

## Response ID ANON-5W9S-YSNW-9

Submitted to A world-class education system: The Advanced British Standard consultation  
Submitted on 2024-03-20 06:44:09

### Introduction

1 What is your name?

Name:  
Dr Rebecca Kitchen and Prof Joe Smith

2 What is your email address?

Email:  
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3 Are you happy to be contacted directly about your response?

Yes

4 Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation

5 If you are responding as an individual, how would you describe yourself?

Not Answered

6 If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, which of the following best describes who/which part of the sector your organisation represents?

A representative organisation or trade association

If other, please state below:

7 What is the name of your organisation?

Insert name :  
The Geographical Association and the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

8 What is your role within the organisation?

Insert role:  
Head of Professional Development and Director (CEO)

9 Would you like us to keep your name and/or organisation confidential?

No

No

10 Would you like us to keep your responses confidential? If yes, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

No

Reason for confidentiality:

### Chapter 1

11 We propose several overarching aims and principles that should underpin the introduction and design of the Advanced British Standard. To what extent do you support these proposed aims and principles? If you have further views on this, please share below.

Neither support nor oppose

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

12 What do you think is the most important thing that the Advanced British Standard could achieve?

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

We support the underlying aims of the proposal but have misgivings about the model. The most important aim we support is that of improving both the understanding of routes for 16-19 students and the status of more technical and vocational routes. Also, the opportunity for students to mix academic courses with more vocational programmes and for more curriculum breadth. However, if students study fewer subjects, they do so in rather more depth. It is notable that the previous and very successful route to breadth (the co-teaching of four AS levels in Y12 then specialism in three A2s in Y13) was brought to an end in the last significant change to the structure of the curriculum for this stage. While we do not propose a return to AS levels, we do encourage thorough research of a path to reform rooted in the principle of sustaining greater breadth. Geography is a strong example of how it aids the 'maths and English' objectives via a 'minor' subject offer for many students, as it did in the AS/A level framework, delivering both substantive discipline-based knowledge but also language (communication) and data (maths) skills.

We believe there are alternative and less disruptive and costly routes to achieving breadth of study than the wholesale change envisaged. The amount of teaching time is a rather separate issue from the structure of the curriculum: how will this be achieved, given the current shortages of specialist geography (and maths) teachers?

13 If you have further views on the aims, principles and purposes of the Advanced British Standard, or anything else covered in Chapter 1, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

A levels are trusted, widely understood, and are used and respected globally. T levels have also received significant investment from government and the wider engaged community, including substantial amounts of time. While the ABS proposals aim to provide clearer options, they still feel quite complex. Therefore, we feel that with clearer signposting and / or packaging, the aim of clearer options may be achieved with the existing qualification portfolio.

Given that one of the aims of the ABS is to broaden 16 – 19 study, the proposal seems to replicate the current pattern of three A levels with the addition of English and maths. A broader curriculum would be a move to a one such as the IB Diploma program with six subject groups to give breadth and the inclusion of items such as theory of knowledge, extended essay and a community/creativity activity. The proposal misses the opportunity to introduce a programme that would genuinely broaden 16-19 education and introduce a project for students to study and research in depth.

## Chapter 2 - Section 1

14 We propose two main programmes at Level 3: Advanced British Standard and Advanced British Standard (occupational). Each will contain a range of separate components to support students. To what extent do you support the proposed design for the Level 3 Advanced British Standard programmes? If you have further views on this, please share below.

Neither support nor oppose

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

15 We propose two main programmes at Level 2: transition and occupational. Each will contain a range of separate components to support students. To what extent do you support the proposed design for the Level 2 programmes? If you have further views on this, please share below.

Neither support nor oppose

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

16 If you have views or evidence on how additional teaching hours at Level 2 could best be used to benefit students, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

17 If you have views or evidence on how a transition year could best be structured to support progression to Level 3, please share below. This could include reflections on the existing T Level foundation year.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

18 In branding terms, how do you think the Level 2 programmes should be considered in relation to the Level 3 Advanced British Standard?

Don't know

19 To what extent do you support the proposal for Level 1 and Entry Level students?

Neither support nor oppose

20 If you have views or evidence on how students at Level 1 and Entry Level would most benefit from additional teaching hours, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

## Chapter 2 - Section 2

21 Once rolled out, we anticipate that the Advanced British Standard qualification framework will supersede the varied Level 3 qualification landscape for 16–19 year-olds (including A levels and T Levels etc.). If you have further views on this, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

We seek assurance that geography would be a choice as it is now. As highlighted in question 12, A levels are widely recognised, understood and respected, and are used globally for these reasons. T levels have also received significant investment from government and the wider engaged community, including substantial amounts of time. If there are identified obstacles to achieving the widely supported objectives of more equitable and effective education at these levels, such as the need for better signposting of pathways to provide clearer options or a need to invest in increased teacher-time, then we strongly argue that it is a better investment to first address limitations in the current system and provision before embarking on expensive and time-consuming wholesale reform. We are also confident that a significant transformation of the curriculum will hinder rather than aid teacher retention and recruitment, which will in turn exacerbate current challenges.

22 To what extent do you support the proposal for how subjects will be selected to be included in the Level 3 Advanced British Standard programmes?

Neither support nor oppose

23 To what extent do you support the proposal for how subjects will be selected to be included in the Level 2 programmes?

Neither support nor oppose

24 If you have further views on how subjects will be included in these reforms at either Level 2 or Level 3, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

25 To what extent do you support the proposal for increased teaching time relative to self-directed study? We particularly welcome any evidence of how this is balanced currently.

Neither support nor oppose

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

Increasing teaching time is an attractive proposition. However, in the midst of a teacher recruitment crisis – notably in geography as a specialism where only 56% of the ITT recruitment target has been achieved: where is this subject specialist input going to come from? While applauding the ambition of expanding teacher-time the proposition is unconvincing in the context of far-reaching teaching capacity shortages for the current programmes.

It is possible to increase breadth or depth, but not both unless substantial investments are made that allow teaching time to be increased. However, the AS route proved to be balanced, practical and effective, for example permitting one 'minor' alongside three 'majors' (and creating an additional 180 learning hours over one year). One reason for its success was a common view of progression from GCSE and of standards. The examples of 'minors' on p.27 appear to be equivalent to taking two ASs.

26 If you have views on the appropriate size of subjects, including whether we should standardise associated hours, please share them below. We particularly welcome any evidence of guided learning hours delivered currently.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

There should be parity between subjects which are examined at the same level. The content should be manageable and comfortably fit within the allocated hours so that there is time for breadth and depth. In the context of geography, fieldwork should be embedded within the time allocation and recognised as an essential and integral element of the curriculum.

27 If you have views or evidence on how time for employability, enrichment and pastoral (EEP) can best be used, please share below. We particularly welcome views and evidence about how to support students with additional challenges, e.g. lower prior attainment or the most disadvantaged.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

EEP sessions should be valued in the same way that academic subjects are. It is possible to envisage ways in which students could build a portfolio of their work in this area which could count towards the ABS qualification in a meaningful way. Opportunities to signpost EEP within subjects could be taken. For example, in geography signposting content that represent 'green skills' or the practical application of data skills would be valuable. We propose that such badging or waymarking can and should be part and parcel of student experience of the curriculum whether in its current or a future form.

28 If you have views on how we can encourage employers to offer industry placements and what further support education providers will require, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

The potential for a centralised, but optional, system should be assessed (but also piloted prior to any scaling) for example where a database of offers of work placements could be searched, applied for and allocated. Incentives (financial?) could be offered to employers to encourage them to offer work placements. Any such initiative must be very attentive to the uneven opportunities for access for students.

## Chapter 2 - Section 3

29 We propose that we develop the English and maths offer within these reforms around certain principles. To what extent do you support these principles?

Neither support nor oppose

30 To what extent do you support using the proposed knowledge and skills identified for maths and English to inform these components of the Advanced British Standard? If you have further views on this, please share below.

Neither support nor oppose

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

The composition of the maths and English content is not, perhaps understandably at this stage, well-defined in the proposal. However, we know from varied research over time that a very effective way for many students to make progress in these subjects at advanced level is in context, embedded in other disciplines, prominently geography, with its distinctive interdisciplinary and applied character. Rather than a focus on 'pure maths' and 'pure English' we recommend embracing multiple pathways towards developing and embedding such skills.

We emphasise that our extensive experience of supporting teachers and learners in schools, and our very broad engagement with employers, amply demonstrates that geography is a very prominent example of how engagement with this discipline is an effective way of widening achievement and progress in English and maths. It provides a robust and real-world vehicle for the deployment of essential and flexible employment skills and knowledge ranging from core numeracy and written communication skills to oracy, teamwork and digital skills. We are also aware of the energising and motivating effects for both teachers and learners of engaging with practical knowledge and skills that address some of the biggest challenges and concerns that young people live with, including climate change and biodiversity loss. These important themes are being explored by teachers and learners as part of the National Education Nature Park programme.

31 We propose that there will be a range of English and maths majors and minors at Levels 3. To what extent do you support this proposal?

Neither support nor oppose

32 How can we best support students who have secured lower Level 2 passes in English and maths at 16 (e.g. grade 4 or 5) to progress onto Level 3 study in these subjects?

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

33 If you have views on how English and maths can be delivered for students taking the occupational programme, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

See answer to question 32.

34 If you have views on how existing Level 2 qualifications (GCSEs and Functional Skills qualifications) could provide the basis for two-year Level 2 study for English and maths within the Advanced British Standard, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

There is a danger of muddling the purpose of advanced level study and diluting any potential benefits of curriculum change. GCSEs are not 'advanced'. There may be potential to add GCSE courses for some degree of enrichment, although it is difficult in practical terms for most centres to programme in this way. There is a danger that such a move will only entrench social divides in achievement and opportunity, with only better resourced schools and communities enabling a richer offer. Reviving ASs for co-teaching would be a more pragmatic and manageable route to breadth that includes opportunities for developing a mixed diet of more technical, creative and academic options.

35 If you have further views on what students will study as part of the Advanced British Standard, or anything else covered in Chapter 2, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

Equalising funding for students at 16-19 would help achieve the aims in Chapter 1, in particular strengthening FE and sixth-form colleges. It is unclear how the proposals will affect schools vs sixth-form/FE colleges given that bringing academic and technical education together in a single menu will be a challenge in many sixth form settings.

The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is valued by students, schools and universities. To what extent will this be incorporated into the ABS programme?

We are already aware that we are not alone in making the observation that maths and further maths alone are being referred to in the context of STEM pathways. We wish to reiterate that other disciplines prominently including geography also deliver these skills.

We argue that it may be more productive to embed practical mathematical/data skills and language / communication skills within a course. We argue that geography can play a unique role in putting these skills to work in a practical and inspiring way. It would be insightful for curriculum design to map the

presence of such prized elements of skills and knowledge across current A level specifications, but our experience tells us that geography is unique in its capacity to achieve this. Please refer again to the links embedded as an appendix to our narrative public statement in response to the Consultation that give evidence to support these points.

### Chapter 3

36 We have proposed assessment principles to underpin the Advanced British Standard. To what extent do you support these assessment principles? If you have further views on this, please share below.

Neither support nor oppose

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

37 We have proposed principles to underpin the new grading system. To what extent do you support these grading principles? If you have further views on this, please share below.

Neither support nor oppose

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

38 To what extent do you support the proposal that students will receive individual grades/marks for each major and minor (or equivalents) studied within the Advanced British Standard?

Neither support nor oppose

39 Do you agree that students should receive some type of overall Advanced British Standard award? If yes, what value could an 'ABS award' add on top of individual component grades, particularly for higher education providers and/or employers?

Yes

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

Yes. A potential benefit of this approach is the opportunity to recognise student achievement holistically as well as individually.

40 What minimum attainment conditions, if any, should a student need to achieve to receive a Level 3 Advanced British Standard award?

Meet a minimum aggregate Advanced British Standard score

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

Our HE sector colleagues wish to note that there is significant value in individual grades being reported in order that universities, employers and other stakeholders are able to gauge students' performance in individual subjects.

41 Which of the Advanced British Standard award options outlined do you prefer and think would add most value? Please include any evidence if available.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

Option 1 is the preferable option. Option 3 would favour students who take similar subjects which enable them to perform highly across the board e.g. maths, further maths, physics etc. and disadvantage those who take a more diverse range of subjects e.g. music, geography and economics.

42 If you have further views on how students will be assessed and graded under these reforms, or anything else covered in Chapter 3, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

Grading should have currency with students, parents and employers. Therefore, keeping the current system is sensible. Subjects should have the capacity to conclude the right form of assessment, and there are going to be subjects where it is important to include both non-examined as well as terminal examination elements. This is particularly important if the ambition to recognise value in both academic and vocational courses is to be fulfilled. Fieldwork in geography is another opportunity to give value to a broader range of assessments and skills (including teamship and other skills valued highly by employers but rarely exercised or assessed within most of the rest of the academic curriculum).

### Chapter 4

43 What strengths in the current approach to 16-19 education should we aim to preserve under the Advanced British Standard?

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

We recognise that there are limitations with the A levels and T levels offer and take this consultation in the spirit of an appetite for reform and improvement. We feel that the ambition for breadth and depth suggested by the ABS therefore should be kept. The previous AS and A level system

enabled the 'minor' and 'major' options described here. We recommend that curriculum review includes very full consideration of the strengths of that framework, albeit extending it by integrating T levels in a comprehensive and committed way. It is worth noting that the Level 3 apprenticeships offer a paid options for which students (notably from economically disadvantaged backgrounds) can progress post-16. The proposed Standard does not, as specified, offer a paid route for the occupational pathway. More broadly: it feels as though better signposting and packaging of the existing qualifications may offer some solutions to the perceived issues.

44 What opportunities and challenges do you see for the recruitment, retention and deployment of staff as a result of implementing the Advanced British Standard?

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

Employing more teachers is essential for the achievement of high-quality 16 – 19 education, regardless of whether the ABS is implemented or not. This is a first step prior to any consideration of curriculum reform. No framework, current or envisioned, can succeed against the kinds of aims that shaped the ABS proposal unless current subject specialists are retained and recruited. New recruits need careful induction and support if they are to thrive and be fully effective members of the profession. This is particularly important in the context of geography teaching being a shortage profession.

45 What staff training do you think may be required to implement the Advanced British Standard successfully?

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

The ABS is no exception to the fact that any subject specialist teacher will need a robust programme of subject-specific professional development. This will need to include the changes to course specifications as well as routes through the ABS so that teachers can support students in making their choices. We also note the necessary but undesirable fact that there are an increasing number of non-specialist teachers required to teach shortage subjects such as geography. While the ambition must be to achieve full recruitment of appropriate specialists in the meantime it is essential that significantly increased support is put in place to enable curriculum delivery by non-specialists. Our institutions are very well placed to work in partnership (and as required with other partners in our networks) to contribute to this vital work.

46 We are interested in the changes that may need to be made to deliver the Advanced British Standard for all students, regardless of where they live. What changes do you think may be required in the following areas:

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

If all (or even most) courses which are part of the ABS are to be provided at all (or most) centres then there will need to be strategic thinking as to how students will be able to access these. Hybrid provision may be a solution for some courses which are typically small scale and only have a handful of centres.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

47 If you have further views on how the Advanced British Standard could impact 16-19 providers, or anything else covered in Chapter 4, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

Schools with Sixth Forms are likely to find it difficult to offer a wide range of vocational courses in addition to academic ones. Would all schools be expected to offer a broader curriculum? For example, if independent schools choose to just offer academic courses then it will be very difficult for vocational courses to achieve parity, which is one of the main aims of the ABS.

The aim of improving access to education and raising standards for disadvantaged students and those with SEND is surely wins universal support. However, there is a significant risk that devaluing the BTEC route, rather than developing and supporting students to achieve in current programmes, will impede progress on this widely supported aim. Again, investment in signposting, to very prominently include an integrated expression of T and A level routes, may achieve some of the important goals that drive this proposal.

Equalising funding for students at 16-19 would help achieve the aims, in particular strengthening FE and sixth-form colleges. It is unclear how the proposals will affect schools vs sixth-form/FE colleges given that bringing academic and technical education together in a single menu will be a challenge in many sixth form settings.

## Chapter 5

48 What changes to pre-16 education do you think will be needed to create effective pathways into the Advanced British Standard?

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

An enhanced emphasis upon critical thinking will need to be embedded within the 11-16 and primary curricula in order for the ABS to be effective. There will also need to be more comprehensive careers advice so that students make good choices about the subjects they will study. This again echoes the importance of investing in signposting and option communication of existing routes, and reviewing the impact of such on the ABS' expressed aims, prior to committing to a major revision of the curriculum.

49 If you have views on how students can be supported to make informed choices for their Advanced British Standard programme or apprenticeship – linking to their prior attainment, abilities, interests and future ambitions – please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

See our answer to Q.48. Teachers will need expanded careers advice capacity and a strong understanding of the different routes available if they are to better support their students in the ways envisaged. All young people should have equal access to high quality, personalised, timely support to navigate their career journey. At each stage, students should be aware of the impact of their choices, and how it may influence their future pathways.

50 If you have views or evidence on the additional support that may be needed to enable students with SEND to access the Advanced British Standard, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

Students with SEND have very different needs and so will need a variety of extra support. In geography, this may be in the form of fieldwork accessibility or resource modification e.g. colour-blind students access of maps. Many SEND students struggle with English and maths and so if these are to be incorporated into the ABS these should be embedded within the major and minor subjects that they are studying (if and as appropriate).

51 If you have views or evidence on the additional support that may be needed to enable other groups of students to access the Advanced British Standard, please share them below. Examples of these groups include disadvantaged students and students with caring responsibilities.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

Effective accessibility provision should be a high priority for investment under any scenario for future 16-19 curriculum. It can help to support SEND, carer and other specific needs and help to achieve the inclusivity and equality objectives stated as core aims of the ABS proposal. But this requires sustained investment in both training and resources as well as curriculum design.

52 If you have views on how to ensure the Advanced British Standard provides effective pathways into post-18 education or study, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

The support of lifelong learning is an ambition we strongly support, and the objective of a framework for 16-19 education that achieves a sustained balance of both breadth and depth is an essential foundation for accessible and inclusive education post school.

53 If you have views on how to ensure the Advanced British Standard reforms meet the needs of employers, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

We argue that there is a need to move beyond past ideas of what is a professional role or earning outcomes, and to move to a situation where we better capture the value individuals put on their roles, their contributions to society and to their communities and the environment, as well as the economy. It is also important to recognise the diversity of employers and their needs, now and in the future.

54 If you have views on the impacts of the Advanced British Standard reforms on other groups of students who take post-16 qualifications, please share them below. Examples of these groups could include adults in further and community education providers, students in custodial settings, and students in devolved administrations, Crown Dependencies or overseas.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

We have previously noted that the A level benefits from high levels of recognition and respect both cross-generationally and internationally, and the introduction of the ABS risks this recognition and high standing unless it demonstrates significantly greater strengths. Communication of these strengths needs to be heavily invested in. It is perhaps more than a footnote that the 'British' in the title may be an obstacle to achieving parallel standing in international contexts to the more neutrally positioned A level standard. In addition, this would be more appropriately named 'English'.

55 If you have views on the impacts (positive or negative) of the Advanced British Standard reforms on any group with a protected characteristic, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

56 If you have views on the impacts (positive or negative) of the Advanced British Standard reforms on the environment, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

57 If you have further views on the wider implications of the Advanced British Standard, or anything else covered in Chapter 5, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less:

58 If you have further views on anything else associated with the Advanced British Standard not covered in the questions throughout the consultation, please share below.

Please limit your response to 1500 characters or less: