



Enabling students to enter HE - what are the challenges to change and how could they be addressed?

**NEON/UCU Summit - The Future of Higher Education Admissions,
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Andy Case, Policy Adviser, National Education Union





Factors creating challenges

- **Funding**
- **Qualification reform**
- **Accountability, workload, recruitment and retention**



Funding

- **91% of primary schools and 94% of secondaries have had their per pupil funding cut.**
- **Funding per student has fallen by 21% in school sixth forms and by 8% in FE and sixth form colleges, since 2010-11.**
- **55% cut in spending per pupil on services provided by local authorities**
- **This has led to challenges such as larger class sizes, fewer subjects on offer, fewer extra curricular opportunities, fewer services such as mental health support and careers advice**



Funding sources

- <https://neu.org.uk/campaigns/funding>
- <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/13307>
- <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/13307>
- <https://raisetherate.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/document/Raise-the-Rate-Funding-Impact-Survey-March-2019.pdf?t=1551803541>



Qualification reform

- **Most GCSE, AS and A-Level subjects are now assessed 100% by exams taken at the end of the course – a challenge to diverse admissions?**
- **More content to teach, leading to fewer subjects on offer and/or 3 year KS4**
- **This creates challenges in terms of lack of space in the timetable for anything else**
- **Also creates a challenge to changing admissions in that earlier exams would mean even less time to complete courses**



Qualification reform

- **GCSE content made harder and content in all qualifications has been changed to focus more on traditional knowledge**
- **Focus on long term retention of facts, revision and exam practice/preparation**
- ***“Try to teach all content [as quickly as possible]... to allow revision time rather than spacing revision during year. More emphasis on retention of facts rather than depth and application”***
- ***“More exam conditions lessons”... “Memorizing quotes. More formal assessments and mock exams.”***

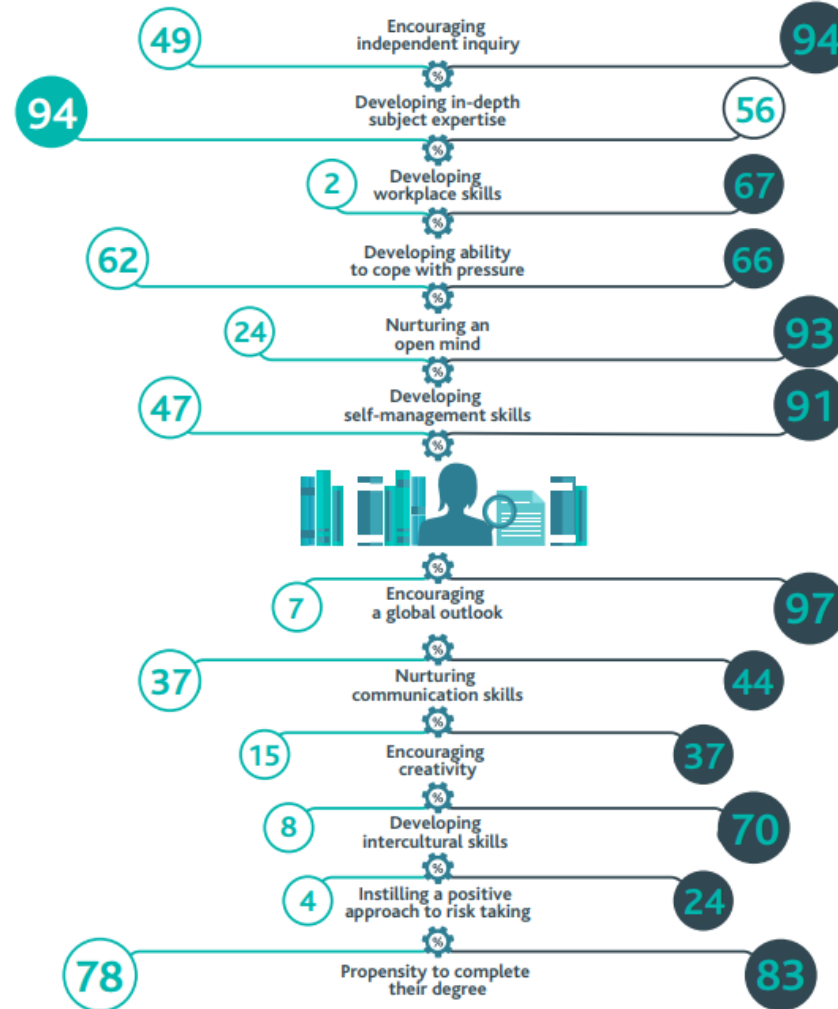


How well do you think each of these exam systems develop the following qualities in students at present?

A LEVELS

Percentages represent combined scores of good and excellent

IB DIPLOMA



Source: 2017 Annual Survey of University Admissions Officers, commissioned by ACS International Schools and IBSCA



This table shows the percentage of UK university admissions officers who believed the two education programmes developed the listed skills “well or very well”

How well do you think A levels and the International Baccalaureate diploma develop the following qualities in students at present?		
	A-levels	IB
Encouraging independent inquiry	49%	94%
Developing in-depth subject expertise	94%	56%
Developing workplace skills	2%	67%
Developing ability to cope with pressure	62%	66%
Nurturing an open mind	24%	93%
Developing self-management skills	47%	91%
Encouraging a global outlook	7%	97%
Nurturing communication skills	37%	44%
Encouraging creativity	15%	37%
Developing intercultural skills	8%	70%
Instilling a positive approach to risk taking	4%	24%
Propensity to complete their degree	78%	83%
Interest to study to MA or PhD level	44%	54%



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Qualification reform

- **With changes in content and assessment method, comparisons between cohorts, nations and qualifications, become more difficult**
- **Applied Generals:**

“It is not possible to make meaningful comparisons between the pre-existing and redeveloped qualifications because they are sometimes very different, based on different content and assessment methodologies, notably the introduction of mandatory external assessment with limited resit opportunities in place of coursework or controlled assessment.”
(Ofqual, 2019)



Qualification reform

- **GCSEs, AS and A-Levels:**

“For AS and A level this means that, all things being equal, a student who would have received a B in a legacy qualification will get a B in the new qualification” (Ofqual, 2019)

- **This wording is misleading. At the centre or student level, we cannot be so sure that reformed qualifications don't impact certain groups of students more than others**



Qualification reform


- This is potentially a challenge to admitting students from more diverse backgrounds.
- Research shows that SEND students generally struggle more with formal exams than with non-exam assessment.
- There is also some suggestion that disadvantaged pupils attain relatively worse results in reformed GCSEs than in legacy ones, although further research is needed to confirm this


Qualification reform


Key differences between countries




Ofqual


 9 to 1 grading
(9 being highest grade)


 All exams taken at the end of the course
(linear qualifications)


 Students must retake all of their exams when retaking the qualification; non-exam assessment marks can be reused



 In general, students will receive grades A* to G, but may take some GCSEs used in England (graded 9 to 1)


 Some GCSEs will be linear with all exams taken at the end of the course; some will be modular


 Students must retake all of their exams when retaking a linear GCSE; non-exam assessment marks can be reused


 Students can only retake each unit once in modular GCSEs



GCEA
Accreditation

 In general, students may take GCSEs graded A* to G (including from 2019 a new grade C*) and those graded 9 to 1

 Assessment objectives and their weightings differ in some subjects




 Content requirements are different in most subjects

Qualification reform




Key differences between countries



Ofqual

-  AS levels will not contribute to A level results
-  All exams taken at the end of the course (linear qualifications)
-  Students must retake all of their exams when retaking the qualification; non-exam assessment marks can be reused



-  AS levels contribute 40% of the total marks of the full A level
-  Individual AS and A level units can be retaken by students only once
-  AS exams can be taken at the end of the AS course or alongside A2



Qualification reform

- **AS decoupled from A-Level**

Year	AS entries	Change from previous year	Change from 2015
2015	1,330,660	-1%	n/a
2016	1,141,550	-14%	-14%
2017	660,200	-42%	-50%
2018	269,090	-59%	-80%
2019*	117,595	-56%	-91%

*2019 entries are provisional

- **This causes a challenge in the current admissions system because it makes predicting grades even harder – however PQA would mitigate this**



Accountability, workload, recruitment and retention

- EBacc and Progress 8 narrow the curriculum
- Provisional entries for 2019 show a 4% increase in EBacc subjects and a 9% decrease in non-EBacc subjects compared to 2018.

Year	EBacc subject entries	non-EBacc subject entries
2016	3,540,000	1,400,000
2017	3,853,795	1,244,235
2018	4,055,085	1,081,410
2019*	4,206,765	979,075

Year	% Change compared to 2016	
	EBacc subject entries	non-EBacc subject entries
2017	9%	-11%
2018	15%	-23%
2019*	19%	-30%

*2019 entries are provisional



Accountability, workload, recruitment and retention

- **EBacc and Progress 8 narrow the curriculum**
- ***“This decline [in entry numbers of non-EBacc subjects] indicates that schools/colleges are continuing to focus more on EBacc subjects than those subjects which do not count towards the EBacc. Progress 8 and Attainment 8 measures are also likely to be influencing these patterns as their calculation can only include a maximum of three non-EBacc GCSEs” (Ofqual, 2019)***
- **This creates challenges to the pipeline of students in non-EBacc subjects**



Accountability, workload, recruitment and retention

- *“The EBacc is made up of the subjects which the Russell Group says, at A Level, open more doors to more degrees.” (DfE, 2019)*

Facilitating subjects

- Mathematics and Further Mathematics.
- English Literature.
- Physics.
- Biology.
- Chemistry.
- Geography.
- History.
- Languages (Classical and Modern)

EBacc subjects

- English language and literature
- maths
- the sciences
- geography or history
- a language

The Russell Group last week scrapped their ‘facilitating subjects’ list.



Accountability, workload, recruitment and retention

- **The inspection process is not fit for purpose**
- **Progress 8 is a comparative measure so for every school that has a positive score, there is another with a negative one**
- **School league table positions are based purely on exam results**
- **Teacher pay can be linked to exam results and Headteachers' job security can be determined by Ofsted ratings**
- **The headline accountability measures, along with the other major accountability lever Ofsted, are driving teacher workload**



Accountability, workload, recruitment and retention

- Workload and stress amongst teachers is at unprecedented levels

neu.org.uk/policy/teachers-workload

- 84% said that workload was manageable only “sometimes” or “never”
- DfE research from 2016 shows that teachers are working on average 54.4 hours per week
- Teacher pay is down by 10% in real terms since 2010



Accountability, workload, recruitment and retention

- **Recruitment and retention crisis**

neu.org.uk/policy/teacher-recruitment-and-retention

- **40% of members believe they won't be in education in 5 years time**
- **DfE data shows that 40% of teachers leave the state sector within 5 years of starting training (this rises to 50% in shortage subjects such as maths and physics)**



Accountability, workload, recruitment and retention

- **These workload pressures, created by the toxic accountability culture, drive teachers to leave the profession**
- **They create an exam factory culture which disengages students and narrows their educational experience**
- **The workload pressures mixed with the size of reformed qualifications and inadequate funding create challenges in terms of information, advice and guidance for students**



Accountability, workload, recruitment and retention

- **EBacc and Progress 8 narrow the curriculum**
- **The headline accountability measures, along with the other major accountability lever Ofsted, are driving teacher workload**
- **Teacher pay is down by 10% in real terms since 2010**
- **Workload and stress amongst education professionals at unprecedented levels**
- **Recruitment and retention crisis**



Summary of some of the challenges

- **Inadequate funding**
- **Content and effects of reformed qualifications and assessment**
- **Size of reformed qualifications and high teacher workload potentially preventing the possibility of earlier exams**
- **Accountability measures narrowing curriculum and driving teacher workload**
- **Pipeline of students in non-EBacc subjects**
- **Recruitment and retention crisis impacting upon teacher pipeline**



More detailed summary of challenges

- **Funding is inadequate to support a broad and balanced curriculum offer. It is also inadequate for supporting effective careers guidance and generally supporting those who may need more help, such as SEND students.**
- **Reformed qualifications are more focused on retaining knowledge than developing skills and A-levels generally appear to be less effective at developing characteristics that are useful for the style of learning likely to be needed in HE**



More detailed summary of challenges

- **The assessment method used in reformed qualifications is potentially inhibiting certain groups of students from expressing their true ability**
- **Decline in AS due to decoupling makes predicting A-level grades even harder in the current system – PQA would help mitigate this**



More detailed summary of challenges

- **The size of reformed qualifications means schools are struggling to get through the content as it is. Alongside the fact that teacher workload is as high as it is, this creates challenges to the notion of bringing exams forward**
- **The size of reformed qualifications mixed with the narrow accountability measures is pushing creative subjects out of the curriculum. This creates challenges to the pipeline of students in non-EBacc subjects**



More detailed summary of challenges

- **The accountability regime is driving teacher workload. When added to the real terms decreases in pay, this is creating a recruitment and retention crisis**
- **With the secondary school population set to increase significantly*, this raises serious capacity issues – will there be enough teachers to teach students in the stages leading to HE?**

***In July 2018, the DfE reported that the number of children enrolled in state schools would increase by 355,000 within the next five years.**



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