

The National Baccalaureate Trust recently concluded their consultation on the establishment of a National Baccalaureate for England. Below we have set out our response to the first question of that consultation:

‘Q1: Please let [the National Baccalaureate Trust] know what your overall thoughts are about the idea of a National Baccalaureate for England’.

Our response will focus on three areas that we believe are fundamental to the National Baccalaureate for England (NBfE) proposals: curriculum breadth; modes of assessment; and, integration of skills.

We support the development of a broad and diverse curriculum. We see a baccalaureate approach as an opportunity for students to experience a wide range of subjects, particularly outside of Ebacc subjects and with a focus on technical and creative, and personal development. We particularly support proposals for a wrap-around curriculum or a portfolio covering wider skills. We feel strongly that young people should be able to combine academic and vocational education and would not be supportive of a purely academic or vocational route in the final two years of the programme. Instead, we would like to see a baccalaureate model which allows mixing of qualifications to ensure routes can run together. For example, BTECs offer students the choice of blending academic and technical subjects and we support the #ProtectStudentChoice campaign which opposes the removal of BTECs. We also point to the Foundation Apprenticeship programme in Scotland which allows young people to gain industry knowledge and experience whilst at school, and would want to see similar opportunities replicated in a NBfE.

We recognise the challenges of a radical overhaul of assessment due to its close links to curriculum and pedagogy. However, we are keen to see bold, brave reform. The current assessment system prioritises high-stakes exams which dominate what is taught and the way in which it is taught. Urgent change is needed as young people find the current exam system increasingly stressful and it does not provide adequate opportunities for all young people to thrive. We are currently working closely with the [Rethinking Assessment](#) movement made up of academics, researchers, teachers, employers, policy makers and education professionals to explore ways of evidencing and assessing the skills of our young people. Additionally, this year we will also pilot practical approaches in schools and offer them as real alternatives. The proposed baccalaureate model could offer one option within a suite of multi-modal assessment options that we are exploring at Rethinking Assessment

Lastly, we need a broader, more holistic education system with a focus on developing young people with appropriate skills for the changing world of work. We support the proposals in the consultation which prioritise skills and behaviour development. In particular, there is much we could learn from the Welsh Baccalaureate model which includes the ‘Skills challenge certificate’ gained through individual projects, and challenges in enterprise and employability, global citizenship and community.

At Edge we want to give all young people the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to flourish in their future life and work, and we are keen to work collaboratively with the National Baccalaureate Trust and others towards this mission.