

Government consultation on implementing the English Baccalaureate:



Crafts Council response January 2016

The Crafts Council is the national lead for craft in the UK. Our goal is to make the UK the best place to make, see, collect and learn about craft. Engaging over 2.8 million people annually, we champion and support high quality contemporary craft practice and grow and diversify audiences for craft.

Craft contributes £3.4bn to the UK economy each year. In addition to the value it creates in its own right, craft adds value to other industrial sectors, including healthcare, engineering or architecture.

We welcome the Government's consultation on implementing the EBacc. We view GCSEs as a vital milestone in the education of young people and are pleased to note in the consultation that "EBacc subjects are only part of a broad and balanced curriculum. The government believes that every child should experience a high-quality arts and cultural education throughout their time at school. This is why the arts subjects are statutory for maintained schools from key stages 1 to 3."

Regrettably, we believe that the inevitable consequence of the intention to place a greater focus on EBacc entrants will be a reduced priority for those creative subjects which are acknowledged to be a part of a broad and balanced curriculum. Entries for GCSE Design and Technology have already fallen by 29% in five years¹. We are concerned that this policy effectively diminishes the status of all other subjects not included in the EBacc, risking labelling those young people outside the EBacc as failures and seriously reducing educational choice. The measures will have a significant detrimental impact on the teaching and learning of the arts in schools. For many secondary schools, parental, pupil and teacher choice will be abolished. The policy is likely to have a material impact on the UK economy, society and our international standing.

The EBacc accountability measures are needlessly bureaucratic. We would prefer to see the continuation of the more equitable performance measures of Progress 8 (progress from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school in eight qualifications), Attainment 8 (showing attainment in the same 8 subjects) and the percentage of pupils achieving a good pass in English and mathematics. By contrast, the proposed measures are unambitious and will widen the disadvantage gap. The Attainment 8 and Progress 8 performance measures require virtually all students to be entered for English, maths, three further EBacc GCSEs and up to three additional GCSEs or approved technical qualifications. This provides a broad curriculum for all students while providing an important element of choice in subjects, geared to the talents and aspirations of individual students.

¹ <http://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/news/gcse-stats-whats-the-real-picture-for-the-arts-in-schools/>

In seeking to impose the full EBacc on 90% of students, the government is claiming that foreign languages, history and/or geography are inherently, and in all circumstances, more valuable than non-EBacc subjects. There is no sound evidence to support this. In addition, there is no evidence that choosing alternatives to foreign languages, history and/or geography harms the prospects of students who choose paths other than direct entry to a Russell Group University.

We do not support the proposal that EBacc entry and attainment be given a more prominent role in the Ofsted inspection framework. The regulatory system should maintain a balanced focus on the quality of the full breadth of subjects taught in schools.

Evidence² suggests that other countries are trying as hard as the UK to grow the creative and cultural industries. Some forecasts suggest that creative sector growth will be stronger globally than in the UK. This evidence underpins calls for change in our education manifesto for craft and making *[Our Future is in the Making](#)*³. The Creative Industries Federation (of which the Crafts Council is a member) recommends that,

While other countries are reforming their entire education systems to focus on culture and creativity, we are losing ground in the UK. We should refocus our attention on ensuring our education system is innovative and progressive, supporting the creativity of our young people and providing the bedrock for our future economic success.⁴

Department for Education consultation on implementing the English Baccalaureate

Pupils in scope

1. What factors do you consider should be taken into account in making decisions about which pupils should not be entered for the EBacc?

We oppose the introduction of a 90% entry target for the Ebacc. Withdrawing the target would reduce the need to make such distinctions between pupils.

Accountability for meeting the EBacc commitment

2. Is there any other information that should be made available about schools' performance in the EBacc?

We have serious concerns about the central premise of the target in the consultation paper. It is essential that performance in measured and published equally across all GCSE subject entries, rather than introducing a separate target for EBacc subjects.

² The C. Report 2015–2016, Creative Industries Federation, 2016

³ <http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/education-manifesto/>

⁴ Ibid.

3. How should this policy apply to UTCs, studio schools and further education colleges teaching key stage 4 pupils?

New types of school, such as free schools and studio schools, are taking the opportunity to act as vanguards of new styles of education. The opportunity to develop an innovative curriculum offer and to widen educational choice should not be placed at a disadvantage by a requirement to adhere to the EBacc target.

Implementation

4. What challenges have schools experienced in teacher recruitment to EBacc subjects?

The consultation acknowledges that the target for schools to enter 90% of students for the EBacc will have a significant impact on teacher recruitment in the EBacc subjects.

We would also underline that the inevitable consequence of the target will also be an impact on teacher recruitment in other non-EBacc subjects, such as creative subjects.

We would refer to findings on falling teacher recruitment in creative subjects published by the National Society for Education in Art and Design and by the Design and Technology Association.

5. What strategies have schools found useful in attracting and retaining staff in these subjects?

No response.

6. What approaches do schools intend to take to manage challenges relating to the teaching of EBacc subjects?

We would also be interested to understand how schools will manage challenges relating to the teaching of non EBacc subjects, in light of the pressure to enter 90% of pupils for EBacc subjects.

7. Other than teacher recruitment, what other issues will schools need to consider when planning for increasing the number of pupils taking the EBacc?

Schools will wish to ensure that participation in creative subjects does not decline and become relegated to an optional out of/after school activity available only to those able to pay.

8. What additional central strategies would schools like to see in place for recruiting and training teachers in EBacc subjects?

No response.

Impact on pupils with protected characteristics

9. Do you think that any of the proposals have the potential to have an impact, positive or negative, on specific pupils, in particular those with 'relevant protected characteristics'? (The relevant protected characteristics are disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.) Please provide evidence to support your response.

We are concerned that young people with dyslexia and those who may be better suited to a more practical education will be placed at a disadvantage if pressurised to take the EBacc.

Socio-economic status is not a protected characteristic as such, but we are concerned that the EBacc policies will also have the effect of relegating creative subjects to an optional out of/after school activity available only to those able to pay. From a social justice point of view, we would wish this factor to be taken in to account in assessing the impact of the target.

10. How could any adverse impact be reduced to better advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it? Please provide evidence to support your response.

We are alarmed that in five years, 2007-2013, participation in craft-related GCSEs fell by 25% as recent Governments' policies (including a greater focus on performance tables and the introduction of the Progress 8 measure) have disincentivised schools from offering or promoting craft-related courses, and young people from choosing them. This comes at a time when elsewhere around the globe investment in creative education and making is rising. Full figures are in our report *Studying Craft 2: an update on trends in craft education and training*⁵, together with our earlier report on trends.

This evidence suggests that equality of opportunity across all pupils could be better maintained by retaining the current focus on Progress 8 and Attainment 8 without introducing the new target of 90% EBacc entry.

Given the risk that we believe this target poses to the future of creative education in general and to craft education in particular, we would urge DfE to investigate and reassure itself and the creative and cultural sectors about the perceived risk to creative education in the Government's intention to set a target for schools to achieve a 90% entry rate to the EBacc. We refer to the cross-party support garnered for actions set out in *Our Future is in the Making*, an education manifesto for craft and making⁶.

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⁵ <http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/research-reports/>

⁶ http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/content/files/7822_Education_manifesto@14FINAL.PDF