



Towards A National Baccalaureate for England

Consultation

National Baccalaureate Trust

April 2021

The Consultation Process and Timeline:

Date	Process/Event
May 2021	Consultation Launch A questionnaire to gather ideas, policy recommendations and responses from stakeholder organisations and interested individuals.
May 12th	Consultation Forum The slides for this event are linked here A recording of the event is linked here
October 15th	Consultation response deadline.
Autumn 2021	Report Writing. Members of the NBT team will consider the range of responses to the consultation leading to a report that includes an evaluation of various contender models for a National Baccalaureate for England alongside some policy recommendations.
November	Consultation Forum 2 An opportunity for participants to offer comments on the emerging draft report.
January 2022	Report Published. NBT will hold a launch event to promote the report's publication and will set out a process for further engagement into 2022.

The Consultation Questionnaire:

[Please submit your responses via this google form.](#)

All responses are confidential unless otherwise indicated.

Trustees:

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Towards A National Baccalaureate for England: Consultation

In this document the National Baccalaureate Trust is launching a consultation process to gather views and ideas relating to the establishment of a National Baccalaureate for England. As an organisation we have our own views regarding what this might look like in principle and in practice but we are keen to gather views from key stakeholders with a range of perspectives before publishing recommendations and proposing some alternative models for further consultation. This paper sets out the context and some initial ideas and possible models to provide a stimulus for discussions and responses.

Introduction

Our education system has many strengths. We have fantastic teachers, innovative leaders and wonderful schools and colleges that are continuing to improve year on year. We have an incredibly dynamic education community engaged with research and committed to seeking excellence and tackling disadvantage. The sector's response to the pandemic has highlighted many of these strengths.

But, despite these strengths, ***too many young people, especially those judged to be at the lower end of the attainment range, are denied the opportunity to leave school with a fair record of their successes and achievements, however hard they work. Too often, young people's educational careers are defined solely in terms of a collection of exam results, often in a narrow range of disciplines and with inadequate regard for technical education, creative learning and personal development.***

We believe a successful education encompasses so much more than this, which is why, as members of the National Baccalaureate Trust, we have been working to design an exciting new type of leavers' award for students in English schools and colleges, which acknowledges **all** our young people's achievements, including academic and technical qualifications as well as their participation in the arts, sport and civic activity. With the range of pressures facing schools and colleges, **now** is the time to broaden our understanding of education so that our young people are properly equipped to thrive in the 21st century. To do this we want to invite interested schools and colleges, organisations and individuals to join us in shaping the vision for a National Baccalaureate for England. (NBfE)

Every school and college leaver could achieve this award, regardless of the level at which they complete their formal education, and there are strong international examples which should encourage us to devise this type of approach - the widely recognised International Baccalaureate for example. We have set out an explanation of why we believe this new, more holistic way of celebrating achievement is necessary and how it would benefit students, teachers, schools, colleges, universities and employers throughout the country. We are confident that these changes would also bring about a radical increase in belief and investment in education on the part of our students and their parents.

We hope you will engage with a discussion on the principles and details of the ideas we have put forward and will be prepared to submit a response via our questionnaire so that our final report reflects a consensus of views across the sector to the greatest possible extent.

[You will find the questionnaire response link here.](#)

The National Baccalaureate Trust

What is the National Baccalaureate for England?

The term 'baccalaureate'¹ applies to a framework for curriculum and assessment, akin to the International Baccalaureate, that we envisage being implemented across England. It has the following characteristics.

The National Baccalaureate is:

- **A national, overarching post-18 certificate:** NBfE would be an overarching award that all students in England work towards completing at the end of their education at 18 or 19, encompassing and summarising all of their achievements across a broad, rich curriculum.
- **An umbrella award and transcript:** NBfE would be awarded based on a holistic view of each student's achievements in formally assessed components, as well as personal development and non-examined achievements through their wider curriculum, all captured in a common transcript. Component assessments could include some existing qualifications and examinations; others could be new.
- **Universal for all learners:** The NBfE applies to every student in the country, allowing both academic and technical pathways to be included on parallel terms within the same overall framework. All learners can complete the National Baccalaureate at some level, whether in schools, sixth-form and FE colleges or apprenticeship programmes.
- **A structured framework:** The NBfE has an internal structure such that some core components would be mandatory requirements for the award whilst others would be optional, blending common entitlements with the flexibility to ensure all students can achieve across the full range of technical and academic learning pathways.
 - It is likely to need to embrace a two-stage element allowing existing 11-18 and 11-16 institutions and further education and sixth form colleges and apprenticeship providers to contribute according to their specialisms and age-ranges within an integrated national system.
 - It comprises formally assessed components - which might include existing GCSEs, A Levels, BTECs and T-Levels or their reformed equivalents - alongside a record of the student's personal development and research projects. This might include existing project qualifications such as the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), well-established instrumental grades and other arts and sports awards and accredited achievement schemes such as the widely recognised Duke of Edinburgh Awards or the National Citizen Service.
- **A tiered framework:** The NBfE would be designed to allow all students to celebrate their successes and achievements at different difficulty levels, from Entry Level, Foundation (L1) and Intermediate Level (L2) to Advanced Level (L3). Our National Baccalaureate Award is designed to reflect high quality, ambitious educational standards, with the final transcript focusing on what students have achieved rather than using the language of pass and fail as is currently the case for the third of all 16 year olds who do not achieve grade 4 at GCSE.
- **Internationally comparable:** The NBfE shares the advantages of other prestigious Baccalaureate models like the International Baccalaureate which also comprises examined and non-examined components, blending academic or technical learning with personal development. The NBfE model and concept also aligns with High School graduation at 18 in the USA and the Baccalaureates in Spain and France.

¹ The National Baccalaureate concept and structure is entirely different to the current eBacc which, in our view, completely misuses the term 'baccalaureate'.

Why do we need the NBfE? What problems does it solve?

- **Structural imbalance of a system focused on 16, not 18:**

Although participation in education is compulsory to age 17 and encouraged to 18, the weight of the system falls heavily in Year 11, with students aged 16. The volume of assessment and exam preparation in Year 11 is disproportionate and distorting to a coherent 14-18 curriculum. The English system should be geared towards a common end-point at 18/19, where we finally evaluate students' successes in the round. This is also where the greatest weight of school and college accountability should fall. The National Baccalaureate is an attempt to redress this issue and shift teachers' and students' thinking on to a long term outlook, working towards completing the 'Bacc' at the end of Year 13, whichever type of programme they've elected to follow.

The National Baccalaureate for England, with its associated common transcript, would provide a more holistic view of young people and their achievements as they progress to employment or to Higher Education through the UCAS system.

- **Insufficient breadth and coherence in curriculum pathways:**

Our current system has multiple structural flaws with excessive structure and subject content volume at KS4 and insufficient breadth at KS5. Students move from a crowded, inflexible experience at GCSE, with inadequate provision for engaging in non-Ebacc subjects, to a narrow three-subject curriculum at A level or single-discipline technical qualifications with little scope for further study in other areas. Students often make choices as early as Year 8 to conclude learning in history or arts or a language - with very little chance of returning to them later. A 14-18 Bacc would allow subjects to be studied across a wider time frame, providing opportunities for greater breadth in the final years and less congestion at KS4.

A broader Bacc-model curriculum for 14-18 would also have positive implications for the breadth of study at KS3 which can, at times, become excessively condensed in order to provide space to prepare for high volume, high stakes examinations at 16.

- **Insufficient diversity of assessment modes:**

Our current system focuses very heavily on terminal examinations in all subjects which has distorting effects on the flow of learning as students progress from age 14 to 18. It simply is not healthy or necessary for all 16 year olds to undertake so many high-stakes exams in a short period in Year 11, when this is not yet the end of their compulsory education. Examinations have an important role to play but in the NBfE we would have a system that allows more ways for students to register achievements, perhaps staggered and accumulated over time. The NBfE would incentivise more innovation in assessment processes including 'when-ready' exams, moderated portfolios, adaptive testing and more scope for extended project work to play a part in the overall matrix of assessments, alongside formal examinations.

- **Persistence of the Technical-Academic divide:**

There are significant disparities of experience between schools, further education colleges and apprenticeship providers in terms of the scope for wrap-around curriculum provision and breadth of learning outside of the main programme. This exacerbates the sharp technical/academic divide that has held back the system for decades. A National Baccalaureate would ensure all learners had parity of entitlement to a broad, rich, holistic education across FE and other Sixth Form settings including learners engaged on apprenticeship programmes. If all young people were aiming to complete their Bacc, there would be a unifying language and process with a common transcript format, allowing different pathways to co-exist and gain esteem on equal terms.

- **No formal recognition for personal development:**

There isn't enough time to prepare for multiple high volume public examinations (GCSEs) while also covering a broad range of other learning experiences. A more flexible approach at KS4, leading to Baccalaureate completion at KS5 would create multiple opportunities for shorter courses, opportunities for personal development, creative pursuits and community service and the continuation of maths and English beyond Year 11 for all learners, as needed. Examples are presented later in this document.

- **Inertia in the reform of assessment and qualifications:**

Whilst some changes to examinations and qualifications have taken place over the last few decades, the basic system remains the same. To a great extent, there are too many interlocking components for policy-makers to countenance radical reform. However, the National Baccalaureate provides a sufficiently robust and broad umbrella to keep constant over time whilst all manner of reforms to assessment and curriculum could be implemented across its many components, slowly and steadily over time.

It would be possible, for example, for a very broad and flexible model to be implemented initially, largely based on existing provision, that then gradually evolved into a more tightly defined concept with more precise requirements for completion. Within the Baccalaureate structure, separate discussions could be had about the nature of the assessment of each component - e.g. the role and format of examinations, portfolios and other assessment modes for different subjects. There is no need to resolve all these issues at once.

The National Baccalaureate for England: Core Principles DRAFT

The National Baccalaureate for England should be underpinned by a set of core principles. We propose the following **six core principles**.

1. **Inclusion:** Every young person is a valued member of our diverse society on an equal basis and is entitled to be equipped with the knowledge, skills and attributes required to allow them to make the maximum contribution possible. The NBfE is a universal framework providing paths to success and fulfilment for all young people in all educational contexts, including those with special educational needs.
2. **Aspiration:** Every young person is capable of significant achievements and successes in multiple domains, each of which deserves recognition as part of a broad and deep holistic education where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
3. **Challenge:** The NBfE should support provision of a rigorous and demanding set of learning experiences that provide appropriate levels of challenge for all learners in their context.
4. **Breadth:** The NBfE is a framework that encompasses traditional subject disciplines in addition to an entitlement to personal development opportunities that are physical, creative and cultural and include elements of community service and extended enquiry².
5. **Balance:** A framework that embraces an appropriate degree of specialisation in technical and academic subject disciplines alongside wider personal development and extended enquiry.
6. **Coherence:** A framework that ensures every young person receives a multi-faceted education which is deeper and richer for the value given to each component and the connections made between them.

The National Baccalaureate for England should ensure young people develop a set of defined key capacities. We propose the following **four key capacities**³.

A baccalaureate-based programme should ensure that every young person is able to gain the knowledge, skills and personal attributes required to become:

- **ambitious, knowledgeable, inquiring learners**, ready to learn throughout their lives
- **enterprising, creative contributors**, ready to play a full part in life and work
- **responsible, principled and informed citizens** of their community, England and the world
- **healthy, confident individuals**, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

The National Baccalaureate for England framework gives recognition to the full range of a young person's achievements and learning experiences including formal qualifications and all aspects of their personal development.

² It is recognised that the NBfE will need to be guided in part by the National Curriculum:

a) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of [young people] and of society,
b) prepares [young people] for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

³ This deliberately echoes the use of 'capacities' in Scotland and Wales, in an attempt to forge wider national coherence.

The NBT's Provider-based model.

The National Baccalaureate Trust has supported schools over the last 5 years to develop a Baccalaureate framework built around existing provision. The framework for the NBfE can be expressed in very simple terms, allowing for a very wide range of alternative models to be developed to meet the needs of learners in different contexts, whilst always delivering on the core principles and the key capacities of learners.

Essentially the provider-based model has **three key elements**:

Core Learning	Personal Project	Personal Development Programme
Subject-based learning Including, but not exclusively, the National Curriculum subjects. Formal vocational and academic qualifications from national awarding bodies.	An opportunity to engage in an extended enquiry leading to a significant final product demonstrating a range of skills, knowledge and personal attributes.	A formal programme recording each learner's engagement in a range of activities that complement their core learning. To include an element of service, creativity, physical activity and cultural activity.

The model can be applied to allow schools and colleges of all kinds, including FE colleges, to deliver a National Baccalaureate for England curriculum. Terminal completion of the National Baccalaureate for England can be awarded at Advanced, Intermediate, Foundation and Entry Levels.

Some schools have delivered this model in their schools over the last few years as part of their work with the National Baccalaureate Trust.

The Priory Federation of Academies Trust, Lincolnshire/Leicestershire

The Federation schools are at various stages of developing a Baccalaureate model including post-16, KS3 and Primary models. [This linked leaflet gives a flavour of the post-16 model](#), focusing on the breadth of options available in the Personal Development Programme.

Core Learning	Personal Project	Personal Development Programme
As defined by The National Curriculum and assessment specifications, with additional emphasis on reading and numeracy within each academy. At KS4 this involves a full range of GCSEs while at KS5 it consists of A levels, BTECs or a blend of both.	Self-directed learning that is either an externally assessed FPQ, HPQ (KS3) or EPQ or internally assessed Priory Award (KS5).	At KS5, students are encouraged to complete 120 hours of activities which develop their physical / wellbeing, creative, cultural, community and leadership learning. Activities are tracked within the academy and linked to the Trust values: wisdom, curiosity, generosity, passion, courage. In KS3 academies have three tier award structures which recognise the development of the Trust values.

Wood Green School, Witney: <https://wgswitney.org.uk/the-wood-green-baccalaureate>

The Wood Green Baccalaureate has been developed at each key stage to recognise and celebrate the full educational experience of our school. Based on our six core values, the Baccalaureate is now the central element of the school's philosophy and provision. This year, the Governing Body has two stated aims for the school: that every student in year 11 and 13 secures an excellent destination, and that every student in the school completes the Baccalaureate. Completing the Baccalaureate at each stage demonstrates accomplishment across the curriculum, excellent attitudes to learning, development of personal and learning qualities and a commitment to the community.

Core Learning	Personal Project	Personal Development Programme
As defined by the National Curriculum and assessment specifications, with a growing emphasis on oracy, research and reading	Currently accredited through HPQ and EPQ, with internally accredited subject awards in KS3 that promote wider learning	The personal development curriculum involving physical/wellbeing, creative, cultural, community and leadership learning, recognised through a values-based rewards programme.

Anglo-European School, Ingatestone <https://www.aesessex.co.uk/curriculum/>

Founded in 1973, AES has a long tradition of delivering Baccalaureate programmes for all students in the Sixth Form, including a commitment to the IB alongside A levels. Students can choose from two International Baccalaureate programmes (the IB Diploma or the IB Career Programme or from two Anglo Baccalaureate programmes (4 A levels or a mix of A level and IB Courses). Baccalaureate principles also inform curriculum design at KS3 and 4 with all students studying two languages, Citizenship, a humanity and an arts/technology subject.

Core Learning	Personal Project	Personal Development Programme
At KS3 as defined by the National Curriculum including statutory Citizenship. This continues at KS4 with a requirement to continue study of the humanities, arts, Citizenship, technology and two languages. The Sixth Form has four 'routes' - IB Diploma, IB Career Programme, four A levels or a hybrid route including some A levels and IB courses. All sixth formers study a language, Citizenship and IB CAS.	A range of projects in KS3, one of which is presented for National Baccalaureate purposes which involves production of an abstract. At KS4, a 'reflective project based on the IB Career Programme is completed based on their work experience. In the Sixth form there is a combination of Extended Essay, Reflective Project and EPQ	A range of experiences are recorded as part of their Diplôme du Citoyen. This includes participation in exchanges and other visits, work experience, Model United Nations, community service, active citizenship as well as artistic performances and sport including being part of the Elite Performer Programme and performing in our annual Eisteddfod.

Established Baccalaureate Models Past and Present

As part of the consultation process, the NBT is looking for ideas for alternative models, drawing on the best practice worldwide and on ideas generated in the past. For reference, we are including some outlines here with links to documents and websites providing much more detail.

The Tomlinson Report 2004 http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/pdfs/2004-tomlinson-report.pdf	The report recommendations included the goal that all 14-19 year olds should have access to “coherent and relevant” learning programmes. These should comprise: • core learning which is about getting the basics right, and developing the generic knowledge, skills and attributes necessary for participation in higher education, working life and the community; and • main learning – chosen by the learner to develop knowledge, skills and understanding of academic and vocational subjects and disciplines which provide a basis for work-based training, higher education and employment.
The International Baccalaureate https://ibo.org/programmes/	The IB runs The Middle Years Programme, The Career-Related Programme and the Diploma Programme. The curriculum for the Diploma Programme is made up of the DP core and six subject groups. The three core elements are: • Theory of knowledge, in which students reflect on the nature of knowledge and on how we know what we claim to know. • The extended essay, which is an independent, self-directed piece of research, finishing with a 4,000-word paper. • Creativity, activity, service, in which students complete a project related to those three concepts. The six subject groups are: • Studies in language and literature • Language acquisition • Individuals and societies • Sciences • Mathematics • The arts

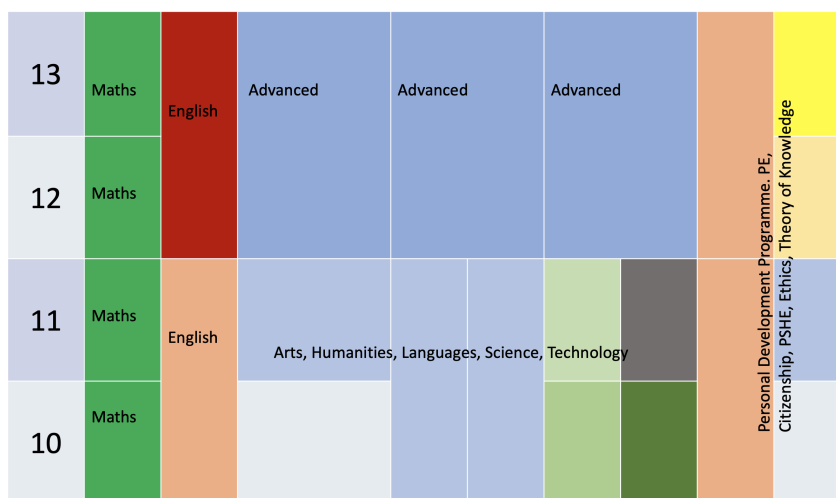
The Welsh Baccalaureate Welsh Baccalaureate	 *Essential Communication Skills level 1 (Foundation) or 2 (National), and Essential Application of Number Skills level 1 or 2 for post-16. The Welsh Bacc can be achieved at three levels: • Foundation (Level 1) • National (Level 2) • Advanced (Level 3) At all levels, it comprises multiple elements and is achieved on the successful completion of the Skills Challenge Certificate and the required level of attainment in supporting qualifications.
AQA Baccalaureate Programmes AQA Baccalaureate	The AQA Bacc comprises: • three A-level subjects (a student's main subject choices) • independent learning through the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) • skills development through Enrichment activities: work-related learning, community participation and personal development • breadth through one AS level, A-level or Level 3 Core Maths qualification, provided that this differs from a student's main programme of study
Other recent reports for consideration:	EDSK: Re-assessing the future Part 2 – the final years of secondary education RA/CSE: Rethinking assessment in education: The case for change.

A future 14-19 Baccalaureate Model?

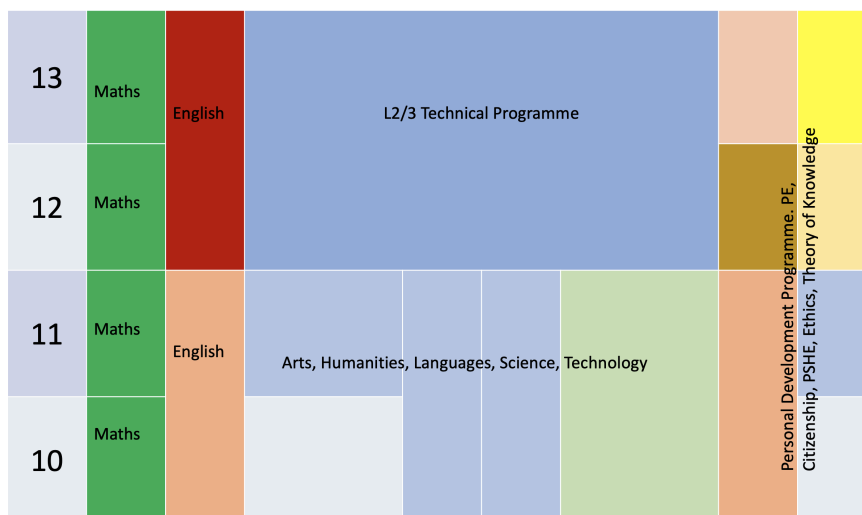
It is possible to conceive of a wide range of alternative models. NBT Trustee, Tom Sherrington, highlighted this in a blog post published in August 2020: [A National Baccalaureate For All. There is another way.](#)

Here, students engage in different programmes across Years 10-13, some of which are examined following standard qualifications; others are centre-assessed. The high-volume, high-intensity assessment period at the end of Year 11 is subsumed within a wider framework with all units contributing to the Baccalaureate award at the end of Year 13. The Personal Development programme contained elements of project work, community service, physical and creative activity. Each element carries a credit weighting that allows students to be awarded the full Baccalaureate on completion. A full transcript would be provided for passporting students into Higher Education and Employment.

It would be possible to create a Bacc structure that could be completed entirely in an 11-18 school or in two parts in partnerships between 11-16 schools and 16-18 sixth forms and further education colleges.



A technical/vocational route could equally lead to the full Baccalaureate:



These examples illustrate the possibility for studying maths and English all the way through until completion, perhaps with alternative modes of 'when ready' assessment. Similarly other forms of micro-credentials could be used to accredit each of the contributing units. The key point is that there are multiple possible permutations that open up once we spread assessment over time with the weight of terminal assessment in Year 13, allowing for extremely flexible component design making up the overall Baccalaureate award.

Consultation Questions and Considerations.

As part of the consultation process, we would like to gauge the appetite across stakeholders and practitioners for a move towards a National Baccalaureate for England. We need to move beyond a critique of the existing system towards proposing concrete alternatives with a chance of working at scale across the sector.

[Please find the questionnaire here.](#) There are three sections: A, B and C. Please fill in as much as you can in the time you have.

The questionnaire asks for your comments in a range of formats including a long free-response format question **A1 A Baccalaureate In Principle**.

The following questions might serve as prompts for this question - you might want to focus on just a selection of these points in your response.

1. What elements of a national framework for curriculum and assessment are essential to meet the needs of all learners and society as a whole?
2. Do the Core Principles, as outlined, capture the spirit of the Baccalaureate sufficiently well? What would you add or change?
3. Should our formal curriculum and assessment framework go further in recognising students' achievements and endeavours beyond formal qualifications? Should this be left for schools and colleges to design or should there be a common, coherent national framework?
4. How can a Baccalaureate achieve the aim of a system that allows all learners to achieve success, with their achievement recognised at various levels, rather than relying heavily on qualifications with built-in failure rates?
5. Do you think a holistic National Baccalaureate framework, as outlined, would be a better system than one based primarily on GCSEs, A levels and technical qualifications? Why?/ Why not?
6. Which of the models presented in this document are closest to your ideal system? Why? How would you adapt them further?
7. Would it be better to plan an integrated 14-19 Baccalaureate removing the current divide between KS4 and post-16 study? What are the practical implications? Or would it be better to start with a 16-19 model?
8. Would it be better to implement a radical overhaul of the whole system or should we begin with developing the wrap-around concept, folding existing qualifications into a wider framework in the first instance?
9. In principle, would you value a reduction in the number of qualifications at KS4 as part of a move to a wider wrap-around Baccalaureate that primarily focused on achievement at KS5? What would be the implications for student progression and movement between 11-16 and post-16 institutions?
10. Although the immediate discussion centres around assessment and qualifications for 14-18 year olds, do you think a Baccalaureate concept would have value in the primary phase and at KS3?

[Please find the questionnaire here.](#)