

# Routes into Higher Education: The Challenges of Curriculum Change

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# Continued school system reform

RPA in  
progress

Review of  
local authority  
arrangements

More  
academies

Further  
diversification

More  
autonomy for  
schools

School Boards  
and regional  
chancellors

# Primary Schools

Revised National Curriculum September 2014

Accountability: more detailed information on school and pupil performance

More demanding 'secondary ready' tests

Possible reintroduction of external testing at 7

# Secondary qualification reform

## Revised National Curriculum from 2015

- standards
- content
- structure
- assessment

## Changed curriculum

- GCSE
- AS levels
- A levels

## New qualifications from 2014

- Applied Technical
- Applied General

# GCSE: measuring achievement

A basket of 8 acceptable GCSEs

Current grades A\*-G become 9 - 1

Points given for each grade

Value added measured against individual points targets

Only the first exam. taken counts in school performance tables

# Progress 8 Subject choices

## English and Mathematics

Mathematics  
DOUBLE  
WEIGHTED POINTS

English (Language)  
DOUBLE  
WEIGHTED  
POINTS IF LIT. IS  
ALSO TAKEN - THE  
BEST OF THESE  
GRADES WILL  
COUNT

## 3 more 'E.Bacc. subjects from:

sciences

computer science

geography

history

languages

SINGLE SUBJECT  
POINTS

## 'Open' subject choices

other 'E.Bacc.'

other academic  
subjects

arts subjects

vocational subjects  
'defined as high  
value'

COUNT AS 1 GCSE  
SUBJECTS WITH  
SIMILAR CONTENT  
WILL HAVE  
'DISCOUNTED'  
POINTS'

# The importance of GCSE results

GCSE achievement may become the nearest indicator of likely success at 18

GCSE results may also affect:

- choice of post-16 place / course
- university entrance
- occupational / apprenticeship entrance

All are competitive - GCSE success matters!



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# Post-16 curriculum change

More emphasis on English and Mathematics for all students at all levels

## New level 3 Technical qualifications

- High standards, high employability, backed by a minimum of 5 high status employers. These plus maths at level 3 or an extended project = Tech.Bacc. Examples include Engineering, accounting, professional cookery, I.T., manufacturing.

## New level 3 Applied General Qualifications

- A level standard and suitable for H.E. progression, backed by a minimum of 3 universities. Examples include Health & Social Care, Sport & Exercise Science, Applied Science.

18 year olds to be funded at a lower rate than 17 year olds



# A and AS level reform

Content revision assisted by  
Russell Group universities

More rigorous, much less  
coursework

Starts 2015

Linear assessment after 2  
years, not modular

AS a separate qualification,  
the same difficulty as A level,  
intended to be delivered over  
2 years

# Implications for universities

- Applicants will present qualifications with the same name but different content and grades for several years
- Potential grade deflation - future entrance requirements may be affected
- Content, delivery and assessment will have changed
- Y9 Options will have changed



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# The importance of subject choices

- Particular GCSEs are required for some post-16 qualifications and degree courses
- Prior study of particular A level subjects is of course required for some university courses
- Potential grades vs subject choice needs careful consideration
- However, note that plenty of courses do not require particular subjects for entry



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# 'Facilitating subjects'

- 'Russell Group' recommendation (but applies to other universities too - also variations between the RG universities, so research needed).
- A 'facilitating subject' is one which is a requirement for entry for some courses; other subjects may be equally suitable and widely accepted, but are not a requirement.
- Subjects that can be viewed as 'facilitating subjects':  
Maths; Physics; Biology; Chemistry; History;  
Geography; Modern and classical languages; English Literature.



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# Other subjects

- Combinations of facilitating/ other subjects are fine: two facilitating subjects leaves most options open, one facilitating subject leaves plenty of choice
- Three 'new' subjects is not usually a good idea
- Grades are arguably more important than subject choice

# Vocational qualifications

- 95% of universities currently accept BTEC for entry, and 70% of degree subjects
- Vocational quals. are usually used for relevant subject areas, but many are transferable to other subjects (note, some exceptions)
- Grades are the key - including GCSE grades
- For some courses, vocational students may have an advantage due to their sector knowledge.



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# Routes into H.E: how you can help

- Check UCAS applications carefully - make sure students have listed their qualifications correctly
- Make school/college options policies clear
- References: comment, if appropriate, on factors potentially affecting grades - e.g. if rule changes have occurred mid-cycle
- A level students - reference and personal statement may become even more important when AS results not available to universities



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Thank you