications, both vocational and academic, which can contribute to performance indicators at Key Stage 4, and those which cannot. The decision criteria should be explicit and public. They will include considerations of depth and breadth (including consultation with/endorsement by relevant outside bodies), but also assessment and verification arrangements which ensure that national standards are applied to all candidates.

Recommendation 2

At Key Stage 4, schools should be free to offer any qualifications they wish from a regulated Awarding Body whether or not these are approved for performance measurement purposes, subject to statutory/health and safety requirements.

Recommendation 3

Non-GCSE/GCSE qualifications from the approved list (recommendation 1 above) should make a limited contribution to an individual student's score on any performance measures that use accumulated and averaged point scores. This will safeguard pupils' access to a common general core as a basis for progression. At the same time, any point-based measures should also be structured so that schools do not have a strong incentive to pile up huge numbers of qualifications per student, and therefore are free to offer all students practical and vocational courses as part of their programme. (See also Recommendation 26 below)

Recommendation 4

DfE should review current policies for the lowest-attaining quintile of pupils at Key Stage 4, with a view to greatly increasing the proportion who are able to progress directly onto Level 2 programmes at age 16. Performance management indicators and systems should not give schools incentives to divert low-attaining pupils onto courses and qualifications which are not recognised by employers or accepted by colleges for progression purposes. (See also recommendation 28)

Recommendation 5

The overall study programmes of all 16-18 year olds in 'vocational' programmes (i.e. currently everything other than A levels, pre-U and IB, and including 'Foundation Learning') should be governed by a set of general principles relating primarily to content, general structure, assessment arrangements and contact time. Provided these are met (and see recommendation 6 below), institutions should be free to offer any qualifications they please from a recognised (i.e. regulated) awarding body, and encouraged to include non-qualifications-based activity.

Recommendation 6

16-19 year old students pursuing full time courses of study should not follow a programme which is entirely 'occupational', or based solely on courses which directly reflect, and do not go beyond, the content of National Occupational Standards. Their programmes should also include at least one qualification of substantial size (in terms of teaching time) which offers clear potential for progression either in education or into skilled employment. Arrangements for part-time students and work-based 16-18 year olds will be different but the design of learning programmes for such students should also be considered.

Recommendation 7

Programmes for the lowest attaining learners – including many with LDD as well as those highly disaffected with formal education – should concentrate on the core academic skills of English and Maths, and on work experience. Funding and performance measures should be amended to promote a focus on these core areas and on employment outcomes rather than on the accrual of qualifications.

Recommendation 8

The DfE and BIS should evaluate the extent to which the current general education components of apprenticeship frameworks are adequate for 16-19 year old apprentices, many of whom may wish to progress to further and higher education. It does not appear appropriate, given this Government's commitment to progression through apprenticeship, that frameworks should, as at present, be drawn up entirely by SSCs, who conceive their role in relation to current employers, and current, occupationally specific job requirements. The review of frameworks should also consider ways to increase flexibility and responsiveness to local labour markets and conditions.

Recommendation 9

Students who are under 19 and do not have GCSE A*-C in English and/or Maths should be required, as part of their programme, to pursue a course which either leads directly to these qualifications, or which provide significant progress towards future GCSE entry and success. The latter should be based

around other Maths and English qualifications which have demonstrated substantial content and coverage; and Key Skills should not be considered a suitable qualification in this context. DfE and BIS should consider how best to introduce a comparable requirement into apprenticeship frameworks.

Recommendation 10

DfE should continue and if possible increase its current level of support for CPD for mathematics teachers, and give particular attention to staff who are teaching post-16 students in colleges and schools. DfE and BIS should discuss the possibility of joint funding for post-16 CPD activities in English and Mathematics, especially as they relate to apprentices and to general FE colleges recruiting adults as well as young people.

Recommendation 11

Funding for full-time students age 16-18 should be on a programme basis, with a given level of funding per student. (This can and should be adjusted for differences in the content-related cost of courses, and for particular groups of high-need student.) The funding should follow the student.

Recommendation 12

There should continue to be no restrictions placed on a young person's programme in terms of which level or type of qualification they can pursue. If it is appropriate for a student or apprentice to move sideways (or indeed 'downwards') in order to change subject or sector, that is their choice.

Recommendation 13

Young people who do not use up their time-based entitlement to education (including apprenticeship) by the time they are 19 should be entitled to a corresponding credit towards education at a later date. The existing system of unique student numbers plus the learning accounts being developed by BIS should make this straightforward.

Recommendation 14

Employers who take on 16-18 year old apprentices should be eligible for payments (direct or indirect), because and when they bear some of the cost of education for an age-group with a right to free full-time participation. Such payments should be made only where 16-18 year old apprentices receive clearly identified off-the-job training and education, with broad transferable elements.

Recommendation 15

DfE and BIS should review contracting arrangements for apprenticeships, drawing on best practice internationally, with a view to increasing efficiency, controlling unit costs and driving out any frictional expenditure associated with brokerage or middleman activities that do not add value.

Recommendation 16

DfE and BIS should discuss and consult urgently on alternative ways for groups of smaller employers to become direct providers of training and so receive 'training provider' payments, possibly through the encouragement of Group Training Associations (GTAs).

Recommendation 17

At present teachers with QTS can teach in FE colleges; the FE equivalent – QTLS – should be recognised in schools, which is currently not the case. This will enable schools to recruit qualified professionals to teach courses at school level (rather than bussing pupils to colleges) with clear efficiency gains.

Recommendation 18

Clarify and evaluate rules relating to the teaching of vocational content by qualified professionals who are not primarily teachers/do not hold QTLS. Many schools believe that it is impossible to bring professionals in to demonstrate/teach even part of a course without requiring the presence of additional, salaried teaching staff. This further reduces the incidence of high quality vocational teaching, delivered to the standards that industries actually require.

Recommendation 19

Make explicit the legal right of colleges to enrol students under 16 and ensure that funding procedures make this practically possible. Colleges enrolling students in this age group should be required to offer them a full KS4 programme, either alone or in collaboration with schools, and be subject to the same performance monitoring regime (including performance indicators) as schools.

Recommendation 20

All institutions enrolling students age 16-18 (post-KS4), and those offering a dedicated entry route for 14-year old entrants, should be required to publish the previous institutions and, where relevant, the qualifications and average grades at the time of enrolment of previous entrants. (This should be done on a course-related rather than an institution-wide basis)

Recommendation 21

DfE should evaluate models for supplying genuine work experience to 16-18 year olds who are enrolled as full-time students, not apprentices, and for reimbursing local employers in a flexible way, using core funds. Schools and colleges should be encouraged to prioritise longer internships for older students, reflecting the fact that almost no young people move into full-time employment at 16; and government should correspondingly remove their statutory duty to provide every young person at KS4 with a standard amount of “work-related learning”.

Recommendation 22

DfE should encourage Ofqual to move as quickly as possible away from regulating individual vocational qualifications and concentrate on regulating awarding bodies. When there is reason for concern about a particular qualification, Ofqual should continue to intervene.

Recommendation 23

DfE should confirm and clarify that qualifications offered to 14-19 year olds and funded through YPLA will not in future need to be either QCF-compliant or belong to a specified group with additional approval criteria (GCSE, A Level, Diploma etc). They should, however, be offered by a regulated awarding body. As an immediate and temporary measure the Secretary of State should use his powers, under Section 96, to approve the funding of key established qualifications which have not been approved by SSCs, and have therefore not been accredited, but which are recognised by DfE as playing an important role in the country’s vocational education system, and which are clearly valued by employers and/or higher education.

Recommendation 24

DfE and BIS should discuss and consult on the appropriate future and role of National Occupational Standards in education and training for young people, and on whether and how both national employer bodies – including but not only SSCs – and local employers should contribute to qualification design.

Recommendation 25

The legislation governing Ofqual should be examined and where necessary amended, in order to clarify the respective responsibilities of the regulator and the Secretary of State

Recommendation 26

DfE should introduce a performance indicator which focuses on the whole distribution of performance within a school, including those at the top and bottom ends of the distribution.

Recommendation 27

At college and school level the assessment and awarding processes used for vocational awards should involve local employers on a regular basis. Awarding bodies should demonstrate, when seeking recognition, how employers are involved directly in development and specification of qualifications.