A NEW ERA

Equitable Reliable Assessment

QUALIFICATIONS FOR A NEW ERA: EQUITABLE, RELIABLE ASSESSMENT

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:
EVIDENCE FROM INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Commissioners were asked to collect evidence from their communities to inform the commission's thinking. Strategies for evidence collection were designed by commission members and were tailored to meet the needs of individual groups and to maximise the quality of illustrative evidence gathered. Commissioners were supported to compile reports of their evidence, and those reports are reproduced here. Analysis of the reports was carried out by Estelia Bórquez-Sánchez and is included as Appendix 2.

1. STUDENTS

Summary report of focus groups with students

Focus groups were held in October 2021 with students between the ages of 15-19. They were chaired by Professor Louise Hayward, chair of the Independent Assessment Commission (IAC).

The students involved had recently completed, or were currently studying for, a mixture of GCSEs, level 2 and 3 applied general qualifications (AGQs), AS-levels and A-levels.

Recruitment for the groups was voluntary and supported by the UK online student community, The Student Room, and the qualifications awarding body, AQA.

Is change needed and if so, how much and why?

- All students across the focus groups believed at least some change was needed.
- No respondents advocated for complete change, neither did any student argue for the status quo: the majority of responses on a rating scale from 0-10 (where 0 was no change and 10 was complete change) were between 3 and 6.
- The phrase 'evolution not revolution' was used on more than one occasion.
- Although asked for their thoughts on the broad definition of qualifications and

on assessment more generally, students seemed to equate qualifications with exams. Discussions focussed heavily on the use of exams and whether there was need for change in this area.

- Most students supported continuing to use exams but not exclusively.
- The perceived objectivity of exams was often cited as a reason for wanting to retain them. There was a desire for an increase in other forms of assessment such as coursework and oral presentations, which were described as being more relevant for the 'real world'.
- Students who indicated a desire to retain exams often indicated that they were conscious that their previous personal success using exams was likely to be a factor behind their desire to retain them. They were aware that others who had not been as successful might have other views.
- Almost all students agreed that, regardless of which methods of assessment they supported, those used for qualifications should support them to show the best of themselves and that one size does not necessarily fit all.

Which purposes should qualifications serve, and which purposes are most important?

Participants were offered ten potential purposes for qualifications as examples of what they are currently, or could be, used for. They were:

1. attempting to signal what a student knows and can do

2. attempting to signal where a student sits within a national rank order

3. creating national or regional league tables for schools and colleges

4. teacher/lecturer appraisal

5. marking personal development or progress of the student

6. identifying both the strengths and weaknesses of the student

7. showing readiness for work/information for employers

8. comparing students in England to students internationally

9. showing readiness for further study/information for further or higher education institutions

10. to identify national trends of performance among groups of students, for example, the performance of students from different socio-economic groups or different regions.

It was explained that these purposes were not mutually exclusive nor exhaustive, and during discussion participants were invited to identify others.

The following issues were raised:

- The purpose highlighted as being one of the most important by the largest number of students was "identifying both the strengths and weaknesses of the student". Almost all students included this in their top three.

- Students were not sure that qualifications and grades, as currently constructed, necessarily achieved this – a number argued that existing qualification demonstrate one student's performance compared to others and not the strengths and weaknesses of an individual.

- The next most common purposes identified were: "attempting to signal what a student knows and can do"; "marking personal development or progress of the student"; "showing readiness for work/information for employers".

- Students commented that they had selected purposes that focussed on the student. Students argued that the primary purpose/s of qualifications should be student-focussed.

- The main things students wanted from qualifications were information to support their learning/progression, and what mattered to potential employers or to colleges or universities for further study. In the current context, this equated to grades. Students saw grades as evidence to "open doors".

- When asked about purposes they had not selected, for example, those associated with appraising schools or teachers, students seemed less aware of these uses for qualifications. Rather than comment on those, they reiterated the point that for them, the focus should be on how it helps the student learn and/or progress.

- Some students were aware that national accountability policies had affected the courses they could or could not take, and they thought that this should not be the case. Both the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and the fact that it is a student's first attempt only that counts towards performance table scores, were identified as having an impact on their choice of subjects/courses.

- Some students commented that they would like more from qualifications/education generally. They felt that as education moved into the latter phases, broader skill development became less valued and focus was almost entirely on "remembering whatever you can for the exam".

- Most students indicated a desire to be better prepared for the world after education and the inclusion of issues which are, and will be, more relevant to them, such as climate change.

Features of the current system – benefits and improvements

- Students saw benefit in having assessment and/or qualifications that could be taken before the end of compulsory education and as such said they were in favour of assessment at different points during the latter years of school/college education.

- The main reasons for which students wanted opportunities to be assessed before the end of compulsory education were:

- doing so helps them decide what subjects to study post-16

- it helps give an indication of how they are progressing, allowing them an opportunity to change/improve the situation.

- As discussion about alternatives took place, students identified that the benefits they spoke of could also be achieved via

assessment at different stages and via different formats.

- Some students argued for having lower stakes, more flexible 'progression checks' against national standards, to help them identify their progress, at age 16 and/or other stages. They suggested using a wider variety of assessment approaches at different stages would allow them to demonstrate broader competencies.

- Most students expressed a desire to diversify assessment beyond written examinations. A common theme was a desire for assessment to be more closely related to 'real life'.

- Speaking and communication were skills that many students identified as important yet are not sufficiently part of the assessment system. They perceived these skills crucial for their life after education, in work and society, and many argued for having greater proportions of formal assessment taking place orally or in formats which required oral presentation.

- Similar thoughts were expressed about opportunities to collaborate and develop inter-personal skills. A number of students wanted more opportunities to develop broader life skills such as managing finances/handling money. Students perceived these to be important for success in the future.

- Some students spoke of a preference for all assessment to take place at a single end stage as this would reduce the number of stress points for them. However, others reflected that this risked having an 'off day' which might not allow them to demonstrate their best work and could produce a grade below the standard at which they would usually perform.

- Some suggested an increase in assessment points to help spread this risk, but perhaps capped at two or three junctures throughout the year, identified in advance, to minimise the stress that they might feel if assessment opportunities were constant.

- A number of students advocated for a mixture of modular and linear assessment opportunities within a qualification, to

achieve what they described as the "best of both worlds":

- opportunities to spread assessment risk, vary the assessment method and show what you have learnt and can do in different ways as you go along

- an assessment opportunity at the end, when students felt they might demonstrate a better level of understanding having completed the whole course.

- Students did not see the value in using only qualification results to rank schools. They commented that while qualifications were important, other factors helped determine their opinion of the school, for example, the extra-curricular offering and how supportive a school was perceived to be.

- They also argued that "other things", not just the efforts of the teachers and students at a school, can impact examination results which are therefore not a reliable reflection of quality or effort.

- Students indicated that it was important to collect data on qualification results, given how important qualifications were to their future prospects.

- Students commonly indicated that the current assessment system for qualifications did not meet the needs of all learners. For example, they suggested that qualifications using only exams did not necessarily allow those who perform better via alternative methods to demonstrate their true capabilities. They also referenced their earlier points around communication skills as an example of why the current system does not meet their needs.

- Some felt that if assessment were to be improved, the broader qualification offer in England, including AGQs and online Functional Skills courses, as alternatives or in addition to GCSEs and A-levels, offered routes to progression for most: there is "something for everyone". Students in the focus groups suggested that those who were not currently on these courses, or who struggled to access them fully, should be consulted as their views might be different.

- Students felt that they wanted more information about the various qualification options earlier in their educational journey and for the wider public to be better informed about the value of different qualifications, which they viewed as legitimate alternatives.
- Some students specifically argued that removing many AGQs was a "really bad idea" and would decrease choice and access to qualifications for many.

What would be the most important three words to describe the assessment and qualifications you would like to see by 2030?

- The most common word students used to describe the system they would like to see was one equivalent to accessible or inclusive.
- Fair was also often used, as was flexible or adaptable.
- Qualifications and assessment should be primarily student-centred and should treat students as individuals.
- Assessment and qualifications should be flexible/accessible/inclusive enough to allow all students to show what they can do.
- Students wanted to be assessed in a broad range of ways to ensure everyone has a chance to demonstrate where their strengths lie.

2. PARENTS

IAC parent focus groups facilitated by Parentkind, the national charity supporting parents' engagement with education, and the membership organisation for Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), 8 and 9 September 2021

Two focus groups were held with four self-selecting parents of school age children in England.

- Parent 1 – two children aged 14 and 17
- Parent 2 – one child aged nine (also a secondary school governor)
- Parent 3 – two children aged 15 and 17 (also primary school governor)
- Parent 4 – four children aged nine, 11, 17 and 18 (also chair of a parent association for upper and lower schools).

A representative from the IAC also attended each focus group as observers.

Participants were given an introduction to the commission's role, its objectives and case for change. They discussed the five questions below (the quotes in purple are those of the parents).

In summary:

- Parents agreed there is a case for change.
- The current system is seen as unfair, setting some children up to fail and too academically focussed. Grade inflation, low perceived value of technical qualifications and over-reliance on exams for assessment were also raised as weaknesses of the current system.
- Parents would like a fairer education system which is less pressurised, more inclusive and more reflective of the world of work.
- They would like to see any assessments take place over a longer period and less of a focus on exams at the end of the course: a combination of exams and coursework was

supported by parents and an emphasis on assessing more transferable soft skills.

- Other qualifications and links with employers need to be better promoted and from an earlier age.
- The system needs to respond more quickly to the skills needs of employers.
- The role of technology in exams and assessment could also be explored.
- Parents were supportive of the IAC's draft principles, particularly:
  - clarity around what qualifications and grades mean in terms of a student's understanding or capability in a subject
  - recognition of parents, schools and employers as key stakeholders to be included in the design and implementation of any new system.

Q1: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current system?

Strengths

Parents said that England's current exams and assessment system has a good reputation globally and that our qualifications are valid across the world. Also, it is seen as a level playing field – everyone works to the syllabus and sits the same exam under exam conditions.

Another strength mentioned was the fact that post-16 there is more than one way to gain a qualification and that does not necessarily mean going into higher education.

Weaknesses

It is seen as quite an unfair system, which sets some children up to fail.

"That's a big thing because not everyone has the same skills, obviously, but that doesn't mean that you don't deserve a chance at something."

"There are some children who are just not academic, they may not have learning difficulties, but have strengths in other areas. And that's ignored. It's not assessed. It's all very numbers based and rigid."

"It doesn't really support people with SEN [special educational needs]. Some don't do SATs [standard assessment tests], some only do one or two GCSEs, so for them... what's the future? It doesn't cater for them, it's just academic."

The system is seen as too academically focussed, and parents question the value in encouraging so many young people to go to university.

"I think that university isn't the be-all and end-all; I was one of those people that went to university almost by accident, I didn't intend to, but it was easy and there was a grant. Head of the school seemed to assume everyone would be going to university, but those tertiary options don't really get discussed."

"Weakness is the hierarchy. If you do A-levels you're at the higher end, and you must be going to university. Personally, I don't feel you should go to university if you're not going to become, for example, a professional."

"My daughter wants to do midwifery, so she has a need to go. My son isn't interested in following an academic career and I don't know that university would be right for him. You shouldn't feel like you've failed."

There is an over-reliance on exams which raises a number of concerns including: mental health issues; the fact that they don't reflect real life work situations; that they favour those young people with a good memory; and everything rests on a few exams at the end of a two-year course.

"I work on a crisis hotline and the majority of calls I've had recently are from 17- to 18-year-olds, not knowing what they want to do, or worried about results, many depressed and some to the point of suicidal."

"We're hearing about a mental health crisis in secondary schools and, as parents, we probably

have some responsibility there as we do make out that exams are incredibly important, which they are, but they're a stage gate each time. GCSEs get you to A-levels, A-levels get you to further/higher education of your choice, but I can't think of the last time I was asked to roll off my own GCSE grades."

"I still think it's a measure of attainment rather than aptitude."

"Exams don't reflect real life – you don't have to perform the exact same thing with someone assessing you every day, it's all condensed onto a single moment and creates a lot of pressure and difficulties for the individual if something goes wrong on that day."

"Why is there not more coursework, why did we move away from it?"

Grade inflation was identified as an area of concern too: one parent gave the example of a big employer setting its own selection tests due to more people achieving the highest grades.

"I heard that some companies ignore grades, they look at other things first and then have their own tests. So many people come out with As – how do you pick between two people with nine A*s; and if they're focussed on trying to get that many, do they have time for other interests, eg Duke of Edinburgh Gold?"

"You see the grades improving year-on-year, and I think that devalues those who achieved As before there were A*s, for example, so there are things around that which don't sit comfortably."

BTECs and other more vocational qualifications are not as valued as more academic qualifications:

"A lot of schools don't even do any BTECs or similar. I know of a college, it's big, almost like university, it supports multiple BTECs (eg media production) – students should be able to see it, it's incredible. But sadly people feel they're 'not valid'."

"I know growing up that someone did a BTEC

if you're just not smart enough. Again, it's those whole levels of who's good enough and who's not. And it's not just amongst parents, it's amongst students too. Once I learned more about BTECs I was a lot more supportive and wished my son had gone down that route. But it's not even spoken about – when I went to school, it wasn't even a choice."

The education system struggles to keep up with the changing world of work.

"There does seem to be a gap between skills that employers talk about as important (eg innovation, teamwork) and what young people leave school able to demonstrate."

"Ken Robinson, the educationist, talks about how the education system was designed for the factory age and putting everyone in boxes."

Q2: How could the future of the education system be improved?

Parents would like the education system to be less pressurised, more inclusive and more reflective of the world of work.

"Less stressful. Of course I want them to enjoy learning. But it's about valuing differences."

"They need to discover about their personalities – are they carers, are they active, can they communicate, can they speak in front of people? They sort of half do it, but it's not what an A-level examiner is looking for. It's almost like they don't have time for it."

"It should be for all. Make it fun, less about the numbers."

"Education needs to be relevant and enjoyable. A test at the end can kill it for so many."

They would like to see any assessments take place over a longer period and less of a focus on exams at the end of the course:

"Ultimately focusing less on the exam result – for the quest for knowledge to be a bigger thing than the achievement of exams."

"I feel that maybe some other countries have systems where it is not so focussed at one exam at the end, where assessments are conducted over a longer period. They have a more general approach, that you achieve a standard which is considered acceptable (not everyone necessarily does), as opposed to here where there seems to be a massive push for everyone to go to university, even though there are a huge number of jobs that don't actually require that."

Other qualifications and links with employers need to be better promoted and from an earlier age:

"As an employer, I have seen apprenticeships expand since the [apprenticeship] levy was applied, and they're no longer seen just for school leavers but also for vocational training. Perhaps that needs to be seen from an earlier age – it seems at the moment that you go through a couple of years at secondary school and if it seems that you're not going to be an achiever you get directed to the vocational route rather than it being part of everyone's experience."

"More work experience skills, more interaction with employers. It happens to some extent at college, but maybe it needs to start earlier. More information made available about what is out there for students once they finish. Not everyone knows exactly what they want to do, and there are so many things out there. There are jobs out there now that didn't exist when we were at school, there are constant changes that we've not grown up with and experienced."

Linked to this is the need for the system to respond more quickly to the skills needs of employers:

"There's a natural time lag between industry noticing a skills gap and feeding through to colleges and schools to equip young people with those skills. From an industry point of view I feel that's frustrating that it takes so long to respond. Potentially we need to work on identifying future skills shortages sooner so that we can feed those courses through as

well."

"How do we do coursework, do we assess things like presentation skills or mini team projects? I don't know, but I think we have to be creative. Employers need to say what they need and expect from young people, and the education system needs to adapt."

The point was raised about taking advantage of technology for exams:

"There is maybe a time to start looking at how we access exams – does it have to be pen and paper, is there not a digital solution to fairness in the exam hall? With that, would it be possible to build in reasonable adjustments on a personal level?"

Q3: What kind of assessment and qualification system would best support this different way of evaluating young people's experiences and aptitude?

Q4: How might an assessment system be designed to challenge and support every person?

There was overlap between the responses to both questions so results have been combined.

Parents would like a system that is fairer to everybody:

"Something that identifies behaviour as well as attainment – to understand somebody's attendance, commitment, how dedicated a learner they were is arguably more valuable than what they achieved, because a good employer should be able to teach what they do, but they need the 'raw materials' to work with. That would be really powerful for children who perhaps aren't so academic and can't wait to get into the workplace, as it gives them something to strive for."

"It has to be fair to the young people who

would have knocked it out of the park as well (eg exams), how you get all of these elements identified in one solution could be quite baffling, but at the moment, with grade creep, people are getting quite cynical about the achievements of young people, even though within that there are young people who've worked hard and are able, and deserve acknowledgement for that too."

"When I think about what I want for my son, I mean really... I just want him to thrive. As a parent you've got the conflicting issue of what you want best for them which, really, is ultimately mental health... but it's really hard to abandon the idea that results aren't important."

A combination of exams and coursework was supported by parents and an emphasis of assessing more transferable skills too:

"There is some value in the end-of-year exams, the skill to be able to retain information and work under pressure, but we all don't want to live that way, do we? The BTECs are assessed periodically throughout the course, coursework [daughter did drama and had to submit video evidence] and English speaking [had to do a speech and then answer questions]. Considering she's quite quiet and shy she did well, and for her it was a really valuable experience."

"Watching the student doing something, seeing how they interact with others, teamwork and things, I'm not saying it was the best when I went to school, but we were observed all the time, great to see that someone was seeing them implementing their soft skills. Focus wasn't just on one particular thing at the end of the year."

"It's about readiness for work, eg in school I'm familiar with students carrying passports and can get some kind of accreditation for kindness (singular example) but having that be more standardised might be useful?"

The International Baccalaureate (IB) was identified as a qualification that includes both coursework and exams and offers more personalised learning.

There was also a question as to whether aptitude tests traditionally used in selective education should be more widely considered, appreciating that this may be controversial.

Q5: Feedback on IAC's draft principles – are they the right principles, if not, what needs to change?

Principle 1

Assessment and qualifications should reflect what matters in schools and in society. They should provide information to all young people, to their parents/carers and to users of qualifications about the knowledge, skills and competences young people have to allow them to make good progress in the next stage of their lives, in employment, college or university.

Parents agreed with the principle as a whole, and with the need for a better understanding around what qualifications actually mean in terms of what people have had to demonstrate to achieve them.

They said GCSEs etc should be the same whichever board you take the exams through. The challenge is how you achieve the 'equitable' element.

Principle 2

Qualifications should be designed to meet the future needs of English culture, society and the economy to enable young people to thrive in less predictable times socially and economically, both nationally and internationally.

Parents supported this principle, saying young people need transferrable soft skills such as resilience, flexibility and adaptability. They said ideally employers should be fine-tuning, not taking on wholesale training for basic knowledge.

One parent said they felt children are so spoon-fed they don't think for themselves – for

example, following a fixed path, but not being aware of the broader set of skills they need to thrive socially and economically.

Principle 3

England's qualifications system should be inclusive both in purpose and in the design and development of the system.

There was strong agreement for this principle.

One parent, also a governor, said:

"I don't know how you'd do that. I think it's interesting with the new Ofsted framework, the new parental engagement and so on, but even as governors as a stakeholder they present a school development plan and I think: 'Are you telling me? Or are we included in this decision?' I think it's hard, but it's the right way to go, even if it's a long process and people don't all agree."

Principle 4

Qualifications should support progression for all young people, but should not exist only to act as a mechanism for determining the next examination or selection.

There was some confusion in one of the focus groups as to the meaning of this principle. Parents agreed that encouraging young people to be lifelong learners is more important than learning particular subject matter.

Principle 5

Qualifications and assessment should be recognised to be one part of a wider education system and care should be taken to ensure that accountability systems do not distort qualifications.

Parents agreed strongly with this statement:

"We're not just growing students, we're growing citizens as well."

One parent made the point that with the introduction of its new inspection framework, Ofsted has made the move away from exam results as a measure of a school's performance, which she saw as a positive step forward.

3. THE EDUCATION PROFESSION

Evidence from the profession

How the evidence was gathered

On 4 May 2021 a small pilot group of school and college leaders met for an hour. They were from institutions that taught both vocational and academic qualifications from different contexts, including a residential special school, and from different parts of the country. They were invited to discuss a set of statements about qualifications to elicit their reactions, along with questions about the balance between moderated validated teacher assessment and written exams externally delivered, and between a baccalaureate model and external exams in selected subjects.

Once the activity had been refined, it was repeated with more than thirty participants online in a roundtable arranged with the Chartered College of Teaching. These were teachers and school leaders with varied professional experiences, self-selected on the basis of their interest in an invitation to debate contemporary assessment issues.

What are the problems with the current system?

The current model of assessment, and its impact on curriculum design and pupils' experience of the curriculum, does not meet the needs of all pupils in all contexts.

"You are in a system that sees academic excellence as the pinnacle – [we need an] assessment system that would help a student to recognise that there are many pinnacles.

"The current assessment process and its terminal nature does not always evidence the progress a student has [made] or is making.

"GCSEs reward learning up to that point and help identify pathways – the problem for lower attainers is that we don't value all grades.

"If you 'fail' at GCSE however, the current system does not support you so well since the apprenticeships etc are separated out and don't always lead to employment. If you fall foul of that system what is then left?

For most pupils, the nature of the exams and the lack of opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, skill, understanding and wider attributes, brings a real limitation to both the education they experience and the qualifications they then gain.

"GCSEs are no longer fit for purpose in my opinion – they narrow the curriculum and the learning too much at year 11. We have to spend a lot of time unpicking the focus on performance rather than learning when students start sixth form.

"Currently assessments are something that is 'done to' pupils rather than 'done with' students in a formative and developmental process.

This is particularly true for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and/or mental health challenges.

"Young people with special needs are left out.

The problem is not only or always exams. Participants pointed to the impact of the accountability system, as well as the way in which grades are awarded.

"It's about high-stakes testing linked to league tables and performance management targets.

The exams aren't the issue - the availability of awards is constraining.

Is there a place for exams?

This does not mean that exams are unnecessary. Overwhelmingly, it appears that educators support external exams as one part of a system, particularly for a small number of the highest attaining pupils as they seek to progress to the next stages of learning at university.

"High-stakes examinations are crucial for students looking ahead to academic futures.

"They do enable the standardised testing of subject knowledge and cognitive skills.

"They do offer a focus – an end point – without which it can be difficult to teach.

Participants were clear though that this should be only one part of the system.

"There is an independence and standard level that mean that exams are a valuable indicator of student performance across educational settings. As a part of the process they give evidence but should not necessarily be seen as the overall judgement.

"Exams are one way to assess learning, not the only way to assess learning.

Do we need qualifications at 16?

Some participants expressed a view that GCSEs are necessary for those who leave at 16, in order to evidence their learning. Others suggested that many of those pupils are looking to evidence a range of competencies that GCSEs are not currently designed to give. Having 'terminal' exams at 16 seems increasingly artificial.

What could a better system look like?

Participants did not want to see a split model of qualifications similar to the O-level/CSE split, where pupils are potentially placed on a track by virtue of the housing estate they live on. Instead, participants spoke of having access to a blend of appropriate teacher assessment including assessment of group work, with access to 'stage rather than age' assessments of core skills. These assessments would then lead on at appropriate points to more formal assessments, including exams.

Even then, the form of assessment would need to align with the subject being assessed, meaning that not everything would be assessed by an exam.

"Our system should enable all students to evidence their skills and knowledge.

"Assessments should provide useful information to someone who knows nothing about me. This might be someone I want to work for, who may not need academic qualifications, but is looking for someone with another specific skill.

"Should there be different qualifications for different levels for different purposes? For example, maths to show competence in numeracy should be different from a maths qualification which assesses whether or not someone has the knowledge/skills to study maths as an academic discipline at a higher level.

"In some other countries, vocational pathways hold the same kudos as academic ones.

What is needed for change to happen?

We need a change in the mindset away from the view that academic qualifications are the only, or the most important, qualifications. Participants also identified a need for change in teacher training and professional development, to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current system and to develop skills in the different ways in which assessment could be carried out, both to support student learning and to evidence qualifications.

"Changing the wide perception that the only qualifications that count are the academic is a major barrier to change.

"Develop teachers pedagogical understanding of assessment – there is not understanding about norm-reference, moderation, standardisation etc. Also, the pros and cons of the options.

4. EVIDENCE FROM EMPLOYERS AND UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS

The business organisation, the CBI, convened two focus groups: to discuss ways in which qualifications are used in recruitment and in admission procedures, and how the needs of employers and those concerned with admissions could be better met within this. One group consisted of employers, the other further education colleges and university admissions departments. These were self-selecting focus groups, convened by the CBI and attended by an additional member of the IAC. This evidence does not represent CBI policy.

The groups included businesses covering a range of sectors – including technology, food supply, hospitality, energy and utilities, education, and construction – of varying sizes and from across the UK, and were operated under the Chatham House Rule[1].

Focus group with businesses, 21 May 2021

What are the problems with the current system?

Participants described typically using qualifications to set minimum requirements for entry, as a crude filter to get young people 'through the door'. This is particularly true for companies with heavily oversubscribed positions, where GCSEs are often used as a baseline.

However, the focus in recruitment is on potential, and exam grades only give a limited picture. There was a sense that the education system currently has one lens on a child and doesn't report on them as the whole person that businesses are interested in.

Several attendees viewed a reliance on exam grades in recruitment as a barrier to social mobility and were actively looking at other ways to sort candidates as they seek to build a diverse workforce.

Exams have traditionally not served SEND communities well; businesses value diversity of thought but a strict reliance on exam results in recruitment can lead to neurodiverse talent being overlooked.

The links between curriculum and assessment were emphasised, particularly with regards to how subjects are assessed as standalone entities when, in the real world, subjects interact.

The point was made that, in addition to not measuring the employability skills that employers look for, exams may in fact actively work against the skills that businesses seek in young people. One participant described having to unpick the perfectionism that frequently arises from an exam system which trains young people to fear making and learning from mistakes.

What could a better system look like?

The consensus was that businesses are much more interested in employability and interpersonal skills than in exam grades. Businesses seek to recruit young people with a growth mindset, who demonstrate motivation, innovation, agility, resourcefulness, good performance in a team, good communication skills and problem-solving skills. Exam grades do not give this information.

Many employers look to proxies such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, National Citizen Service and Camp America in order to evidence soft skills, but there was a recognition that taking part in such activities may be more difficult for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

---

[1] Participants in the meeting are free to use the information but not to disclose who made any particular point. This is intended to lead to more open discussion.

There was not a clear consensus on whether, or how, an alternative assessment system might measure soft skills, but there was interest in a 'scorecard' idea, that is, that students leave education with reflections on their soft skills from teachers, or perhaps a portfolio of their work that goes beyond exam grades. Reference was also made to the International Baccalaureate model, which makes community service and physical activity a requirement for achieving the overall academic qualification.

Focus group with education providers, 27 May 2021

What are the problems with the current system?

Participants use qualifications as a filter to an extent, in admitting students to university courses. Further and higher education (FE and HE) institutions often receive little, or inconsistent, information about students beyond their grades, which forces them to use grades in admissions more heavily than they otherwise would. However, it is clear that focusing on grades alone ignores the disadvantages that many young people face. There was concern too that exams do not accurately reflect what neurodiverse students bring to the classroom.

Universities discussed their use of contextual admissions, where they invest significant time in understanding the whole student and the support they may need to be successful in further study. This is not obvious from exam grades. Often, prior exam results are used as a means of understanding the students' needs and identifying the appropriate wraparound support to give them rather than to decide whether they are suitable for admission.

It was also observed that while many companies report seeking to recruit well-rounded young people, this is not always reflected in the practicalities of recruitment, which still leans heavily on exam results. The role of professional bodies in setting exam-based barriers to enter lucrative professions was also highlighted as an issue.

What could a better system look like?

Several members raised the possibility of students transferring within or beyond the education system with a portfolio of their achievements that encompasses more than just their exam results, although there was also concern that such an approach would undermine colleges' role in allowing students to start completely afresh when joining.

Members discussed the work that has already been done in the FE and HE sectors to diversify the types of assessment on offer, which has not been reflected in schools.

While there was some enthusiasm for greater use of teacher references which reflect on more than exam grades, there was also concern that this would disadvantage pupils at schools with fewer resources and time to allocate to such a process.

Conclusion

It is clear that while exam grades play a part in allowing employers to sift candidates, both employers and university admissions tutors need more information than exam grades can give. They need information about the skills and mindsets which students bring, including their self-motivation, agility and resourcefulness, and their ability to perform well in teams, to communicate, innovate and solve problems. And they need to understand the support that school leavers will need to succeed in the next stages of education and employment. The exam system neither gives sufficient information about these skills, nor encourages students to develop them. Instead, the current system encourages perfectionism, fear of failure and silo-thinking, which actively undermines the abilities of school leavers to innovate and take creative risks.

A better system would develop and report on soft skills, and on achievements beyond exam grades, to give a more rounded picture of what each individual has achieved.

5. SENIOR STAKEHOLDERS RESPONSIBLE FOR QUALIFICATIONS

Individual interviews were held between 27 April 2021 and 17 July 2021, with senior officials from Ofqual, OCR, AQA, WJEC, Pearson UK, City and Guilds and the Federation of Awarding Bodies.

Interviewees were sent in advance a briefing that included the following questions, and were invited to comment on these:

1. **What, in your view are the main problems with the current assessment system in England?**

2. **What do you think we can learn from the 2020 and 2021 experiences?**

3. **What should be the main principles to underpin a vision of an improved assessment system in England?**

4. **What do you think the main purpose(s) of the assessment system should be?**

   a. **How do you think this should relate to school accountability?**

   b. **Should the labour market be the main audience for the results?**

   c. **Should entry to higher education be the main use of the results?**

5. **How could a new assessment system support equity and equality for all learners?**

   a. **Do you have any suggestions about vocational qualifications?**

   b. **How might the assessment system challenge and support all learners?**

6. **Are there other countries from which we could learn about robust alternatives to England? What is the evidence base to support any recommendations for other countries?**

7. **What are the main practical implications, including at national level, of your recommendations for changes to England's assessment system?**

8. **Do you have any further points that you wish to make?**

The discussions were rich and varied. The analysis below presents distinctive and original thoughts arising from them, organised by the questions above.

Main problems with the current assessment system in England

- There is too much political interference.
- The regulatory regime is too directive.
- There is a lack of clarity regarding who is running which bits of the system.
- The problem is that the bottom 40 per cent are ignored (reference to former Education Secretary Keith Joseph).
- The academic model is dominant.
- Learners are seen as a commodity at times.
- Assessment purposes are added after they are designed.
- Our workforce doesn't engage in a lot of qualifications.
- The problem is with qualifications rather than assessment per se – should be more relevant and empowering. Better blend of vocational and academic.
- There is a risk-averse attitude to curriculum change and destinations for learners.
- Higher education is over-reliant on public exams for admissions.

What we can learn from the 2020 and 2021 experiences

System

- The system is too complex, arcane and burdensome. The entire regime fell in on itself in 2020.
- Pandemic exposed the fragility of the system.
- Continuous assessment is important.
- Need to be able to connect grades to students' own work.
- Teachers could be more involved but teacher assessment has to be consistent.
- Scrapping modular exams made the system less resilient.

GCSE

- GCSE needs to change. An end-of-course exam system is too fragile and leads to drilling.
- GCSE doesn't serve the most and least able students.
- Are GCSEs really necessary? What are they used for?
- Are there too many exams at GCSE? Do they assess the right skills? Soft skills?

Exams

- Exams have a useful place as part of the system.
- Too much emphasis on terminal exams. Knowledge and skills debate.
- Exams are more suitable at 18 than at 16.
- External assessment is the fairest way to assess.
- Teachers now favour exams.
- Young people wanted to demonstrate their skills through exams.

Digital assessment

- We should be able to move to digital assessment.
- There will be no going back in technology for teaching and learning and assessment after the pandemic.
- There should be more innovation.

Grade inflation problems

- Teacher judgement can be trusted as long as systems are built around them.
- Vocational training qualifications (VTQs) had fewer issues during the pandemic.

What should be the main principles to underpin a vision of an improved assessment system in England?

- Inclusivity.
- Serve students.
- Challenge.
- Support learning.
- Tests worth teaching to.
- Adaptability/flexibility.
- Empowering.
- Coherence.
- Innovation.
- Need longer time for reforms (not short political cycles).
- Needs of individual learners.
- System coherence – alignment with teaching and learning practices.
- Manageable for teachers – doesn't dominate and crowd out teaching and learning.
- Resilience.
- Evidence-based.
- Standard that is clear for everyone.
- Social justice and equality and diversity.

Vocational

- Measurement of individual ability and aptitude.
- Need a sector and subject-based approach.
- Parity of opportunity.
- Validity.
- Proportionality.

What do you think the main purpose(s) of the assessment system should be?

- Progression signalling and the measurement of schools and pupils.
- To show what pupils know and can do.
- Tracking pupils over time.
- Need to consider how much discrimination we need and want in the system.
- For VTQs, preparation for life and work.
- For academic qualifications, progression.

How do you think this should relate to school accountability?

- A number of respondents talked about the problems with league tables and use of assessment data for this purpose and Ofsted use of data.
- Accountability should be disconnected, as it affects teaching and learning.
- Teacher assessment would be impossible if linked to accountability.

How could a new assessment system support equity and equality for all learners?

- Less end-of-course assessment.
- Functional language and maths.
- Equity is bound up with the wider education system, not just assessment.
- More hybrid approach and the use of vivas, where students present their work to experts and answer questions.
- Variety of assessments would support equity.

Do you have any suggestions about vocational qualifications?

- Stop using the phrase parity of esteem.
- Remove the stigma around VTQs.

Are there other countries from which we could learn about robust alternatives to England? What is the evidence base to support any recommendations for other countries?

- Singapore, with three pathways and explicit routes of transition.
- Singapore, Finland, not the US.
- Scotland – new apprenticeship model based upon the Swiss system.
- Germany – for VTQs.

What are the main practical implications, including at national level, of your recommendations for changes to England's assessment system?

- Teacher assessment should be a much more integral part of the system.

Do you have any further points that you wish to make?

- It is in everyone's interest to lift the lid on the black box that is the system.
- Any change needs to be based on a strong strategy, with a ten- to twenty-year lead-in.
- Education is a collaborative effort and stakeholders need to be involved. Needs to be coherent.
- We have a low trust society in which exams are trusted.
- Schools are worried about being sued. Law firms have been offering seminars.
- We should not be exam factories.
- Don't try to introduce new things in a pandemic. The system can't respond.
- There is a forgotten 50 per cent in the system.
- Need a cross-party agenda.
- Can't look at assessment in isolation – need to look at teaching, the curriculum and the whole system.
- Are we naturally coming up to a reform period now that the Government has been in power for ten years?

6. EVIDENCE FROM POLICYMAKERS

The IAC organised two focus group discussions with more than 40 policy leads from voluntary sector organisations, trade unions, awarding bodies and others in spring 2021, together with a range of one-on-one discussions with policy makers. These discussions were organised by the Edge Foundation to support the work of the commission.

One impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the cancellation of exams two years in a row has been to bring the assessment system into the policy spotlight as never before.

While some politicians, most notably the former Secretary of State for Education, have called for a rush back to exams as "the best and fairest way for young people to show what they know and can do" (Gavin Williamson, **educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2020/11/29/ exams-are-the-best-and-fairest-way-for- young-people-to-show-what-they-know- and-can-do-the-education-secretary-on-the- importance-of-exams/**) many from all parts of the political spectrum have called for change.

Robert Halfon, influential Conservative MP and chair of the Education Select Committee, has been among the most radical, calling for an end to GCSE exams even before the Covid-19 pandemic:

"All young people should have access to the technical and creative subjects that will give them the skills that employers are looking for. These are not 'soft skills' developed at the expense of knowledge, but the essential skills that will enable young people to interpret, manipulate and communicate that knowledge. We must move from knowledge-rich to knowledge-engaged (**fenews.co.uk/fe-voices/ gcses-have-had-their-day-sector-response/**)[2]

Kate Green, while Shadow Secretary of State for Education, similarly suggested that the assessment system must change to reflect the need for breadth and value young people's talents:

"We remain an outlier in putting students through a huge system of multiple terminal exams at GCSE level, a reflection of an assessment system designed for a now outdated school leaving age, just as we remain an outlier in setting pupils on a relatively narrow path at the age of sixteen, that sees many young people studying only three subjects. (**rethinkingassessment.com/ rethinking-blogs/englands-obsession-with- high-stakes-exams-goes-against-teenage- brain-science/**)[3]

The appetite for change seems to have gained significant momentum, with the influential One National Caucus of Conservative MPs calling for an end to GCSEs (**onenationconservatives.files. wordpress.com/2020/10/futureofeducation. pdf**)[4] and, in Wales, Plaid Cymru making this part of their official policy (**bbc.co.uk/news/uk- wales-politics-54355913**)[5].

In general, there was a strong appetite for exploring change with a leaning towards revolution rather than evolution in the system. Some of the key lessons from the pandemic were clear:

"It is possible to have two years without exams. Why not more?

"Teachers are very capable of assessing their students.

"Assessment without exams needs proper planning rather than being rushed in.

There was a strong feeling that as we move into the next era of the education system, we need to think carefully about the purpose of assessment. In all the groups we spoke to, the need for assessment to help mark personal progress and to signal the development of skills to employers were prized far more highly than holding schools to account or doing well in international comparisons such as PISA, the Programme for International Student Assessment.

Policy makers recognise the perceived strengths of the current system that we would not want to lose – a wide currency and understanding, and a single system that covers all young people. However, they were also clear that there are several aspects that they would be particularly keen to change. In our conversations, the most popular areas for change were having two sets of high-stakes exams at 16 and again at 18, despite the raising of the participation age, the excessive use of exams to fuel league tables and the over-focus on end-point written exams as the sole measure of success.

To create a fairer assessment system for all, policy makers had plenty of suggestions for the way forward:

More multimodal assessments to give opportunities for different skills to shine.

More continuous chances to perform not crammed into specific points.

A wider range of assessment approaches, more focus on skills and on understanding.

We finished by asking the policy makers to tell us in three words what they would like the assessment system to look like by 2030:

7. RESEARCHERS' FOCUS GROUP REPORT

The first focus group for researchers was held on 2 July 2021. Present at the meeting were the following people:

Jo-Anne Baird – IAC member. Professor at University of Oxford.

Patricia Broadfoot – Professor Emeritus.

Nansi Ellis – National Education Union.

Louise Hayward – Chair of the IAC. Professor at University of Glasgow.

Louis Volante – Professor, Brock University and Maastricht University School of Governance.

Dominic Wyse – IAC member and convenor for researchers' focus group. Professor at UCL Institute of Education.

Two of the researchers invited to the focus group could not attend the first meeting so they were individually interviewed subsequently:

Pam Sammons – Professor at University of Oxford.

Gill Wyness – Associate Professor, UCL Institute of Education.

The focus group members have spent their careers researching many of the issues relevant to the aims of the commission. As such their comments represent summaries that included their experience of carrying out multiple research projects. Focus group members were also all able to draw on their extensive knowledge of relevant research studies undertaken by colleagues internationally.

Focus group members were sent in advance a briefing that included the following questions and were invited to comment on these in writing if they wished to:

1. What if any is the main problem with the current assessment system in England?

2. What should be the main principles to underpin a vision of an improved assessment system in England?

3. How might a new assessment system address a range of different assessment purposes but also mitigate negative consequences caused by conflicting purposes for assessment (eg a main purpose to assess pupils' learning but also a purpose to hold schools accountable)?

4. How could a new assessment system support equity and equality for all learners?

5. Are there other countries from which we could learn about robust alternatives to England? Do note the evidence base to support any recommendations for other countries.

6. What are the main practical implications, including at national level, of your recommendations for changes to England's assessment system?

7. Do you have any further points about assessment in England that you wish to make?

The report that follows took account of both written and oral answers to the questions. Inevitably there were overlaps between answers to the questions as part of the focus group dialogues. As a result, the analysis for this report has identified the key themes that each represent the majority of views from the focus group. All the respondents commented on the first draft of this report and all comments were addressed as part of writing up this final version.

The main problems with assessment and qualifications in England

The statutory assessment and qualifications system in England reflects a lack of clarity about the purposes of assessment. In particular, the need to hold teachers and schools accountable for the quality of education that they provide has been confounded with the need for assessment for students' learning. As Louise Hayward noted in her written response:

The assessment system appears to be focussed on judgement and categorisation rather than using assessment to improve learning at the level of the individual, the school or the nation. However, it would be difficult to imagine the kind of change that might appear to be desirable without beginning with the curriculum.

Patricia Broadfoot backed this up during the focus group meeting when she spoke about the importance of fitness for purpose, reminding us of the school certificate model that was based on an idea of something to which all young people could aspire.

The statutory assessment and qualifications systems in England have distorted students' education in undesirable ways. In particular the curriculum has been unduly narrowed. Arguably this is in contradiction with the statutory need for a broad and balanced curriculum.

The assessment and qualifications system has a focus on traditional academic outcomes at the expense of rigorous recognition of other equally important aspects of learning.

There is a lack of attention to the social, moral, creative and economic purposes that the education system seeks to develop in its future citizens. Part of this lack of attention includes the neglect of the vital importance of vocational education. The assessment and qualifications system needs to recognise the full range of talents that all young people have, and at the same time be better aligned with the world of work that young people enter, not just in an imagined future but every year as each cohort finishes their formal education.

Main principles for a reformed assessment and qualifications system

The assessment system should reflect, and contribute to, the development of a different society – a more just society.

The purpose of assessing young people's learning should be clearly separated from the mechanisms for holding teachers and schools to account for the quality of education.

Equity, in recognition of all young people's talents built on understanding of diversity, should be the most important principle to drive reforms in the assessment and qualifications system.

Equity in assessment and qualifications requires sufficient diversity of curriculum content to reflect young people's differing social contexts, experiences in life and their interests. This means that a universal national system of assessment is not sufficient because this form cannot account for the diversity that is part of all students' prior experiences and knowledge.

The assessment system should contribute positively to the provision and experience of a genuinely broad and balanced curriculum for all students. This includes ensuring that assessment systems do not lead to undue narrowing of the curriculum.

Practical actions for changes to assessment and qualifications

The undue emphasis on final exams should be changed to ensure that young people experience a better balance of exams and coursework assessments. The reasons for the use of a range of forms of assessment are:

a) differences in students' natural abilities to perform in exams versus other types of assessments;

b) the greater breadth of aspects that can be addressed in coursework assessments;

c) the importance of valid assessments in programmes such as post-16 skills-oriented practical courses where traditional examinations are often not the most appropriate form of assessment.

A recommendation that teacher assessment alone is the best way to assess young people's learning would not be appropriate as, like any assessment, it has limitations. The research evidence in relation to the pros and cons of exams versus teacher assessment reveals diverse findings.

For example, in his written response Louis Volante commented: "Indeed, a large body of recent research suggests that teachers' grades are better at predicting college/university success since they are ideally positioned to assess both cognitive and self-regulatory skills (see Brookhart et al, 2016; Galla et al, 2019)."

This is complicated by a survey and comparison of 'centre assessed grades' versus an algorithm used by government in 2020, that Gill Wyness was involved with. The survey suggested that centre assessed grades gave an advantage to students with parents who were qualified at graduate level and therefore disadvantaged some other groups of students (**blogs.ucl.ac.uk/cepeo/2021/06/08/thegraduate-parentadvantageinteacherassessedgrades/**).

It is also important to note that other forms of assessment, for example, those more relevant to vocational qualifications, are not covered by these data. These data also remind us of the perennial problem of having teacher predicted grades, rather than finalised teacher assessments and exams, at the heart of the progressions to university.

Evidence from other countries may provide useful practical examples of how assessment could be done differently in England but, as Jo-Anne Baird made clear, there is a need to ensure that the countries selected for comparison are ones that appear to uphold our principles for a reformed assessment and examinations system in England. Louis Volante pointed out that a holistic view of education is evident in some Canadian provinces, and places such as New Zealand, or the work being done on Ireland's new primary curriculum. A holistic orientation to curriculum and assessment in these regions is a phenomenon that has also emerged in work that Dominic Wyse has conducted on the most effective ways of teaching and assessing pupils' reading.

If assessments of young people are to be used as part of analysing the performance of teachers, schools and the education system, then this should be on the basis of national representative sampling of schools across England. There is abundant evidence in school effectiveness research of how to achieve this, as Pam Sammons noted, including the vital role of contextual or value-added measures in order to measure impacts of Socio-Economic Status (SES) in relation to assessments of learning. This evidence is presented in the new British Educational Research Association (BERA) report entitled High standards, not high stakes (**bera.ac.uk/publication/high-standards-not-high-stakes-an-alternative-to-sats**) which built on a previous report about problems with baseline assessment (**bera.ac.uk/publication/a-baseline-without-basis**).

The focus on primary education in these reports reminds us of the vital importance of ensuring that the principles for assessment, and the practicalities, ensure that from early years education up to the end of young people's post-16 education there is consistency and coherence in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in England.

References cited in this text

SM Brookhart, TR Guskey, AJ Bowers, JH McMillan et al (2016). A century of grading research: Meaning and value in the most common educational measure. Review of Educational Research, 86, 803–848.

BM Galla, EP Shulman, BD Plummer et al (2019). Why high school grades are better predictors of on-time college graduation than are admissions test scores: the roles of self-regulation and cognitive ability. American Educational Research Journal, 56(6), 2077-2115.

Other suggested references

From Louis Volante:

M Birenbaum, C DeLuca, L Earl, M Heritage, et al (alphabetical order) (2015). International trends in the implementation of assessment for learning: Implications for policy and practice. Policy Futures in Education, 13(1), 117-140.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2018a). Equity in Education: Breaking Down Barriers to Social Mobility. OECD Publishing.

oecd.org/education/equity-in-education-9789264073234-en.htm

J Staufenberg (2017). Ofsted inspectors urged to crack down on schools 'off-rolling' pupils. www.educationviews.org/ofsted-inspectors-urged-crack-schools-off-rolling-pupils/

SM Thomas, Y Gana and B Muñoz-Chereau (2016). England: The Intersection of International Achievement Testing and Educational Policy Development. In L Volante (Ed) (2016), The Intersection of International Achievement Testing and Educational Policy: Global Perspectives on Large-Scale Reform (pp. 37-57). Routledge.

L Volante, C DeLuca, E Baker, H Harju-Luukkainen et al (2020). Synergy and tension between large-scale and classroom assessment: International trends. Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice, 39(4), 21-29.

From Louise Hayward:

There is evidence exploring how different countries deal with accountability, eg: nfer.ac.uk/media/3032/nfer_accountability_literature_review_2018.pdf

and seminal texts that explore effectiveness and improvement, eg:

C Chapman, P Armstrong, A Harris, D Muijs, D Reynolds, P Sammons (2012). School effectiveness and improvement research, policy, and practice: Challenging the orthodoxy?

Bob Lingard, Aspa Baroutsis and Sam Sellar (2021).Enriching educational accountabilities through collaborative public conversations: Conceptual and methodological insights from the Learning Commission approach. Journal of Educational Change. doi: 10.1007/s10833-020-09407-x

Harry Torrance (2018). The Return to Final Paper Examining in English National Curriculum Assessment and School Examinations: Issues of Validity, Accountability and Politics, British Journal of Educational Studies, 66:1, 3-27, DOI: 10.1080/00071005.2017.1322683 **https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00071005.2017.1322683**

Bethan Marshall (2017) The politics of testing, English in Education, 51:1, 27-43, DOI: 10.1111/eie.12110

S Kippin and P Cairney. The Covid-19 exams fiasco across the UK: four nations and two windows of opportunity. Br Polit (2021). **doi.org/10.1057/s41293-021-00162-y**

Tom Bramley (2020). Metaphors and the psychometric paradigm, Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice, 27:2, 178-191, DOI: 10.1080/0969594X.2020.1731421

Gordon Stobart (2008). Testing Times: The Uses and Abuses of Assessment

From Patricia Broadfoot:

Postscript

Some thoughts on assessment in the post Covid-19 world

As this book went to press in June 2020, the world was in the grip of the Covid-19 pandemic. Never before had we seen such comprehensive disruption to our established way of life with people across the world 'locked down' in their homes and businesses of all kinds shut. Perhaps for the first time, schools were closed for months at the very time when many students would have been taking public exams. But this year, exams could not happen. Alternative means of assessing students and accrediting their achievements had to be identified rapidly so that students could be awarded appropriate grades and selected as fairly as possible for their chosen next steps in their education or future employment. What more than a century of passionate argument against formal written examinations had not been able to achieve, was finally realised in a few short weeks.

The theme of this book of collected works is the relationship between education, its social context and how assessment practices have evolved to mediate that relationship. Although the various chapters range over different levels of the education system and different policy contexts, they share a common ambition to explore the insights to be gained from a sociological approach to understanding the role that educational assessment plays in various social settings. Normally, those social settings evolve quite slowly, over decades, rather than years, as changing economic and political, as well as social, imperatives dictate. In 2020, by contrast, that evolution was dramatic and arguably, unprecedented in its speed and scale. No one was in a position to predict how the established order might need to evolve in the long term if citizens around the world were to continue to be protected from the threat of the lethal Covid-19 virus through provision for safe social contact. As governments around the world faced significantly increased debt and businesses were required to learn to operate in novel ways virtually overnight, educational institutions of all kinds also had to respond to the new exigencies in a matter of weeks, gradually moving from closure to cautious opening with safe social distancing. Institutions and

individuals rapidly learned to engage with each other virtually and substantial elements of educational provision moved online. Teachers in schools and universities became adept at delivering content and providing feedback through the internet for those who could or would engage with this new form of tuition. But, significant as these momentous changes in the delivery of education were, they were arguably not as fundamental as the changes in assessment practices that would be required.

In the Epilogue to this volume, I suggest that "it may be that we stand on the threshold of an 'assessment revolution' made possible by the revolution in the way we live our lives today". When that Epilogue was written, that surmise had to be largely conjectural, prompted by the increasingly pervasive presence in our lives of the internet and other virtual tools for, in practice, progress towards the use of technological tools in high-stakes assessments, had proved remarkably limited. As Chapter 18 discusses, despite the many potential advantages of technology-enhanced assessment, the challenges and risks associated with such a move are many. Given the powerful gatekeeper role of summative assessment, when so much is at stake for individuals, the issue of trust in the procedures to be used is overwhelming. External examinations, typically unseen and closely supervised, still enjoyed that trust and hence, despite the inconvenience and expense of designing, delivering and marking them in traditional ways, their widespread use persisted – until the advent of the 2020 global pandemic. The resultant rapid changes in the social order involving constraints in normal social contact at a stroke made thinkable the unthinkable. Where possible, assessments too had to become virtual, delivered and marked online. Where time scales were too short for such a change to be achieved, students needed to be assessed and, in many cases, ranked by their teachers. What would have been unthinkable and certainly unacceptable, in many contexts around the world only a few months earlier, had now to be accepted, a force majeure.

The purpose of this short postscript is to speculate further than has been possible in any of the contributions to this book, which were all written before the 2020 crisis, how educational assessment might change in the future as a result of the shock waves in society caused by the pandemic. If the constraints holding back new developments in assessment practice were essentially social, rather than technical, as suggested above, what might be the lasting impact on such practices of the dismantling of so many traditional educational arrangements in response to the seismic changes brought about by the Covid-19 global pandemic?

As I write, there is a widely shared view that the world has been irrevocably changed; that the future will not be like the past. What it will be like, however, no one can truly predict since it depends on a number of unknowns. What has become clear, however, is that the internet will be an ever more ubiquitous tool of social life, a tool that individuals and organisations have learned to harness for the new and creative uses that have become a vital part of the fabric of today's society. It has already become a major, and probably permanent, element of educational provision. In such a context, it seems inevitable that assessment procedures too, will increasingly be delivered online, the barriers that had hitherto inhibited their acceptability swept away by the exigencies of what is practicable in the post-Covid world.

This is especially likely given that the technologies that can be harnessed for the delivery of both formative and summative assessment online are now widely available. As suggested in Chapter 18, it is the willingness to use them that has been lacking. Fear has been a major factor hindering their adoption – fear of hardware breakdowns or software inadequacy; fear of cheating; fear of change; fear of challenge. But will such fear continue to hold back the considerable potential benefits of online assessment in terms of both the validity and reliability of assessments in a world that has become accustomed to every other aspect of life being available in that way? It seems unlikely.

As ideas about how to deliver education change, so this in turn may well make traditional paper-based tests and examinations come to seem increasingly archaic and out of step with the needs of the times. As already intimated in the final section of this book, such changes were already underway before the momentous events of 2020. But the impact of a global pandemic which has impacted on every aspect of life and on every part of the world, has created a climate for change in the social fabric of life that is truly unprecedented. As such, it seems inconceivable that educational assessment will not itself be transformed to fit the needs of a very different future. Just as mass public examinations evolved in the 19th century to meet the changes prompted by the radically different social world of the industrial revolution – as I discuss in Chapter 2 – so it seems likely that there will now be a further evolution in assessment practices so that they meet the needs of a social world that has had to become significantly more virtual. These practices are likely to take full advantage of the potential of the online tools now available to fulfil the ongoing need for the certification of students' achievement and their selection for future opportunities. Coupled with the ever more pervasive use of 'big data' to monitor institutional standards and to compare educational achievement on a national and international scale, the transformation may indeed come to justify the epithet of 'revolution'.

As I argue in the various chapters of Part 5, there are many potential advantages in online assessments. They can be flexible, personalised, timely, holistic and engaging. As such, they can help individuals to become more motivated and self-aware learners and thus promote lifelong learning. Technology-enhanced assessment can increase validity by emulating more closely the real-world domain being assessed. It can also increase the reliability of the assessment, removing the variance that must inevitably be associated with the involvement of human beings in the process. Such notable benefits of the widespread use of online tools would suggest that the 'assessment revolution' we can now anticipate, will result in a much more fruitful educational experience for the scholars of the future. But will this be so?

It has been the argument of this book that assessment needs to be understood as a powerful tool, a social process that mediates the relationship between educational provision and the economic, social and political priorities of any given context. Thus, whether in the end a particular approach to assessment proves to be fruitful educationally, depends much more on the purpose for which it is used, rather than the particular tools employed to gather the assessment data per se. Whether, for example, international league tables of national educational performance result in educational improvement depends on whether governments use them to help diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of their own system in their own cultural context. If, on the other hand, they lead to crude policy-borrowing based on the apparent success of techniques used in other national settings, they are unlikely to lead to educational improvement. One thing is certain, however; the impact of the pandemic has created an unprecedented opportunity for an assessment revolution. It has encouraged the introduction of novel ways of recording and using data on the outcomes of learning that are much more in step with the needs of contemporary societies. It is likely to lead to the use of new assessment tools to promote and enhance learning in a way that could be of huge benefit to both individuals and wider society. Whether this potential is realised however, remains to be seen.

Patricia Broadfoot
June 2020
P.M.Broadfoot@bristol.ac.uk

8. EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND MENTAL HEALTH

Following the webinar on equity, diversity, inclusion and mental health (EDIH), individual conversations were held with:

- Professor Louise Archer, Karl Mannheim professor of sociology of education at the Institute of Education, University College, London, and co-chair of the Centre for Sociology of Education and Equity.

- Professor Mhairi Beaton, Professor at the Carnegie School of Education, Leeds Beckett University.

- Professor David Gillborn, Professor of Critical Race Studies at the School of Education, University of Birmingham, and editor-in-chief of the journal Race Ethnicity and Education.

- Professor Jonathan Glazzard, Professor of Inclusive Education, director of the Centre for LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Education and principal researcher in the Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools in the Carnegie School of Education at Leeds Beckett University.

- Professor Jane Hurry, Emeritus Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychology and Human Development at the Institute of Education, University College London.

- Professor Ingrid Schoon, Professor of Social Policy at the Social Research Institute, Institute of Education, University College London.

This report is an overview of those individual conversations.

Problems with the current system

"No system is perfect, but the current system is far from perfect. It is failing children with a system that only recognises the academic, and knowledge they can retain and retrieve."

- We overuse one mode of assessment, the written exam, which over-assesses the same kind of skills, and does not prepare students for work or for higher education.

- Students are taught to the test, crammed and drilled with information, which means that they do not have the skills to thrive in HE – they are not prepared to research their own information, to be independent learners, nor do they have confidence in expressing or discussing opinions.

- The current system has a detrimental impact on students' mental health.

- The system does not assess the skills young people will need in the future for the range of jobs that will be available. Young people will need to be creative problem solvers, team workers. Our exam system may be highly respected internationally but it is not useful for the workplace.

- Historically, assessment was used to decide who was accepted to university. Government now argues that it is for the needs of the economy – but employers do not find the system useful for their purposes.

- Assessment is viewed as a scientific exercise which can be constantly finessed towards a technical solution. Instead, we need to understand why we are assessing and for whom.

- The focus on end-of-course exams has made teachers more dependent on external ratification of assessments and much less confident in their abilities to assess. This has fundamentally changed the role of teachers towards becoming technicist deliverers of an external system, so that assessment has become an add-on rather than a core part of pedagogy.

- We approach assessment as if it is a way of measuring innate ability, when it is a measurement of the skills and knowledge that students have learnt up to that point.

- Exams do not always test what they set out to test. Students with high cognitive ability from less privileged background are less likely to achieve adequate qualifications, in part because some exams require particular cognitive, verbal and non-verbal ability alongside academic attainment.

- The current system of fixed-point assessment is used for testing and sorting: students' attainment in exams is used to make decisions about their future. If you fail a driving test you take more lessons and try again, you are not told you can only drive a moped from now on: but your grades in school exams and tests are used to decide your pathway, whether you will go to university or will work on minimum wage.

- Children with disabilities are badly served by the current exam system and are systematically denied access to further and higher education, employment and independent living, because of a culture of low expectations.

- Girls generally do better in school than boys but there are differences at the different ends of the scale – girls do better in the middle where boys often do either very poorly or very well. It is suggested that this comes from differences in self-concept, with boys more generally confident in their abilities, and girls less so. This is often suggested as an explanation for why exams favour boys and continuous assessment favours girls. Girls are often more keen to please and achieve better at school, but this can lead to increased mental health problems.

- The cliff-edge of terminal exams is detrimental to lifelong learning. Too little funding is available for those who wish to come back to education and repeat or re-do qualifications later.

- Those who decide how the system will work are those who have succeeded in the current system, and who are therefore inclined to view the current system as successful.

- Every decision-making point in education is a particular risk for certain groups – Black students, disadvantaged students, those with certain disabilities. These decision points can be described as roadblocks, where others make decisions which will have long-term consequences.

- There are fundamental difficulties in the ways we measure and compare. Regression modelling divides inequalities as if they can each be measured separately rather than being interrelated. Controlling for prior attainment denies the racism and inequality that students have experienced up to that point which has impacted on that attainment, and which will continue to impact and is not therefore comparing like with like.

- The fundamental challenge is how we think about ability, what assessment is for and how we use it. Assessment has no humanity, as if we are measuring how much water a jug holds. We need to think about human beings, about what we are asking them to hold and why.

- At every point of assessment pupils are not being assessed on a hidden gem deep inside an oyster, but on how much they have covered, how well it has been taught and how well they have been prepared for that assessment.

What is wrong with our assessment system reflects what is wrong with our education system. The presumption of assessment is that education is for a particular purpose of providing literate, numerate workers. Teachers predominantly view assessment as a way of sorting. And yet the assessment system does not allow many students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and the education system, by privileging academic learning over practical and vocational, does not value students' different ways of knowing and doing, nor the different values of the communities in our schools and colleges. This is particularly true for migrants, students from indigenous communities and students with learning difficulties.

How can we overcome issues of injustice and privilege?

Whatever system we devise there will be inbuilt biases against different groups, those with disabilities, students from low-income households, minoritised groups. It is inevitable that the assessment system will be unfair because the education system is unfair. As humans we turn to patterns, stereotypes and shortcuts in order to make our decision-making easier. Problems arise when we begin to believe that these shortcuts and stereotypes are accurate representations of reality. Professionals in education have a duty to identify and interrupt these shortcuts.

Every decision in education can be seen as a roadblock: whether a child attends private or state school; which group, set or stream a student is placed in. These decisions affect students' opportunities, the curriculum they can access, their life chances and their self-identity. And these decisions are often based on systemic biases.

Nor is it a question of whether terminal assessment is better than continual assessment: both have multiple ways in which unrecognised race inequalities can be introduced and reinforced through the system. All assessment is biased, including the current system of end-of-course exams.

In order to overcome issues of injustice and privilege we will have to accept that, whatever the intentions of policymakers, teachers and assessors, there is likely to be systemic bias. Rather than continually searching for another way to finessing an inadequate system we have to build in that awareness in order to identify bias and interrupt it. There is also a need to change the mindset that equality is a zero-sum game: that by supporting Black students, or girls, for example, other groups will be disadvantaged.

Before introducing a new system, policymakers must rigorously equality impact assess it, alongside parent groups, assessment experts and experts in inequalities. This impact assessment must clearly identify the likely problems in assessing students from particular groups in the ways proposed in the new system. This kind of assessment is intended to minimise the scope for damage.

As the system is implemented it is likely that there will still be imperfections, because this is a human system, with differing levels of expertise and resources. Trialling and evaluation need to continually look at patterns of student outcomes, at different rates of entry to subjects and to different tiers, by student characteristics. Policymakers should work on the basis that, ideally, students from different groups would be achieving similar outcomes, so that the analysis considers whether there are aspects of the new system that are making inequalities worse. Analysis should be set up in such a way that it drills down into different practices to understand exactly what is having an impact, so that iterative changes can be made and trialled.

What could a more equitable system look like

Assessment

- A more equitable system will focus on more authentic assessment situated within the workplace, or which directly assesses the skills students need, for example project planning, team leadership, conflict negotiation, presentations, creativity, problem-solving.
- Assessment should support lifelong learning, rather than providing a judgement at a fixed point in time, in order to encourage all students to continue to learn.
- Assessment should measure what it intends to measure, rather than testing memory, retention, and the ability to sit still.
- We need to move away from terminal exams towards more modular assessments, and to assess the process of learning as well as the products. Different modes of assessment, rather than solely written answers to exam questions, could include presentations, blogs, films. They are much more inclusive

and would enable all students to shine and to thrive. Students and teachers could work together to decide the mode of assessment, with students involved in constructing assessment tasks and criteria, some of the time.

- These could build to a patchwork of assessment that builds up pieces of work over time. These could be linked by an overarching narrative that stiches together the individual pieces.

- There should be good systems of in-school and between-school moderation, carried out by teachers. This would be complemented by external moderation and validation by exam boards, perhaps with each student submitting some work that is externally assessed and compared with the teacher assessment. Differences in assessment outcomes should lead to a conversation about the judgements.

- The system must be set up to identify inequities and to address them systematically, rather than deny them or assume that they are isolated cases. We need to name the problem and develop anti-racist activity at all stages of decision-making.

- Instead of assessment as the sorting hat, it could be seen through Martha Nussbaum's 'capabilities approach', where the main purpose would be to allow all pupils to flourish. This cuts through hierarchies, creating an understanding of society where everyone has strengths and weaknesses, and where students are rewarded for being skilled and contributing to society rather than for their place in relation to other students.

- We need to ensure there is good representation on committees and bodies which determine, write and validate assessments, in order to represent protected characteristics. We need fundamental conversations about the knowledge we assess and value, the way we assess and who makes the judgements.

Curriculum and pedagogy

- In order to encourage lifelong learning, the curriculum needs to focus more on the skills of employment and of getting a job, on emotional as well as cognitive skills and subject knowledge. Students need to see the relevance of what they are learning for their daily lives in the present and the future.

- This requires different ways of teaching, with a focus beyond instruction, repetition and individual problem solving but also on teamwork. Assessment needs to reflect the process of group interaction as well as individual effort.

- Assessment can recognise both teacher and student agency and enable teachers and students to work together deciding when and how to evidence their learning. Listening to students talking about their learning is a powerful way to understand the diverse perspectives within the classroom. This is already successfully used in formative assessment and could also be used for summative assessment.

- The curriculum should highlight social interactions and collaboration with others with a corresponding change to assessment: not so much a punishment or verdict on yourself but a way to gain a better understanding of your own strengths and weaknesses. A more interactive education could encourage collaboration and peer-mentoring, giving students responsibility, and enabling them to develop mastery, competence and ways of feeling useful.

- The contents of the curriculum, for both academic and vocational qualifications, needs to be pruned and developed to reflect the changing requirements of the 21st century.

- We need to review the curriculum with an intent to decolonise and to foreground equity. Decolonising means focusing on power and injustice across all areas.

- Matters of disability, race, sexuality should be embedded in the curriculum at all levels and should be areas that schools assess.

Collaboration

Schools and teachers cannot be expected to do this alone. Reforming assessment needs to be done in collaboration between educators and employers, in order to develop a set of standards and to reduce the variability. In Germany, educators and employers work on the transition together, planning what students must learn and the qualifications they will need. Dual studies offer students the chance to study at university level while working. This is not about expecting schools to develop the workforce of the future because, with increasing technology, automation and artificial intelligence (AI) it is difficult to know what skills will be required. Instead it is about working together to build the base from which students will build the skills needed across different occupations.

What else is needed for change to happen?

For change to happen to assessment and qualifications which involves a greater role for teacher assessment, there will need to be radical change to Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Beginning teachers will need to learn to use many different modes of assessment. They will also need a broader understanding of curriculum development and in particular of social justice.

Within the current restrictive policy, subject knowledge and teacher standards take up most of the programme. They should be balanced with a better understanding of the broad needs of society, so that teachers can become agents of change. We need to move away from a compliance model of teacher education, which produces technical teachers who just need to know and demonstrate teacher standards. ITE will need to be a strong partnership between higher education institutions and schools, to support and empower student teachers to be agents of change.

Social justice must become a much bigger area of teacher education. ITE needs to address, seriously and through deep immersion,

the cultures of low expectation, where certain groups of students are expected to underachieve because of disability or race for example. This requires opportunities for student teachers to reflect on their own values and beliefs, and to work in community contexts where their values and beliefs can be challenged.

Most teachers in the system now will have come through schools dominated by the national curriculum, SATs and increasingly linear, end-of-course, exams. They have little or no experience of different methods of assessment or of developing curriculum. All teachers need continuing professional development in mixed modes of assessment, and to be exposed to different forms of curriculum development and pedagogy, to build confidence in new ways of working. And they need the space to be able to listen to students' voices, to build understanding in their different perspectives, and to consider and encourage the diversity within their classrooms.

The accountability system will also need to change, and we need to broaden out what we mean by school success and effectiveness, beyond the traditional exam results to include inclusiveness and belonging. Currently, a change to Ofsted inspection frameworks leads to changes in practice in schools, and so Ofsted should expect to see multiple modes of assessment and should focus on the impact of our current system on student mental health. However, Ofsted is also flawed: in the past inspectors were trained to consider institutional racism but there is now no requirement to consider inequalities by ethnicity. In the longer term, inspection needs to be part of a broader, collaborative, accountability system.

If we are serious about developing a system in which academic and vocational qualifications are valued equally, this requires a change to the whole of the school curriculum and pedagogy, not just at 14-19. Currently, students are taught an academic curriculum with minimal preparation for choosing to study for vocational qualifications. This leads to a system in which

mainly those who are deemed unsuitable to continue with academic qualifications are placed on a vocational track. For change to happen, there needs to be serious thought given to how all students can be prepared for both of these tracks, throughout their school career.

We also need to make radical changes to careers information and guidance, so that students understand the impacts of the different tracks on their own lives and earnings for example, but also the implications of future changes. For instance, a genuine move towards a green economy will lead to a need for many more people with skilled trades. Brexit and the pandemic combined have shown us how important it is to develop skilled workers, as well as our dependence on key workers, neither of which are properly valued or developed through our current qualifications system. There needs to be an understanding of the relationship between different occupations, and a change of narrative to value trades, skills and caring as essential to our development as a society. And we need to properly fund and resource further education.

Conclusion

Our current system has become deeply embedded in families, young people and teachers, forcing them to change their behaviours to succeed within the system and making it difficult to imagine change. It means that too many students believe that learning has no worth or meaning unless it will be assessed in an exam. But while the system works for some, and can be made to work for others, it does not work for all. Worse, it fails those who are already disadvantaged.

While changing the assessment system could change some of the inequity within our education system, in fact the whole system, its purposes and understanding, needs to change. Assessment dictates pedagogy and curriculum throughout school and does not allow all students to succeed. In order to ensure that assessment is for all students, teachers need to be able to make curriculum and pedagogic decisions that are for all students, including (perhaps especially) those who are currently not involved in the learning in the classroom.

APPENDIX 2:
ANALYSIS OF FOCUS GROUP REPORTS

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
1. Students	**Key problems with the current system**	**Views/ideas/examples for a better system**
Analysis of notes from focus groups of students in October 2021.	- Students were clear that their comments were coloured by their experiences of doing well in exams. They recommended that the IAC take views from students who do not. - Covid has exposed flaws in the current system but there are also some advantages in the current system. - Most exams do not measure interpersonal or emotional skills. - The current system is as fair as it can be. It is not perfect; however, it is not possible to create a system where everyone has a fair shot because not everyone has the same life experiences. - The current assessment system is accessible, flexible and evolutionary, and allows students to show what they could do. - The system is focussed on measuring rather than the learning process. Some students are at a disadvantage because they would not be able to show what they can do in an exam. - Practical skills are not well served by the current system because it is just about remembering whatever you can for the exam. - Schools are less likely to teach essential sub jects such as finance, handling money or life skills.	- A combination of linear and modular assessment was proposed to tackle the problems present in the current system. Continuous assessments show how learners are getting on, and assessment at the end allows them to show the sum of all they have learned. - It could be good to allow people to show what/how they can contribute to society. - England could learn from international examples to improve the system. Germany presents a variety of routes to support the diversity of learners. - Students indicated that the Independent Assessment Commission (IAC) principles are a good idea but that they would require revisiting now and again and adapting to future changes. - A more flexible system would allow students to take qualifications at different stages, rather than the current system where taking GCSEs early could affect a school's league table score. - There should be more emphasis on opportunities to develop various other skills. - A-levels should be broader. - Different subjects, and/or different students, should be assessed differently, for example, coursework is a better way of assessing for some students or subjects.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
	• The system is all about grades. People are obsessed with grades and scores. • Assessment at the end of the learning process has both pros and cons, although learning is not a perfectly straight line. • Using qualification results in league tables is not the best idea because people can get good grades without going to a 'good school'. However, students were not clear how you could compare schools without using exam grades.	• Although some suggested that written exams are the best way to assess people, others thought that coursework and assessment as students go along could be more helpful and relevant to the real world. • The most critical purposes of qualifications and assessment should be related to signalling what a student knows and can do, marking their personal development or progress and identifying their strengths and weaknesses. • A minority indicated that the purpose of qualifications and assessment should be focussed on showing readiness for work/ information for employers and study/information). • Some indicated that identifying national performance trends among groups of students could help improve the current system. • We should improve the current system by focussing on producing a generation that could change things, based on skills, thinking ahead about preventing climate change and making a difference in the future, rather than focussing on measuring knowledge and abilities. • The system should recognise that there is not a single pathway, and there should be multiple pathways and opportunities for second chances. This will need more structured links between schools and colleges.
		• The system should move to a holistic approach, including multiple ways to assess knowledge/abilities and not only through exams.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
2. Parents	**Key problems with the current system**	**Views/ideas/examples for a better system**
Analysis from the report of two focus groups held with parents in September 2021, led by Parentkind.	- The current system is unfair because in focusing on exams it is setting some up to fail. - There is a lack of connection between qualifications and employers. - The current system does not adequately use technology. - The system is not sufficiently responsive to the skills that employers need. - The current system is too academically focussed. Also, over-reliance on exams could raise some mental health issues and does not support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). - Vocational qualifications (such as BTECs) are not valued as much as academic qualification, which could make the system more difficult with the challenge that the world of work presents.	- Some examples for change could be to remove the pressure, be more inclusive and reflect on the challenges of the current world of work. - Other types of qualifications should be promoted, including models such as the International Baccalaureate. - The role of technology in exams and assessment should be expanded and explored. - Parents supported the principles provided by the IAC. A system based on these principles would give parents a clear idea about the meaning of qualification and grades in terms of students understanding and capabilities in subjects. - Parents were clear that they, along with schools, employers and policymakers, should be involved in the design and implementation of the new system.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
3. The profession – teachers and leaders	**Key problems with the current system**	**Views/ideas/examples for a better system**
Analysis of a report of a pilot group of school and college leaders and a larger group convened with the support of the Chartered College of Teaching.	▪ The current model of assessment, and its impact on curriculum design and pupils' experience of the curriculum, does not meet the needs of all pupils in all contexts. ▪ The current assessment process and its use of terminal exams does not always evidence the progress a student has made or is making. ▪ "If you 'fail' at GCSE, the current system does not support you." The participants indicate the consequences of that 'failure' are related to the lack of opportunities for finding a job, becoming disaffected or leaving the education system early. ▪ High-stakes terminal exams do not offer sufficient opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, skill, understanding and broader attributes, and bring a fundamental limitation to the education young people experience and the qualifications they then gain. ▪ Assessments are currently 'done to' pupils rather than 'done with' them in a formative and developmental process.	▪ [We need an] assessment system that would help a student recognise that there are many pinnacles, not just academic achievement. ▪ Participants did not want to see a split model of qualifications like the O-level/CSE split, where pupils are potentially placed on a track by the housing estate they live on. Instead, participants spoke of having access to a blend of appropriate teacher assessments, including assessment of group work, with access to 'stage rather than age' assessments of core skills. These assessments would then lead on at appropriate points to more formal assessments, including exams. Even then, the form of assessment would need to align with the subject being assessed, rather than all subjects being assessed by exam. ▪ The system should enable all students to evidence their skills and knowledge. Assessments should provide useful information to "someone who knows nothing about me". For example, maths to show competence in numeracy should be different from a maths qualification that assesses whether someone has the skills to study maths as an academic discipline at a higher level.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
	• The problem is not only or always exams. Participants pointed to the impact of the accountability system and how grades are awarded through 'norm-referencing'. • Educators support external exams as one part of a system – they are particularly useful for a small number of the highest attaining pupils as they seek to progress to university. However, they should not be the only or main component.	• Participants stated that some other countries have vocational pathways which have the same status as academic ones. The mindset needs to change away from the view that academic qualifications are the only, or the most important, qualifications. • There needs to be a change in teacher training and professional development to understand the current system's strengths and weaknesses and develop skills in the different ways in which assessment could be carried out, both to support student learning and to evidence qualifications.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
4. Employers and university admissions tutors	**Key problems with the current system**	**Views/ideas/examples for a better system**
Analysis based on reports from two focus groups (21 and 27 May 2021), convened by the CBI.	▪ Qualifications are used to set minimum requirements for entry. Participants described this as a crude filter to get young people 'through the door'. Participants indicated that companies with heavily oversubscribed positions use GCSEs as a baseline. Exam grades could be seen as a barrier to social mobility. ▪ Education does not recognise the person that businesses are interested in. Exams actively work against the skills that businesses seek in young people. ▪ Industry actively looks at other ways to sort candidates to build a diverse workforce. ▪ Exams have traditionally not served SEND communities. Although businesses value diversity of thought, a strict reliance on exam results in recruitment can lead to neurodiverse talent being overlooked. ▪ There is a recognition of the links between curriculum and assessment. Participants highlighted the disconnection between subjects being assessed as standalone entities when they constantly interact in the real world.	▪ Participants indicated that businesses are much more interested in employability and interpersonal skills than in exam grades. Businesses seek to recruit young people with a growth mindset who demonstrate motivation, innovation, agility, resourcefulness, good performance in a team, good communication skills and problem-solving skills. Exam grades do not give sufficient information about these. ▪ Many employers look to proxies (Duke of Edinburgh's Award, National Citizen Service and Camp America) to evidence soft skills. However, such activities may be more difficult for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. ▪ There was not a clear consensus on whether or how an alternative assessment system might measure soft skills. ▪ Some ideas about an alternative assessment could be a 'scorecard' where students leave education with reflections on their soft skills from teachers. Another could be a portfolio of the student's work that goes beyond exam grades. Participants made reference to the International Baccalaureate model, which makes community service and physical activity a requirement for achieving the overall academic qualification.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
	▪ Qualifications are used as a filter to an extent in admitting students to university courses. ▪ Further and higher education (FE and HE) institutions often receive little, or inconsistent, information about students beyond their grades, which forces them to use grades in admissions more heavily than they otherwise would. ▪ Focusing on grades alone ignores the disadvantages that many young people face. Exams do not accurately reflect what neurodiverse students bring to the classroom. ▪ Universities discussed their use of contextual admissions. However, this is not always reflected in the practicalities of recruitment, which still leans heavily on exam results. ▪ The role of professional bodies in setting exam-based qualifications as barriers to entry to lucrative professions was also highlighted as an issue.	▪ FE and HE institutions stated that they have been working to diversify the types of assessment on offer, which has not been reflected in schools. Some examples: teacher references could reflect on more than exam grades, but this would disadvantage pupils at schools with fewer resources and time to allocate to such a process.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
5. Senior stakeholders responsible for qualifications	**Key problems with the current system**	**Views/ideas/examples for a better system**
Analysis from a report of meetings held with a range of senior officials at awarding bodies and Ofqual.	▪ The problems with the current assessment system in England are related to political interference, the regulatory regime (being too directive) and the lack of clarity regarding who is running which bits of the system. ▪ Other problems are associated with the academic model, which could be too dominant. ▪ For example, learners are seen as a commodity at times, and the assessment purposes are added after they are designed. ▪ The current system is not sufficiently coherent. We are living in a low trust society in which exams are trusted, but there is a tendency for schools to be exam factories. ▪ The current system is too complex, arcane and burdensome. ▪ Scrapping modular exams had made the system less resilient in a pandemic. ▪ The GCSE end-of-course exam system leads to drilling. Some questioned the need for exams and qualifications at 16 at all. ▪ Accountability is too closely linked to qualifications. The problems of league tables and the use of assessment data for these and for Ofsted have a negative impact on teaching and learning. It would be impossible to move to a system involving teacher assessment if data were linked to accountability in this way.	▪ Change needs to be based on a strong strategy, considering a range of ten to 20 years because education is a collaborative effort and stakeholders need to be involved in order to improve the system. ▪ In order to support equity and equality for all learners, there should be less end-of-course assessment, with a focus on developing a hybrid approach with a variety of methods of assessment, including more functional language and maths assessment. ▪ A few participants gave examples of countries with interesting approaches to assessment and qualifications, including Singapore. Finland, Germany – for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) – and Scotland because of its new apprenticeship model based on the Swiss system. ▪ Teacher assessment should be a much more integral part of the system. ▪ The assessment system should show what pupils know and can do, tracking pupils over time. ▪ An improved assessment system should be based on inclusivity. Views/ideas/examples for a better system and resilience, adaptability/flexibility, coherence, innovation and vocational factors (aptitudes). It should be evidence-based and support learning.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
		- The system should be coherent, aligned with teaching and learning practices, and it must be manageable for teachers. - Change needs time and should not be developed around short political cycles. - Exams are a valuable part of the system but should not be the only method of assessment. It is possible that exams are more suitable at 18 than 16. - Digital assessment should be an important component of a new system. Denmark was cited as having successfully implemented digital assessment. - Continuous assessment is important, but it needs to connect grades to students' work, and teachers will need time to be more involved.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
6. Policymakers	**Key problems with the current system**	**Views/ideas/examples for a better system**
Analysis from report by the Edge Foundation of multiple meetings with policymakers.	The Covid-19 pandemic and the cancellation of exams (two years in a row) put the assessment system into the policy spotlight as never before. ▪ The current system does not encourage and support all young people to have access to the technical and creative subjects that will give them the skills employers are looking for. ▪ Another recurring topic has been the negative impact of putting students through multiple terminal exams at the GCSE level and how this assessment system has been designed for a now outdated school system. Participants highlighted that this system is an outlier in setting pupils on a relatively narrow path at the age of 16, seeing many young people studying only three subjects compared to the diverse disciplines out there.	▪ Participants showed strong feelings about the new era of the education system; they mentioned the need to think carefully about the purpose of assessment. ▪ Participants recognised the current system's strengths – a wide currency and understanding and a single system that covers all young people. ▪ Participants were clear that there are several aspects that they would be particularly keen to change. The most popular issues in need of change were: having high stakes exams at 16 and again at 18 despite the raising of the participation age; the excessive use of exam results to fuel league tables; and the over-focus on end-point written exams as the sole measure for qualifications. ▪ Ideas for change included: 　· more multimodal assessments to give opportunities for different skills to shine 　· more continuous chances to perform not crammed into specific points 　· a more comprehensive range of assessment approaches, more focus on skills and understanding.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
7. Researchers	**Key problems with the current system**	**Views/ideas/examples for a better system**
Analysis based on a report from a meeting of researchers in July 2021 and subsequent conversations with those unable to attend the initial meeting.	▪ The statutory assessment and qualifications system in England reflects a lack of clarity about the purposes of assessment. The need to hold teachers and schools accountable for the quality of education has been confounded with the need for assessment of students' learning. ▪ The assessment system appears to be focussed on judgement and categorisation rather than using assessment to improve learning at the level of the individual, the school or the nation. ▪ It would be difficult to imagine the kind of change that might be desirable without beginning with the curriculum. ▪ The statutory assessment and qualification system in England has distorted students' education in undesirable ways. In particular, the curriculum has been unduly narrowed. Arguably this is in contradiction with the statutory need for a broad and balanced curriculum. ▪ The assessment and qualification system focuses on traditional academic outcomes at the expense of rigorous recognition of other equally important aspects of learning. ▪ There is a lack of attention to the social, moral, creative and economic purposes that the education system seeks to develop in its future citizens. Part of this lack of attention includes the neglect of the vital importance of vocational education.	▪ The undue emphasis on final exams should be changed to ensure that young people experience a better balance of exams and coursework assessments. The reasons for the use of a range of forms of assessment are: · differences in students' natural abilities to perform in exams versus other types of assessments · the greater breadth of aspects that can be addressed in coursework assessments · the importance of valid assessments in programmes such as post-16 skills-oriented practical courses where traditional examinations are often not the most appropriate form of assessment. ▪ A recommendation that teacher assessment alone is the best way to assess young people's learning would not be appropriate as, like any assessment, it has limitations. The research evidence in relation to the pros and cons of exams versus teacher assessment reveals diverse findings. ▪ The assessment and qualification system needs to recognise the full range of talents that all young people have, and at the same time be better aligned with the world of work that young people enter, not just in an imagined future but every year as each cohort finishes their formal education.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
		- The purpose of assessing young people's learning should be clearly separated from the mechanisms for holding teachers and schools to account for the quality of education. - Equity, in recognition of all young people's talents built on an understanding of diversity, should be the most crucial principle to drive reforms in the assessment and qualification system. - Equity in assessment and qualifications requires sufficient diversity of curriculum content to reflect young people's differing social contexts, life experiences and interests. This means that a universal national assessment system is not sufficient because this form cannot account for the diversity that is part of all students' prior experiences and knowledge. The assessment system should contribute positively to the provision and experience of a genuinely broad and balanced curriculum for all students. This includes ensuring that assessment systems do not lead to undue narrowing of the curriculum.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
8. Sustainable change	**Key problems with the current system**	**Views/ideas/examples for a better system**
Analysis based on report of the webinar held by the commission on 28 May 2021.	▪ Assessment currently dictates the curriculum and its content, the timetabling and sequencing of learning. ▪ Assessment is the hinge point for our accountability systems, including for how teachers are held accountable. ▪ This is not an inclusive curriculum because, through the syllabus, exam boards largely dictate the 11-18 curriculum, and arguably in primary schools too. ▪ The presenters suggested that assessment dictates what we value (citizens/people) in society. For example, "it has been made clear to teachers, young people and society that only certain subjects and qualifications are deemed valuable". ▪ Presenters noted that the current system aims to maintain the status quo, leading to a third of young people being unable to gain a strong pass in English and maths every year. It is designed around the importance of maintaining standards rather than on inclusion. ▪ The current system is narrow and limited. ▪ The design of qualifications is focussed on those who can pass exams. Those who struggle or quickly fall away, get lost in education.	▪ A new assessment system should be less about judgement and categorisation and more about progression and lifelong learning, collaboration, growth and development. ▪ A new system must be focussed on equity, and that inclusion is the pathway to overall improvement. ▪ Radical transformation also requires a secure evidence base and ongoing evaluation against the agreed purposes. ▪ Change requires the development of structures and processes that allow people to interact with, support and learn from each other, building powerful partnerships. This needs a change of mindset, away from competition and towards a more collaborative culture. ▪ Change is technically simple but socially complex. The commission will need to build consensus that change is possible and necessary, and encourage people to pull in the same direction. ▪ Mel Ainscow identified five levers for change: clarity of purpose, use of evidence, practice in schools and colleges, local coordination and community engagement.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
9. Equity, diversity, inclusion and mental health (EDIH)	**Key problems with the current system**	**Views/ideas/examples for a better system**
Analysis based on report of individual conversations with leading academics with expertise in EDIH.	▪ The participants indicated that the current system is far from perfect, stating that there is no perfect system. ▪ The current system only recognises the academic aspects such as knowledge that children can retain and retrieve. ▪ This system overuses one mode of assessment, the written exam, which over assesses a particular type of skill and does not necessarily prepare students for work or higher education. ▪ The current system has a detrimental impact on students' mental health. ▪ Assessment is viewed as a scientific exercise that can be constantly finessed towards a technical solution. ▪ The current system approaches assessment as if it is a way of measuring innate ability when it is a measurement of the skills and knowledge students have learnt up to that point. ▪ Exams do not always test what they set out to test. ▪ Children with disabilities are badly served by the current exam system and are systematically denied access to further and higher education, employment and independent living because of a culture of low expectations.	▪ Whatever system we devise, there will be inbuilt biases against different groups – those with disabilities, students from low-income households, minoritised groups. Rather than continually searching for another way of finessing an inadequate system, we must build in awareness to identify bias and interrupt it. ▪ There is a need to change the mindset that equality is a zero-sum game: that by supporting Black students, or girls, for example, other groups will be disadvantaged. ▪ The system must be set up to identify inequities and address them systematically, rather than deny them or assume that they are isolated cases. We need to name the problem and develop anti-racist activity at all stages of decision-making. ▪ Instead of assessment as the sorting hat, it could be seen through Martha Nussbaum's 'capabilities approach', where the main purpose would be to allow all pupils to flourish. This cuts through hierarchies, creating an understanding of society where everyone has strengths and weaknesses and where students are rewarded for being skilled and contributing to society rather than for their place in relation to other students.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
	- "What is wrong with our assessment system reflects what is wrong with our education system." - Every decision-making point in education is a particular risk for specific groups – Black students, disadvantaged students, those with specific disabilities. Participants indicated the importance of paying attention to this because it can be described as roadblocks, where others make decisions that will have long-term consequences, for example, whether a child attends private or state school, which group, set or stream a student is placed in. They indicated that these decisions affect students' opportunities, the curriculum they can access, their life chances and self-identity, and these decisions are often based on systemic biases.	- There needs to be better representation on committees and bodies that determine, write and validate assessments to represent protected characteristics. - We need a conversation about the knowledge we assess and value, how we assess and who makes the judgements. - There is a strong relationship between curriculum and pedagogy. The curriculum should highlight social interactions and collaboration with others with a corresponding change to assessment; not so much a punishment or verdict on yourself but a way to understand your own strengths and weaknesses better. A more interactive education could encourage collaboration and peer-mentoring, giving students responsibility and enabling them to develop mastery, competence and ways of feeling useful. - For both academic and vocational qualifications, the contents of the curriculum need to be pruned and developed to reflect the changing requirements of the 21st century. - We need to review the curriculum with an intent to decolonise and to foreground equity. Decolonising means focusing on power and injustice across all areas. Matters of disability, race and sexuality should be embedded in the curriculum at all levels and should be areas that schools assess.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
		▪ Participants highlighted collaboration: schools and teachers cannot be expected to do this alone. Reforming assessment needs to be done in collaboration between educators and employers to develop a set of standards and reduce variability. ▪ Within the current restrictive teacher training policy – Initial Teacher Education (ITE) – subject knowledge and teacher standards take up most of the programme. They should be balanced with a better understanding of the broad needs of society so that teachers can become agents of change. We need to move away from a compliance model of teacher education, which produces technical teachers who need to know and demonstrate teacher standards. ITE will need a strong partnership between higher education institutions and schools. ▪ Social justice must become a much bigger area of teacher education. ITE needs to address cultures of low expectations. This requires opportunities for student teachers to reflect on their own values and beliefs, and to work in community contexts where their values and beliefs can be challenged.

FOCUS GROUP REPORTS	WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM?	WHAT COULD A BETTER SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?
		▪ The accountability system will also need to change. To include inclusiveness and belonging, we need to broaden what we mean by school success and effectiveness beyond the traditional exam results. In the longer term, inspection needs to be part of a broader, collaborative, accountability system.

APPENDIX 3:
ANALYSIS OF SURVEY 1

The Independent Assessment Commission (IAC) ran a public survey on its website from July to September 2021. Commissioners were invited to share the link within their communities; 120 responses were received. The timing of the survey was unfortunate and the number of responses received too small for meaningful statistical analysis. The commission, however, considered an analysis of the written responses (see below) to identify issues emerging from those who took part in the survey.

The survey invited views on the following:

Q1	To what extent, if at all, do you think the assessments used for qualifications taken by 14- to 19-year-olds in England need to change?
Q2	What are the key lessons learning from the pandemic with respect to qualifications taken by 14- to 19-year-olds?
Q3	Assessment and qualifications can be used to serve many purposes. Which of the following things, if any, do you believe that qualifications taken by 14- to 19-year-olds should be used for? ▪ Attempting to signal what a student knows and can do. ▪ Attempting to signal where a student sits within a national rank order. ▪ Creating national or regional league tables for schools and colleges. ▪ Teacher/lecturer appraisal marking personal development or progress of the student. ▪ Identifying both the strengths and weaknesses of the student. ▪ Showing readiness for work/information for employers. ▪ Comparing students in England to students internationally. ▪ Showing readiness for further study/information for further or higher education institutions. ▪ To identify national trends of performance among groups of students, for example, the performance of students from different socio-economic groups or different regions.
Q4	If you have identified any of the purposes in the previous question that qualifications taken by 14- to 19-year-olds should be used for, which would be the most important in your opinion?
Q5	Are there any other things that you think qualifications taken by 14- to 19-year-olds should or should not be used for that are not identified in the previous two questions?
Q6	What are the key strengths of the current system, if any, which you think it would be best to preserve?
Q7	To what extent, if at all, would you like to see the following aspect of the system change? Assessment at both 16 and 18.
Q8	To what extent, if at all, would you like to see the following aspect of the system change? Assessment mainly through a single mode, where that is the case.
Q9	To what extent, if at all, would you like to see the following aspect of the system change? Assessment mainly through formal written exams, where that is the case.

Q10	To what extent, if at all, would you like to see the following aspect of the system change?
	Assessment mainly at the end of a course, where that is the case.
Q11	To what extent, if at all, would you like to see the following aspect of the system change?
	Assessment mainly in large chunks, where that is the case.
Q12	To what extent, if at all, would you like to see the following aspect of the system change?
	Qualifications being used for league tables.
Q13	Do the qualifications sat by 14- to 19-year-olds in England, and the assessments used for them, meet the needs of all young people?
Q14	How might the qualifications sat by 14- to 19-year-olds in England, and the assessments used for them, be adapted to meet the needs of all young people? Q15 Are there any other models within the UK or internationally you'd point towards as good examples of assessment or qualifications systems? Please provide brief details.
Q15	Are there any other models within the UK or internationally you'd point towards as good examples of assessment or qualifications systems? Please provide brief details.
Q16	In three words, describe the assessment system you'd like to see in 2030.
Q17	Do you have any further comments on qualifications taken by 14- to 19-year-olds in England and the assessment methods used for them?

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Dimension to evaluate based on:

1. What are the key lessons learned from the pandemic with respect to qualifications taken by 14- to 19-year-olds?

2. What are the key strengths of the current system, if any, which you think it would be best to preserve?

DIMENSION	CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
1. Qualification gained during Covid-19: key lessons	1.1. Role of assessment in society	▪ Current examination system ▪ Qualification: memory versus performance
	1.2. Covid-19 and its impact on education	▪ Inequalities and lack of equity ▪ Mental health and wellbeing ▪ Views of students'/teachers' progression
	1.3. Pathways to reporting achievements and capabilities	▪ Views about teacher-based assessment ▪ Views of the qualification system
	1.4. Curriculum design for a new era	▪ A necessary education reform ▪ Technology as part of the learning, teaching and assessment process ▪ Looking to the future: a flexible and inclusive approach
2. The current system: views about strengths and gaps	2.1 Key aspects to be preserved	▪ Positive aspects ▪ Negative aspects
	2.2. Gaps and aspects to be removed	▪ Views of the current insufficiencies ▪ Ideas/views for a better system

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
1.1. Role of assessment in society	Current examination system	▪ Examinations have a clear place in society/school/profession. ▪ A system of assessment based purely on exams does not teach young people enough skills which they can use in the workplace. ▪ Exams are the most reliable way to award qualifications. ▪ Discriminatory system. ▪ Lack of trust in system. ▪ Assessments based on exams are not needed. ▪ The assessment system is outdated and unhelpful to our students. ▪ Summative high stakes assessment at 16 is unnecessary. ▪ Continuous assessment is effective and reliable. ▪ The current system allows disadvantaged pupils to be further disadvantaged. ▪ It is stressful and does not allow some students to work at their best. ▪ GCSE results have become meaningless. ▪ The current curriculum is primarily based on just taking an exam. ▪ There are different ways of formal assessment beyond only exams.
	Qualification: memory versus performance	▪ Exams over-emphasise memory and give unnecessary stress. ▪ We need more effective ways of assessing the skills, knowledge and capabilities/potential of young people that show a wider range of qualities than simple memorisation and regurgitation. ▪ The current system highlights how exams, repetition and memorisation make the education system less accessible and friendly. ▪ Exams only show what students can achieve on one day. ▪ Formal exams are not always necessary or appropriate to judge the performance of students. ▪ Performance tables discourage school leaders from offering meaningful GCSE subjects such as the London Institute of Banking and Finance (LIBF) qualification in financial education. ▪ Memorisation and rote learning do not make stronger students, or better writers, or more articulate debaters.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
1.2. Covid-19 and its impact on education	Inequalities and lack of equity	▪ The pandemic has highlighted existing inequalities in the education system. ▪ During the pandemic, the chance of trying new ways to measure students' performance and knowledge was a reality. ▪ Some students have difficulties that affect exam situations such as those with anxiety difficulties. ▪ Students are not equally and fairly equipped to sit exams. ▪ Teacher and centre assessed grades (TAGs and CAGs) exacerbated inequality and enabled unconscious biases to affect student outcomes. ▪ Some students thrive when offered coursework-style assessment. Some children freeze in exams and this disadvantages them. ▪ The lack of external assessment has widened attainment gaps between less advantaged and others. ▪ Lack of independence and resilience of students to engage with their learning. ▪ Unequal digital access limited full engagement with the curriculum. ▪ Open-book exams for literature are equitable and make for stronger responses. ▪ Even harder to make GCSE English and maths relevant/accessible in 16+ education for young people with poor previous experience/achievement. ▪ The current system is inherently unfair and based primarily on a student's access to resources determined by wealth.
	Mental health and wellbeing	▪ The pandemic has been stressful, and learning has been difficult for learners; some did not work at their best as they felt overwhelmed. ▪ Stress and panic over the completion of the curriculum has been a frequent feature in this system. ▪ The pandemic has constantly introduced changes which has been damaging to mental health, especially when these changes happen during the exam years. ▪ Too much pressure on teachers and students, causing mental health issues to rise.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
		▪ The examinations system is a destructive process that does not assess the potential or the ability of the students. ▪ Online teaching brought disadvantages in terms of missed depth of learning, development of skills and wellbeing overall. ▪ Students more stressed, mental health issues.
	Views of students'/ teachers' progression	▪ Children need to know how they will be assessed and that they will be assessed fairly. ▪ Some children could work better at home without the distraction of school. ▪ Open-book exams for literature are equitable and make for stronger responses among students. ▪ Pupils with greater initiative and learning ability were able to proceed with their studies and learn independently. ▪ Children can be assessed through methods other than exams. ▪ Continuous assessment gives a more rounded picture of their skills and knowledge. ▪ Children's academic achievement should be based on assessment throughout their courses (including coursework) not purely through an exam at the end. ▪ The lack of information and planning by the Government led to massive uncertainties. ▪ Workload massively increased for teachers with assessment measures during the pandemic.
1.3. Pathways of reporting achievements and capabilities	Views about teacher-based assessment	▪ Moving to teacher-based assessment gave a rich view of assessing students during the pandemic and demonstrated the possibility of alternatives rather than keeping a solely exams-based system. ▪ Teacher assessments have a robust performance component. ▪ Teacher assessments add massive workload and limit the reliability of grades. ▪ Teachers can be trusted with assessment and grading. ▪ Teachers can make an accurate and fair assessment of how students have done on their courses without a high stakes exam.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
		▪ Teachers are capable of accurate internal assessment. ▪ Teachers must be given the time and training to complete examination processes correctly. ▪ Teachers should never predict children's grades. ▪ Teacher assessment is unworkable in most subjects. ▪ Teacher assessment is a less robust assessment method than exams. ▪ Teacher assessment is key. ▪ The use of teacher assessment during the pandemic has opened up a debate about how students are assessed. ▪ Teacher assessments are unreliable, and we need to get back to exams. ▪ Teachers are perfectly capable of, with appropriate support, fairly, accurately and robustly assessing student achievements, skills and capabilities. ▪ Teacher assessment is a terrible way of providing objective and comparable assessment of a student's ability.
	Views of the current qualification system	▪ Exams are a fairer way to assess pupils and better than teacher assessments. ▪ Exams are essential in many subjects as the best route we currently have towards equity. ▪ Exams are the most reliable way to award qualifications. ▪ Exams are crucial and must continue. ▪ School assessment is a less robust assessment method than exams. ▪ TAGs have been described as complex, and not much different to exams. ▪ Not all students are able to reach their full potential using formal written exams. ▪ Assessment is a very personal and variable thing, and each student is best suited to a different type of assessment. ▪ Exams only show what they can achieve on one day. ▪ Continuous assessment is effective and reliable. ▪ Returning to normal is a powerful statement about supporting young people and reducing bias. ▪ GCSE results have become meaningless. ▪ The current system is outdated in the modern world and frankly unnecessary.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
		▪ The current system is inherently unfair and based primarily on a student's access to resources determined by wealth, and the assessments rely on this unfairness. ▪ Exams are not necessary. ▪ The examinations system is a destructive process that does not assess the potential or the ability of the students. ▪ Key stage 2 scores are not a suitable method of determining target grades. ▪ The English GCSE is irrelevant to what a typical person needs to learn. ▪ Children can be assessed through other methods than exams.
1.4. Curriculum design for a new era	A necessary education reform	▪ It is time for reform, to remove pressure from pupils and improve curriculum (instead of teaching to a mandated syllabus), to enable teachers to think more comprehensively than the confines of a syllabus, and to create a fairer, more equitable method of assessing all pupils. ▪ This is the perfect time to remove GCSE exams/results altogether, ideally in looking to the future. ▪ Just one examination board and a reduction in the thousands of different qualifications could be offered. ▪ Examinations are not the be-all and end-all of assessment. ▪ Continuous assessment is effective and reliable. ▪ Fair, robust, unbiased assessment is needed.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
	Technology as part of the learning, teaching and assessment process	- Online learning has some advantages to promote education.Online technologies bring disadvantages in terms of missed depth of learning, development of skills, and wellbeing overall. - A few days a week at home with online classes would benefit most students. - Home-schooling is a factor to consider. - Unequal digital access limited full engagement with the curriculum. - Streamline content – too dense for many subjects, mainly English. - Remote learning has allowed students to work at a slower pace than in class thus develop a deeper understanding and produce better written work. - Exams should be accessible to do online for those that struggle or who are home educating.
	Looking to the future: a flexible and inclusive approach	- An original path to developing a system that could assess and report the achievements and capabilities of young people. - Exam boards should be disbanded, and one central board created. - Reconfiguration of the current system could ensure the young people develop the attributes they need to thrive in the 21st century. - Modular structure such as happens in vocational subjects would have allowed learners in the pandemic to have had test scores already banked. - Just one examination board and a reduction in the thousands of different qualifications could be offered. - Fair, robust, unbiased assessment is needed.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
2.1. Key aspects to be preserved	Positive aspects	- Standardisation and moderation along with robustness of processes. - It can teach discipline and the value of preparedness. - It can be equitable if deployed correctly, and thus can attempt to ensure some consistency across the country. - Independent marking. - Exam questions allow pupils to think critically and apply their knowledge to a debate within a question (especially within humanities subjects). - Keeping clarity based on scores or ranks. - There are strengths in the vocational qualifications that are now being offered and stronger links to work experience are being drawn, even at secondary level. - The best thing is that all are assessed in a consistent manner. - The current system is the fairest to assess the academic ability for traditional university course places. - No additional workload for teachers. - All students have equal opportunities to do well. - Marked blind – the examiner does not know the pupil so receipt of free school meals, behaviour, ethnicity are not subconsciously considered when marking/grading. - Rigour – exams are not perfect but they assess what students can do. - It allows the best attempt at a level playing field that we can offer. - It is simple to understand. - It presented a reasonable level of challenge. - Fairer than teacher assessment and much better for teacher workload. - Objective assessment of knowledge that cannot be subjectively manipulated. - Exams work well for majority of students, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
		- Modular vocational units, courses that comprise of different elements including exams that build on strengths of all learners. - Examinations are the best and fairest way to show what students know and how they can apply this knowledge. - Fairness, reliability, well known by users. - Allow students to use all knowledge gained to access high-level problem-solving questions from across the subject curriculum.
	Negative aspects	- Nothing good from the current system. - There are no strengths. - Curriculum is too limited. - Too academic. - Too GCSE-focussed. - Too boring. - Disciplines are an outdated way of assessing learning, decided in 1904. - Not relevant for children today. - I cannot see any key strengths in the current system. - There are no strengths – a more significant problem counters every possible strength. - The whole education system in the country is broken, with an over-emphasis on exams and performance and league tables right from primary school. - The modular approach of an AS/A-level split did not work well for most of our pupils who have done much better in language, literature and media with a two-year A-level including an element of internally assessed coursework.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
2.2. Gaps and aspects to be corrected	Views of the current insufficiencies	• There simply are no strengths to the current system. • It is on a narrow, inflexible curriculum and a single set of age-specific rather than level-specific, high-stakes pen and paper exams. • There should be less emphasis on the importance of just these examinations as the sole contributor to the qualifications. • The system is designed for academic performance and needs to be maintained to fit these students; change is needed for those who do not fit with the current system. • Exam-centric system is better suited to boys. • Exams can be better for some young people. • Disciplines are an outdated way of assessing learning, decided in 1904. So, why aren't we moving towards interdisciplinarity like the International Baccalaureate system?
	Ideas/views for a better system	• A combination of assessments, including examinations, and teacher assessment makes for a fairer system. • Assessments should, in the main, be marked by impartial and standardised examiners. • Designing an incredible system – enjoyable to prepare and plan, enjoyable to work on for both teachers and pupils, it would be amazing. • There just needs to be a wider range of options for less academic students. • An ideal solution would be a three-point assessment system which is one third exam, one third coursework and one third teacher assessment based on classwork marked against standardized criteria. • An assessment system (for private or public purposes) needs a degree of objectivity. • Centralised system that is less open for abuse compared to a school-based system. • Less workload compared to system employed during the pandemic. • In favour of total reform.

APPENDIX 4:
ANALYSIS OF SURVEY 2

Following the publication of the Independent Assessment Commission's interim report in September 2021, the IAC ran a second public survey on its website to seek views about the principles and the process of change. This survey was open for approximately one month. Almost 50 responses were received, from teachers and leaders, parents, and other individuals with a professional or personal interest in assessment. The commission used an analysis of the written responses to identify issues to consider in the development of the final report.

The survey invited views on the following:

Q1	In your experience, do the qualifications currently taken by young people provide a useful basis for the next stages in their lives?
Q2	Thinking about the case for change in the interim report, how far do you agree that change is needed?
Q3	Considering the five principles proposed in the interim report, how far do you agree that qualifications and assessment should: ▪ serve the individual ▪ be recognised to be part of a wider education system including curriculum, pedagogy and accountability ▪ serve the future needs of society, culture and the economy to enable the nation and young people to thrive ▪ be inclusive both in purpose and in the design and development of the system ▪ support progression for all young people, but should not exist only to act as a mechanism for determining the next examination or selection?
Q4	The IAC is seeking to explore how the qualifications system might be equitable and reliable. In your view what would make the system equitable?
Q5	In your view what would make the system reliable?
Q6	Are there any issues that you would like to see developed further in the final report?
Q7	In order to develop proposals that are fit for the future, how far do you agree that the following groups should be involved in the process of change? ▪ education staff working in 14-19 ▪ young people ▪ parents ▪ employing organisations ▪ staff in higher education ▪ assessment experts ▪ policy-makers ▪ politicians ▪ others (please specify).
Q8	The interim report suggests that teachers should be central to the process of change to make sure that proposals are both desirable and manageable. Do you agree/disagree?
Q9	The interim report suggests that teachers should have this work recognised as part of a teacher's role with time made available to reflect these new tasks. Do you agree/disagree?

Q10	Please provide any examples from your experience of activities that demonstrate any of the five principles in practice.
Q11	Please provide any examples from your experience of occasions where you have been involved in changes that felt manageable, inclusive and sustainable.
Q12	What made your experience positive?

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

DIMENSION	CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
1. Impact of the qualifications on young people's future	1.1. Usefulness of qualifications	▪ Preparing and developing for professional careers ▪ Lack of equity and justice
	1.2. People's experiences of qualifications	▪ Role of assessment in education ▪ Views associated with qualifications
	1.3. Lack of diversity, inclusion, economic equality and social mobility	▪ Views and perceptions ▪ Challenges and concerns ▪ Covid-19 and its effects
	1.4. Gaps between academic activities and non-academic	▪ Nurturing academic activities ▪ Developing practical and technical skills
2. Consideration of the kind of society and citizens that we want to support	2.1. An equitable system	▪ Recommendation for a more even-handed system ▪ Challenges for having a fair system
	2.2. A reliable system	▪ Views about a more reliable system ▪ Examples for a robust system ▪ Examples of the five principles in practice

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
1.1. Usefulness of qualifications	Preparing and developing for professional careers	▪ Science A-levels for medical careers. ▪ Those who wish to take their studies further but not for those who don't. ▪ For some, there are specific requirements for the next steps, such as college entry requirements. ▪ GCSE is designed as a preparation for A-levels, which not all students take. ▪ Mainly those going into academia. ▪ Grades being reliable to 'one grade either way' surely isn't acceptable. ▪ The system works well for children who are good enough at schoolwork to get good grades. ▪ For those moving onto academic post-16 routes. ▪ Some kids will cope with academia and progress to academic or knowledge-based roles. ▪ The subjects studied in all secondary schools allow students the opportunity to further their understanding through universities and get jobs later in life. ▪ This tends to favour students from more affluent backgrounds with often an inbuilt sense of self-worth and aspiration. ▪ Assessment and resulting qualifications are only as good as the curriculum and learning experiences of young people that they intend to recognise and 'reward'. ▪ More emphasis on how the qualifications and assessment set-up taken as a whole can be used to assess a broad range of young people's abilities, skills and qualities. ▪ Only for the more academic young people.
	Lack of equity and justice	▪ Students who are good at answering exam papers are at an obvious advantage. Those who are not good at sitting exams do not achieve an accurate outcome of their knowledge. ▪ Some children are made to feel less able when content in some subjects is too broad to squeeze into teaching time, leading to misunderstanding and frustration. ▪ The current education system does not suit all pupils and serves better those more academically inclined pupils.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
		- There seems to be an elitism created to the detriment of those who have lower aspirations/abilities. - Students from affluent backgrounds almost always have a greater advantage in final assessment examinations. - Assessments should be made more equitable and fairer for all. - They are mostly inaccessible to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). - There is a 'parity of esteem' problem regarding academic qualifications still being held as the 'gold standard' with vocational study as only the poor relative. - The current accountability system is perceived to encourage an educational focus on a narrow range of academic subjects, one that separates vocational and academic pathways, and devalues the vocational. - Most people forget lots of what they learn in school anyway if it's not related to their own interests. - Many important subjects are neglected including life skills (like learning about dealing with finances, independent thinking skills), creative subjects and languages (which are not valued despite providing the opportunity to learn a variety of useful skills), as well as ones relating to societal issues (like climate change, inequality). - Significant variation in the quality of education and a one-size-fits-all style of schooling means that some people benefit much more than others. - There is a concern among participants because schools were not entirely preparing pupils for further or higher education, or the workplace, which is the core purpose of their schooling as a foundation upon which to build the rest of their education, career and contributions to society. - It also isn't fair how 30 per cent of students fail. - Exams, which put stress on both students and teachers, are no fun and take away the joy of learning.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
1.2. People's experiences of qualifications	Role of assessment in education	- The current system is not fit for its purpose. - Assessment being ongoing and drawing on different evidence bases. - Assessment must not be conflated with testing or examinations. - Qualifications today are largely exam-oriented. - School is largely about ticking boxes on specifications (that is to say, prescriptions of knowledge) and learning specific exam techniques that are hardly relatable to the real world. - We need to accept that no system will ever be completely reliable. - Parents agree that the current state education system enables children from more privileged backgrounds to succeed more than others. - Parents look for consistency and fairness when it comes to assessment. - Testing and examinations must not exert undue influence on pedagogy. - Exams, as currently constructed, are perceived to be largely a test of memory rather than of understanding and the ability to use knowledge in new and creative ways. - Education systems tend to reflect the ideals and principles of the wider society. - Average grades rise decade after decade across the western world.
	Views associated with qualifications	- Assessment should not be based totally on exams but should be more balanced. - The current key stage 2 assessment framework needs to feed into any proposed changes further on. - Take out tiered exams in maths and science. - Parents, students and wider society have realised that a particular grade does not necessarily show what has been learned or to what standard. - Most will be bypassed in terms of learning key skills life. - Most people forget lots of what they learn in school anyway if it's not related to their own interests. - Some knowledge taught at lower levels must be 'unlearnt' at higher level. - The outcomes are the most important: sustainable change, making the world a better place.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
		▪ Assessment being ongoing and drawing on different evidence bases. ▪ Abolish GCSEs. They are a hangover from a 1950s school leaving certificate. Create a flexible 14-19 curriculum with an appropriate assessment at the end. ▪ One single exam board. ▪ Assessment must not be conflated with testing or examinations. ▪ A nationally recognised, standardised set of exams. ▪ Summative assessments need a full range of modes. ▪ Exams are stressful, narrow curricula, ignore learning styles, ignore individual stages of development, assume vertical learning is everything and ignore the need for horizontal learning. ▪ The system needs to respond more quickly to the skills needs of employers. ▪ Exams, as currently constructed, are perceived to be largely a test of memory rather than of understanding and the ability to use knowledge in new and creative ways. ▪ Too many questions are worded in a way that require contextual knowledge beyond a child's ability in a subject. This needs to change. ▪ At the moment, subjects are studied individually, yet it is far more interesting to link subjects together, teaching something that is relevant to multiple subjects; this should be considered.
1.3. Lack of diversity, inclusion, economic equality and social mobility	Views and perceptions	▪ It needs to change if we are to genuinely improve social mobility and improve the life chances of young people across the board. ▪ The current system has an overwhelming reliance on high stakes examinations, which generates a range of unintended consequences that include 'teaching to the test', inequality between different students of comparable ability, heightened anxiety and consequent weighting of 'exam technique' over ability. ▪ We need to accept that no system will ever be completely reliable. ▪ Some children are made to feel less able when content in some subjects is too broad to squeeze into teaching time, leading to misunderstanding and frustration.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
		- Around half of parents (52 per cent) agreed that the current education system provides the best outcomes for all children, whatever their educational needs, disabilities or health conditions. (Respondent noted that this is based on Parentkind's Annual Parent Survey, but did not note the year.) - Other parents think that there is a lack of equal opportunity, which relates to economic inequality. - Parents observe that social mobility is an issue. - Parents (84 per cent) indicated that an essential aspect of the current curriculum should include vocational subjects, ie those that prepare pupils for a particular job or area of employment. (Respondent noted that this is based on Parentkind's Annual Parent Survey, but did not note the year.) - Parents emphasise that curriculum should prepare pupils for the future job market. - Most parents agreed (89 per cent) that the curriculum should help develop skills that are useful outside of school, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, working to deadlines. (Respondent noted that this is based on Parentkind's Annual Parent Survey, but did not note the year.) - Children with learning disabilities are valuable members of society with a right to a quality education. - Parents look for consistency and fairness when it comes to assessment.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
	Challenges and concerns	- The current system has too narrow a view of ability. - Some parents (42 per cent) indicated that their child's school is not preparing them for the modern-day job market. (Respondent noted that this is based on Parentkind's Annual Parent Survey, but did not note the year). - The process can be energising too, but if that process doesn't deliver the outcomes, there's no point. - Parents recognised the efforts of teachers and their attempts to create a level playing field within the current system, but it is not enough. - The current system and structure do not suit every pupil. - Parents (63 per cent) agreed that their child's school should do more to nurture non-academic pupils to develop practical and technical skills. (Respondent noted that this is based on Parentkind's Annual Parent Survey, but did not note the year.) - Parents recognise that the current education system does not suit all pupils and serves better those more academically inclined pupils. - Parents showed concern that the current curriculum does not include vocational subjects to prepare the pupils for a particular job or area of employment. - Exams puts stress on both students and teachers, are no fun and take away the joy of learning. - We need to accept that no system will ever be completely reliable.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
	Covid-19 and its effects	- Parents have been anxious about the arrangements for exams and the determination of grades over the last two academic years because of the impact of the pandemic and loss of classroom-based learning on their child's schooling. - The pandemic has been increasing the concern among schools because they were not entirely preparing pupils for further or higher education or the workplace. - Much pressure on teachers and schools to get results leads to some shocking practices. - Exam stress topping parental concerns when it comes to their children's mental health. - I would like to see the mental health part developed in greater detail. I think it's a major theme in schools today. - This summer, our workload increased to an intolerable level thanks to 'there will be no exams' from the Government and our idiotic education minister.
1.4. Gaps between academic and non-academic activities	The trend to nurture academic activities	- I believe that there should be more emphasis on how the qualifications and assessment set-up taken as a whole can be used to assess a broad range of young people's abilities, skills and qualities (in line with the need for a balanced and broadly-based curriculum), taking account of the effect on those of different ages. - Significant variation in the quality of education and a one-size-fits-all style of schooling means that some people benefit much more than others. - There is a concern among participants that schools were not entirely preparing pupils for further or higher education, or the workplace, which is the core purpose of their schooling as a foundation upon which to build the rest of their education, career and contributions to society. - Other qualifications and links with employers need to be better promoted and from an earlier age.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
	Developing practical and technical skills	▪ The current education system does not suit all pupils and serves less those more non-academically inclined pupils, so there is a challenge there. ▪ There is a strong view that a child's school should nurture non-academic pupils to develop practical and technical skills rather than only academic activities. ▪ In order to develop a better system, the current curriculum should cover vocational subjects to prepare the pupils for a broad variety of jobs, also areas of employment. ▪ Participants indicated that the curriculum must focus on helping develop valuable skills outside of school, such as critical thinking, problem-solving and teamwork. ▪ Practical skills and communication skills should be valued. ▪ An over-reliance on technology must be discouraged. ▪ Some participants indicated that the new curriculum must focus on life skills, creative subjects and languages, and societal issues. ▪ There is a concern among participants that schools were not entirely preparing pupils for further or higher education, or the workplace, which is the core purpose of their schooling as a foundation upon which to build the rest of their education, career and contributions to society. ▪ Some vocational qualifications involve visiting and studying workplaces, on which they are assessed. ▪ Better vocational pathways would be useful for some pupils, as would specialist pathways.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
2.1. An equitable system	Recommendation for a more even-handed system	- Learning must reflect the practicable application of key skills in life. - An over-reliance on technology must be discouraged. - The new system should give students more options for determining skills and weaknesses. - A teacher-based assessment element similar to the model used in Germany. - Feedback and reflection. - Whenever things have been piloted feedback should be taken to adapt and improve systems. - Introducing science education/scientific literacy programmes. - The central goal must be to improve the school experience for children, especially but not only for the ablest children. - Comparison across years and across geographic cohorts. - Have a wider range of qualifications available for different types of learners. - Stop divisive political ideologies from interfering with (if not dominating) the curriculum within humanities and social sciences in particular - Improve overall quality of education. - More opportunities for educating about issues relating to wider society, to encourage responsible national and global citizens (eg environment education). - Less focus on cramming information from a specification in order to pass. - Ongoing formative assessment as well as summative assessment. - Working with like-minded people who put the child's experience at the centre of our thinking. - Holistic assessment of individuals, based on their own capabilities. - We should try to use assessment as a key part of continuing professional development /moderation and professional development. - The summative assessments need a full range of modes.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
		- An equitable system needs to take into account socio-economic factors, with a range of assessment styles. - Students coming out of school with a portfolio rather than a list of grades. - Tighter mark schemes, possibly less grades and 'levelled up' teaching. - Teacher assessment across courses. - We need a way of establishing a consistent standard. - The emphasis should not be on producing economically productive young people, but rather on producing citizens who contribute towards a kinder society. - A greater emphasis on using a range of different assessment methods, including practical applications, coursework and in some cases working as a group, rather than the current over-emphasis on one-off tests and examinations. - Broad curricula, mixed methods for assessment that match the developmental ages and stages that children and young people are at. - One important aspect is the use of self-assessment, especially through the use of portfolios gathered over time. - Assessment needs to have a wider scope and methods that represent periodic episodes of learning as opposed to end of long stages requiring memorising whole curricula. Life never requires this. - A system that doesn't cause stress and unnecessary anxiety, it should just be a way to test someone's ability, not make them 'vomit' information. - The curriculum for each subject should be rationalised and linked to a learning journey. - Now, subjects are studied individually, yet it is far more interesting to link subjects together, teaching something that is relevant to multiple subjects; this should be considered. - Real-life skills should be taught at school for individuals to be ready for work and looking after themselves.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
		▪ Using teacher assessment throughout the total career of the student rather than relying on a one-off system. ▪ A mixture of exams and coursework/teacher assessments for all qualifications. ▪ Peer review/assessed by a wide variety of employers from different backgrounds together with teachers from each expert area. ▪ One national exam service.
	Challenges for having a fair system	▪ Insufficient reference is made in the interim report to previous attempts at reform, such as the Tomlinson Report, and reasons for their failure. ▪ Teacher input – alongside the assessment. ▪ Unfortunately, the goalposts are constantly being moved. This means that it's difficult to measure where we are at – in terms of achievement etc. ▪ We need to consider more how changes will affect day-to-day school life. ▪ This is a situation like the quote about democracy, ie that it's the worst system apart from all the others that have been tried. ▪ The current key stage 2 assessment framework needs to feed into any proposed changes further on. ▪ Developing curriculum. ▪ The current system strongly promotes one pathway to success in life: good grades --> good university --> good job (ie a stable, well-paid career you stay in for your whole life that you pick when you're still at school and only very young). ▪ Must not be allowed to take over from the human interactions educators bring to add value to education. ▪ This needs to change and improve the life chances of young people across the board, but it is challenging. ▪ The current system has too narrow a view of ability. ▪ The trust and reliability is not currently there. ▪ Insufficient attention is paid across the principles to the need to reference curriculum and learning opportunities fit for the 21st century.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
		▪ This model of work lends itself particularly to STEM/ STEAM [Science, Technology Engineering , (Arts) and Mathematics] related endeavours that are driven by project-based learning and subject mastery. ▪ Qualifications and assessment for SEND pupils at all levels. ▪ Focusing on GCSEs and A-levels alone is far too narrow. ▪ Assessment in special schools.
2.2. A reliable system	Views about a more reliable system	▪ Combination of assessment strategies. ▪ Some sort of 'test run'. Not sure how, though. ▪ I believe that there should be more emphasis on how the qualifications and assessment set-up taken as a whole can be used to assess a broad range of young people's abilities, skills and qualities (in line with the need for a balanced and broadly-based curriculum), taking account of the effect on those of different ages. ▪ Consideration of the kind of society and citizens that we want to encourage, using education, should be important. ▪ Parents look for consistency and fairness when it comes to assessment. ▪ A robust system of coursework assessment and exam equivalence each year. ▪ Taking out the reliance on the use of historical patterns to predict outcomes that only cap attainment rather than encourage it. ▪ External assessment is the least bad option. ▪ Tighter mark schemes. ▪ More standardisation (in whatever form, coursework, exams, etc). ▪ The current system is reliable, because the emphasis is on drill. Drill has its place, but we need to move beyond it, which inherently means a fuzzier, less reliable system. ▪ Establishment of a solid and broad framework for the system, but also a system with flexibility to account for the individuality of students. ▪ Standards, accountability. ▪ Time. ▪ Standardised assessment, sampling. ▪ Consultation with educators at all stages.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
		- The central goal must be to improve the school experience for children, especially but not only the ablest children. - Everyone needs to be 'involved', in that no one can sensibly be excluded, for that just builds in trouble. But different communities need to be involved in different ways at different times.
	Examples for a robust system	- The curriculum for each subject should be rationalised and linked to a learning journey. - The current government should be encouraged to 'level up' expenditure if it is to be seen to be serious about reform. - Learning must reflect the practicable application of key skills in life. - Communication with a wide range of groups to ensure that many people's views are represented (young people especially) so that people have belief in the system. - Teach children how to prepare for the working world rather than how to be activists. - Trust in teachers' professionalism alongside regular internal and external teacher moderation. - The assessment should be fully reliable and trustworthy, in that it needs to be the same no matter who marks the script or judges the coursework (or whatever). - Students should be taught how to participate in reasoned debate and challenged more, learning how to accommodate both alternative views and the difficulties life presents. - Resilience over safe spaces every day of the week. - The system would be reliable if the information was about what an individual can actually do skills-wise rather than what they can remember. It needs to be accountable for putting skills into context. - Incorporating trade unions – staff representatives. - Incorporating local authorities. - Directly tackle the relevance of the current assessments and name them.

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	INDICATOR
		- Policy needs to be based on broad principles rather than be over-detailed or micro-managed, so that teachers in a particular school/college or group of schools can be allowed to exercise and share professional judgement. - An action plan might be helpful – first [this], then [that]. For example, (1) ensure all assessments are fully reliable; (2) change assessment 'rules' for A-level; (3) introduce a replacement for GCSE (this having been developed while 1 and 2 have been in progress); and (4) implement revised curricula at both pre-16 and A-level. - Remove the teacher and school accountability for results.
	Examples of the five principles in practice	- University examinations Covid responses. - Working in the pupil referral unit (PRU) sector, we must design pathways that meet individual pupils where they are, as well as ensuring they are not disenfranchised from a 'mainstream' offer. - Unless these pathways have equal value, the gaps grow between our pupils and their peers, and they disengage from education becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). - This work needs to be better co-ordinated between secondary provisions, employers and colleges. - Even with high timetables, intensive planning, marking and extra-curriculum activities, we were able to provide robust examination/assessments that allowed our students to get their deserved grades. - We received little if any help from exam boards, or in some cases, our own schools, yet we did it. - We are more than qualified to provide suitable assessments for our children. - My background is mostly in primary education, from which I think there is much to learn especially in terms of assessing 'the whole child'. - I actively use problem-based learning (PBL) in physics lessons at year 9, and see clear progress in a student's cognitive maturity. I currently cannot do this in key stages 4 and 5 because the curriculum is so dense that time constraints do not allow it. - Developing learning experiences that were integral with formative assessment, reflected local communities and were appropriate to the needs, cultures and talents of the young people involved.