

## Edge response to the Education Committee's report on the future of post-16 qualifications

---

### Introduction

We were delighted to support the Education Committee by [giving evidence](#) to its inquiry into the future of post-16 qualifications last November 2022. The inquiry report has now been published and we are pleased to see a number of sensible recommendations which will go a long way to improving the post-16 offer. We are especially pleased with the committee's recommendations to delay the defunding of Applied General Qualifications until T Levels have been proven to be effective, and the need to consider a baccalaureate model post-16. We've set out below our thoughts on some of the key areas covered in the report.

### Applied general qualifications

We strongly support the committee's recommendation to pause the planned defunding of some applied general qualifications (AGQs), like BTECS, until T Levels have proven to be more effective in preparing students for progression, meeting industry needs, and promoting social mobility. AGQs allow learners to blend both academic and technical learning at Level 3, offering an invaluable middle pathway in what is becoming an increasingly narrow range of options post-16. Edge has been a proud supporter of the [#ProtectStudentChoice](#) campaign to remove 134 recently reformed and approved AGQs from the scope of the review. In particular, we are concerned that the proposed timeline will mean that the list of new qualifications that will replace the current AGQs will only be published in July 2024 for delivery from September 2025, limiting the ability to provide effective careers information and guidance on them. As the report highlights, there is remarkable consensus across the sector on this issue and we hope that ministers take these concerns seriously.

### T-Levels

We broadly welcome the introduction of T Levels and their aim to provide a rigorous and challenging vocational option at Level 3. However, we share some of the committee's concerns over the early experiences of these qualifications. In particular, we believe that they are too narrow, limiting a learner's ability to pursue other options upon completion. As the committee points out, there is confusion over where they can be feasibly taken alongside A Levels considering the size of the programme, and it is right that the Department for Education clarifies its position on this. There is also uncertainty around progression options for T Level students, particularly towards higher education and apprenticeships.

## Edge response to the Education Committee's report on the future of post-16 qualifications

---

We therefore support the committee's recommendation that the Government fast-tracks the publication of destination data for the first cohort of T Level students. Our [research with the National Foundation for Educational Research](#) made the case for longer term destination measures.

We also share the concerns about the number of industry placements that will be required once T Levels are fully rolled out, given the low awareness of T Levels among employers. We support the committee's recommendation for a strategic plan, with a view towards how T Level placements may hamper the willingness of employers to offer support in other areas of the skills system, to tackle this.

### Baccalaureate

As the committee rightly highlights, England is an international outlier in the narrowness of its upper secondary education. This will only get worse if the Government follows through with its plan to defund AGQs. We have consistently called for a broad and balanced curriculum for both pre- and post-16 education. We understand that a baccalaureate model would be a complex endeavour in England that must be carefully and fully considered and so we support the committee's call for an independent expert panel to undertake this work. At Edge, we have been convening experts to explore the rationale, options, and considerations for a baccalaureate model in England. We will be hosting a webinar on this on 23 May – find out more [here](#) and register to attend [here](#).

### Apprenticeships

We welcome the committee's desire to tackle the decline in under-19s starting apprenticeships and we support its recommendation to commission an independent review to examine possible mechanisms to reverse this. We have repeatedly [called on](#) the Government to re-focus the current programme and levy on young people. We agree that this must be achieved with proper support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

### Impact on devolved nations

One area not covered in the report, but which is nevertheless significant, is the impact of any policy changed on the devolved nations. While education is devolved, any changes made to qualifications in England will have an impact on Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## Edge response to the Education Committee's report on the future of post-16 qualifications

---

Employers and training providers that operate across the UK often struggle to navigate the various policy changes occurring in each nation, as was highlighted in our [workshops with Skills Development Scotland](#). For learners, issues of portability are especially important as many learners may move between the different nations for education and work. Any changes made in England must therefore be mindful of the impact on our devolved colleagues. We will continue to work with [policymakers across the four nations](#) to ensure that our education and skills systems works effectively for learners and employers.

You can read the Education Select Committee's full report [here](#).