



A NEW ERA

Equitable Reliable Assessment

THE FUTURE OF ASSESSMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS IN ENGLAND

INTERIM REPORT OF THE
INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT
COMMISSION (IAC)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE CONTEXT

Qualifications in England have been held in high regard, nationally and globally. Assessment and qualifications matter to young people, parents, employers, teachers, schools, colleges and universities and to the nation as a whole.

In a world that is fast-changing, because of rapid advances in technology, often referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, there are implications for work and wider society⁽¹⁾. It is important, therefore, to think ahead and to consider how assessment and qualifications can be developed to address a future that is more uncertain and less easy to predict. Future planning is essential if high regard nationally and internationally is to be maintained.

Conscious of the impact of Covid-19 on assessment and qualifications in England and increasing disquiet with the status quo, the National Education Union (NEU) commissioned an independent review of assessment and qualifications. To ensure that the review was independent, Professor Louise Hayward was invited to chair the commission and to decide its membership, remit and ways of working.

While the pandemic has increased the visibility of problems in the existing system, the changes that were made in 2020 and 2021 are not models for the future. This interim report is intended to inform debate about the future of assessment and qualifications in England. Changes to the system of assessment and qualifications need to be carefully planned and careful planning takes time. It is not intended that this report should lead to change for those who have already started their courses. The final report of the commission will be published in November 2021.

(1) www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulation-for-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/regulation-for-the-fourth-industrial-revolution

THE TASK

The task of the Independent Assessment Commission (IAC) is to build principles and suggest changes to policy and practice to inform a shared vision for the future of assessment and qualifications in England; one that reflects the changing nature of work and society. By working collaboratively with employers, parents, policy makers, practitioners, researchers, students and professional organisations, the IAC is seeking to establish common ground amongst all those who are concerned with the future of assessment and qualifications in England – culturally, economically and socially.

Qualifications and assessment systems are different across the four nations of the UK, as are the policy decisions and decision makers. The work of the IAC is focused on the full range of qualifications, academic and vocational, within the system in England.

In this interim report we present draft principles which emerge from the evidence that we have collected so far. We believe that these principles should underpin the future of assessment and qualifications in England. As a commission, our view is that everyone should have a voice in creating the future of an assessment and qualifications system that works for everyone, and we invite you to tell us what you think of these principles.

No system of assessment or qualifications can simultaneously serve all purposes and overcome all deficiencies: public discussion often sets one system in opposition to another and gives rise to polarised debate that the commission is seeking to move beyond. The future of assessment and qualifications is too important an issue for that to be allowed to happen.

THE CASE FOR CHANGE

The IAC began its work by investigating how far people think there is a need for change and the evidence for those views. Currently, too many young people leave schools and colleges without the qualifications, knowledge, skills (including soft skills), understanding or attributes they need to transition effectively into college, employment or university. In addition, many young people who apparently benefit from the current examination system report that the final years of school and college are dominated by constant testing and examination rehearsal. This system does little to encourage them to become the lifelong learners needed by current and future society and the economy in England.

The evidence we have gathered to date suggests that the case for change in assessment and qualifications in England is clear.

The current system:

- is not fit for the future;
- is not sufficiently reliable, authentic or fair;
- does not support high standards of education for all;
- undermines student and teacher mental health.

The current system is seen as inequitable and not able to provide the young people of England with the skills and competences they need to thrive in a global, 21st century environment. There can be no more powerful case for change.

There is much to learn from the assessment and qualifications systems in other countries; not least the fact that England's

current system is an international outlier. There are other countries which have some similar features, but no other country replicates the scale and limitations of England's system, nor the associated weight of accountability.

PRINCIPLES FOR A NEW ERA

Before proposing changes to an aspect of education that is as important as assessment and qualifications, it is crucial to have a clear, shared view of the principles that should underpin the design of a future system; one that would be more equitable and more reliable. The IAC proposes five principles to inform a new ERA (Equitable, Reliable Assessment) for England's assessment and qualifications system; one that will serve young people, their parents, teachers, employers and England as a society more effectively.

PRINCIPLE 1:

Qualifications and assessment should serve the individual. They should provide information to all young people, their parents/carers and users of qualifications about the knowledge, skills and competences young people have to allow them to flourish, to participate in the community, and to make good progress in the next stage of their lives, in employment, college or university.

PRINCIPLE 2:

Qualifications and assessment should be recognised to be part of a wider education system including curriculum, pedagogy and accountability. Care should be taken to ensure that approaches to accountability do not distort qualifications.

PRINCIPLE 3:

Qualifications and assessment should serve the future needs of society, culture and the economy to enable the nation and young people to thrive in less predictable times socially and economically, nationally and internationally.

PRINCIPLE 4:

Qualifications and assessment should be inclusive both in purpose and in the design and development of the system.

PRINCIPLE 5:

Qualifications and assessment should support progression for all young people, but should not exist only to act as a mechanism for determining the next examination or selection.

YOUR PART IN CREATING MORE EQUITABLE, RELIABLE ASSESSMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS

We ask you to read this report and to respond to the questions at the end as an individual, as a group of colleagues or as an organisation. Your views will influence the final report of the IAC which will be published in November 2021.

BACKGROUND TO THE WORK AND REMIT OF THE INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT COMMISSION

The experience of the 2020 and 2021 qualifications cycles has demonstrated that, in common with many countries internationally, the system in England was not sufficiently robust to cope with a crisis such as Covid-19. This has thrown a spotlight on a number of quite fundamental and often challenging questions about the purposes and processes of qualifications systems; questions that were already beginning to be asked before the pandemic.

Assessment and qualifications matter to young people, parents, employers, universities and colleges and to the nation. Qualifications in England have been held in high regard, nationally and globally. However, in a fast-changing world it is important to think ahead and to consider how assessment and qualifications in England can be developed to address a future that is more uncertain and less easy to predict, and so maintain this high regard. This concern to look to the future is also reflected in the remits of the reviews already underway in other countries in the UK and internationally.

The Covid-19 pandemic has led many people to question the current assessment and qualifications system. As the country moves forward from the current crisis, it is timely to ask if the current qualifications system is fit for the range of purposes needed to serve the future needs

of all young people, the economy and wider society. What has happened over the past two years with qualifications was a response to Covid-19, the education system in England trying to ensure that the young people living through this global pandemic were not further disadvantaged by the disruption to the qualification system. It was a response to a crisis not a considered model for the future.

The proposals emerging from this commission are intended to:

- stimulate a conversation about the longer-term future of assessment and qualifications in England and
- identify opportunities for amendments to the current system that will lead to more equitable and reliable qualifications for all of England's young people.

These proposals cannot be considered in isolation; they have implications for wider educational issues, for example, the nature of the curriculum and the role of the teacher. This new vision will require reconsideration of what it is to be an educational professional and that will have implications for the allocation and management of time.

The NEU, conscious of the importance of assessment and qualifications to the education system in England,

invited Professor Louise Hayward, University of Glasgow, to establish an independent commission to undertake this review. The task of the IAC is to build principles that would be used to inform a shared vision for the future of assessment and qualifications in England; one that reflects the changing nature of work and society. By working collaboratively with employers, parents, policy makers, practitioners, researchers, students and professional organisations, the IAC has sought to establish common ground amongst all those who are concerned with the future of assessment and qualifications in England – culturally, economically and socially.

' This Commission will look to develop a vision for the future and principles which would underpin an equitable, reliable assessment system – one fit for purpose for the 21st century.'

Louise Hayward, Professor of Educational Assessment and Innovation, University of Glasgow and chair of IAC

The principles developed by the IAC are intended to stimulate a national conversation. This national conversation should inform the design of an assessment and qualifications system that will most effectively position England to respond positively, creatively and sustainably to the personal, social and economic opportunities and challenges posed by our rapidly changing society.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT COMMISSION

Professor Louise Hayward (Chair) is professor of Educational Assessment and Innovation at University of Glasgow

Professor Jo-Anne Baird is director of the Department of Education, University of Oxford

Dr Robin Bevan president of the NEU and secondary head teacher, Southend High School for Boys (2020-2021)

Salsabil Elmegri is vice president, further education, of the National Union of Students (NUS)

Professor Vini Lander is professor of Race and Education and director of the Centre for Race, Education and Decoloniality in the Carnegie School of Education, Leeds Beckett University

Olly Newton is executive director of the Edge Foundation

Kerry-Jane Packman is the executive director of Programmes, Membership and Charitable Services for Parentkind

Professor Dame Alison Peacock is chief executive of the Chartered College of Teaching

Matthew Percival is People and Skills Policy Director at the Confederation of British Industry (CBI)

Professor Dominic Wyse is a professor of Early Childhood and Primary Education at University College London (UCL), Institute of Education (IOE) and current President of the British Educational Research Association.

WAYS OF WORKING

The IAC is engaging with a wide range of communities, all of whom have interest in assessment and qualifications. Meetings have been held online, which has enabled evidence-gathering seminars from a wide range of experts nationally and internationally. The areas to be deliberated by the IAC and on which evidence will be sought have been determined by the commission and its members. Day-to-day organisation of the IAC is supported by NEU professional and administrative colleagues.

In addition to being prepared to share insights from their own perspective at meetings, members of the IAC are central to the process of evidence collection. Each member brings a depth of knowledge about the community they represent and has offered crucial advice on how to generate the highest quality of evidence from that community to inform IAC thinking. Evidence has been gathered from each key community from carefully constructed focus groups and interviews.

To be consistent with the aspiration of the IAC to work with others to design and develop a reformed assessment and qualifications system in England, the work of the IAC has sought to:

- respect individuals;
- be sensitive and attend to structural issues of equality, diversity, inclusion and mental health (EDIH);
- respect evidence;
- listen to all participants.

Issues presented in this report have been informed by IAC discussions, focus groups, national and international expert seminars and interviews.

THE CASE FOR CHANGE

The IAC began by investigating how far people believe there is a need for change and the evidential basis for those views. Every society needs to review its assessment and qualifications system on a regular basis to ensure it provides

- students with the learning, development and qualifications they will need in their lifetime and
- the knowledge, skills and competences that society will need to support future growth and development.

As the IAC began to gather evidence, a very strong view emerged about the need for change in assessment and qualifications.

Even before the pandemic, young people, parents, employing organisations, and politicians from across the political spectrum were starting to question whether assessment and qualifications in England were fit for purpose. This need for change has been amplified by the recognition that a young workforce will emerge from education into the world of the fourth industrial revolution amidst the impacts of climate change. Covid-19, and the changes in the qualification system necessitated by the global pandemic, highlighted further concerns about how far the current system is sufficiently rigorous and whether the standards are sufficiently relevant for life and work in the mid to late 21st century. This is not an issue for England

alone. In a recently published paper, the International Educational Assessment Network, comprising researchers and policy makers from twelve nation states, argued:

“ The Covid-19 pandemic has devastated economies, increased social divisions, and disrupted educational systems across the globe. Countries have managed the health and economic ramifications with varying success, but the ensuing changes have altered the foundations and fundamentals of every country’s socio-economic-political systems, in some countries, drastically. Of particular concern is the fitness of education for economic survival, ethical citizenship, and personal wellbeing in an increasingly unpredictable and challenging future. A critical next step is to consider how educational systems respond and change at this time to ensure a more productive future as they move to an inevitable new normal.”

Although the pandemic has led to major changes in the way pupils in England were assessed, the methods used in 2020 and 2021 should not be seen as a model for the future. They were introduced at speed as single-year crisis responses rather than as part of a properly planned programme for change to a long-standing system. Weaknesses in the 2020 and 2021 approaches are evident; but they do not substantiate a return to the status quo as that was seriously flawed. Change must be carefully planned with those who are concerned with qualifications, students, parents and teachers and those who use qualifications, colleges, employers, universities and policy makers.

The evidence presented to the IAC to date has identified four areas of concern.

THE CURRENT SYSTEM IS NOT FIT FOR THE FUTURE

The current assessment and qualifications system in England does not support the development of the kinds of knowledge, skills and competences regarded internationally as crucial for future life, work and citizenship; as evident in the work of major international organisations such as the OECD and UNESCO. Nor is the current qualifications system perceived to support all students' future progression. Employers identify that the labour market needs a broader skillset than that currently examined. The qualification system does not provide sufficient information about students' skills and abilities in the subjects assessed. Further, it is perceived to limit the development of the competences that employers need, such as nimble decision-making, collaboration and innovation.

The increasing pace of change in society and work means that life-long learning will be essential. The current high-stakes system encourages students to equate learning predominantly as a way to pass exams rather than building the dispositions necessary to continue independent and deep learning. Pupils' horizons are, therefore, narrowed.

THE CURRENT SYSTEM IS NOT SUFFICIENTLY RELIABLE, AUTHENTIC OR FAIR

Parents, students and wider society have realised that a particular grade does not necessarily show what has been learned or to what standard. Instead, it indicates where a student sits in comparison with others who took the exam. A reliable system should provide evidence that forms the basis for students' next steps. The current system gives little information to support progress.

There is growing evidence that the grading system is unreliable. Evidence suggests ⁽²⁾ that, on average, one in four grades at GCSE, AS and A-Level each year could legitimately be one grade higher or lower.

(2) www.hepi.ac.uk/2019/01/15/1-school-exam-grade-in-4-is-wrong-does-this-matter/

Many subjects are hard to assess with a written exam in ways that authentically reflect how the knowledge will be used in life beyond school, the level to which skills have been developed, the competences that have been demonstrated or the soft skills employers identify as crucial to future success. For example, GCSEs in computing can be awarded without students demonstrating their coding skills on a computer; history is assessed by exam with limited access to preselected printed source material, in a way that no adult historian would write.

The system is also perceived to be unfair. In a normal exam year, a system of comparable outcomes is used to determine the percentage of students achieving each GCSE grade, by looking at the achievements of previous cohorts with similar KS2 results. This means that, because of the system, around a third of pupils are denied the opportunity to attain a grade 4 pass in English and maths at GCSE ⁽³⁾

(3) The-Forgotten-Third_full-report.pdf (ascl.org.uk)

THE CURRENT SYSTEM DOES NOT SUPPORT HIGH STANDARDS IN QUALIFICATIONS THAT SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE IN THEIR FUTURE EDUCATION OR EMPLOYMENT

The current approach to examinations encourages teaching, learning and a curriculum, that is focused on what is contained in the final examination. Yet, although examinations are a valuable mode of assessment, they cannot measure all that matters. A more rigorous system would promote the teaching and assessment of all that matters. Evidence presented to the commission suggests that in many schools and colleges there is extensive teaching and learning to the test and that this focus leads to student disaffection with learning, and what has been described as an 'exam factory' culture.

The current accountability system is perceived to encourage an educational focus on a narrow range of academic subjects, one that separates vocational and academic pathways, and devalues the vocational. This is perceived to damage the educational experiences of students who may achieve good exam results but have few opportunities to explore topics in depth or to expend their breadth of learning. It is also perceived to impact negatively on those who have aptitude in practical, technical and vocational ways of learning and assessment. These issues have serious implications for equity.

Exams, as currently constructed, are perceived to be largely a test of memory rather than of understanding and the ability to use knowledge in new and creative ways. Teachers are eager to do their best for students. They report that examination questions can often be

predicted and aware that examination performance improves by rehearsal, they devote significant time on preparation for exam-style questions at the expense of the deep study of a subject. Students commonly report that they feel ill-prepared for further independent study.

THE CURRENT SYSTEM UNDERMINES STUDENT AND TEACHER MENTAL HEALTH

While revising for exams can be an effective means to consolidate knowledge, many students report that the pressure of having to focus everything they know into a short exam window is damaging to their mental health. This is compounded by the number of papers taken, often in quick succession. These pressures are reported to be even harder to manage for many pupils with SEND and those with difficult and disruptive home lives.

Linking qualifications and accountability so closely is reported by teachers to do little to improve outcomes for all. There is a perception that a concern for accountability takes focus away from student learning, increases teacher workload and impacts negatively on both teachers' and students' wellbeing. Teachers reported this to be a major factor behind the statistics that demonstrate the number of teachers leaving the profession ⁽⁴⁾. The current accountability system is perceived to penalise schools for factors outside their control, such as prior attainment and numbers on free school meals. This negative impact is likely to be particularly powerful in areas of poverty.

IN CONCLUSION

The IAC is one of a number of voices arguing the case for change. People from across education, the business sector and wider society are raising concerns, including MPs from across the political spectrum and peers in the House of Lords. Several highly influential groups are also looking closely at assessment and qualifications from different perspectives, including Rethinking Assessment, Pearson, NCFE and the Times Education Commission.

The IAC evidence gathered to date suggests that current qualifications are perceived to be inequitable and unreliable; they do not provide young people and wider society with information on the range of skills and competences needed to thrive in a global, 21st century environment.

There can be no more powerful case for change than a system which does not meet the needs of those concerned. The questions for the IAC now to address are

- what kind of qualification system would be more equitable and more reliable?
- how might such a system be created in ways that are inclusive?

The time for change is now.

(4) explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england

TOWARDS A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF ASSESSMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS IN ENGLAND: A NEW ERA

It is important that England has a different vision for the education of all of its future citizens. This vision of what matters to be an educated citizen who can contribute to society and to the economy is a pre-requisite for the success of any future assessment and qualifications system. But having a vision is not enough. There must be a clear pathway to make the vision a reality for every young person in the country. The design principles for a new Assessment ERA should clearly link the vision with plans for how it might be brought into practice. For that to happen the voices of all those involved in designing, teaching, taking and using qualifications need to be heard.

The vision for the new ERA should thus emerge as one to which everyone has had the opportunity to contribute, to think through the implications of change for their own policies and practices. For that to happen, a national conversation is necessary.

As part of information gathering to build a future assessment and qualifications system, the IAC has developed five design principles intended to stimulate a national conversation about future qualifications. We now need your feedback.

Are these the principles that should underpin England's future qualification system?

Do not leave the future in the hands of others, be part of creating a better future for all of England's young people. We welcome your views.

FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR A NEW ERA – ASSESSMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS THAT ARE EQUITABLE AND RELIABLE

PRINCIPLE 1:

Qualifications and assessment should serve the individual. They should provide information to all young people, to their parents/carers and to users of qualifications about the knowledge, skills and competences young people have to allow them to flourish, to participate in the community, and to make good progress in the next stage of their lives, in employment, college or university.

- Making the curriculum in England reflect what will matter for young people in the late 21st century will require longer term consideration. To make the system more equitable, changes should be made to the current qualifications system to ensure that all young people leave school/college with evidence of what they have achieved that will be useful to them, to society, to the wider economy and to users of the qualification system (employing organisations and further and higher education).
- No society can afford morally or economically to have young people leave school with little evidence of what they have achieved. It is crucial that the qualifications system reflects the achievements of all young people at school as a springboard for future

progression, not only for higher achievers who it may appear to serve well.

- There should be greater flexibility in assessment and qualifications to focus on progression and development, with schools and colleges seen as part of lifelong learning. Assessment and qualifications should inform future learning as much as they provide evidence of past learning.

PRINCIPLE 2:

Qualifications and assessment should be recognised to be part of a wider education system including curriculum, pedagogy and accountability. Care should be taken to ensure that approaches to accountability do not distort qualifications

- The central purpose of an assessment and qualifications system is to provide evidence to inform learning and progression for a variety of purposes. These purposes differ for an individual, a school, a cluster of schools or a nation. The assessment and qualifications system should be well aligned with the curriculum and the curriculum should be well aligned with what is important for young people to be able to play a full part in society in England, socially, culturally and economically.

- Evidence from assessment and qualifications can be used to encourage future learning or to judge and to categorise individuals or systems. When an assessment system tries to do both, judgement and categorisation prevail. This often leads to unintended consequences. Centrally, opportunities to use evidence to make progress and to improve will be diminished.
- The purposes that the assessment and qualifications system in England is intended to serve should be made explicit, focused clearly on progression. For example,
 - evidence gathered on pupil and student learning should be the basis for future learning – from school to college, from school to university, from college to university, from school to employer, from college to employer, from university to employer;
 - evidence gathered at a local or national level should be focused on improving schools individually and collectively, rather than judging or categorising schools. Accountability should be intelligent.
 - inspection systems should primarily be focused on supporting learning within and across schools, gathering evidence with schools to identify where greatest progress might be made and agreeing a practical strategy to support future action.
- The various parts of the assessment and qualifications system should be aligned with the curriculum and evidence gathered from those who are involved in practice (students, teachers and parents) and those who use the evidence (employing organisations, colleges and universities) to ensure that the focus on learning and progression is maintained.
- The potential for unintended consequences arising from the assessment and qualifications system should be a central consideration in its design. Evidence to improve education can come from a variety of sources, from classrooms to international surveys. There is a need to review the range of evidence sources currently in use and to evaluate their impact on learning, from pupils/students to the nation.
- Changes to the assessment and qualifications system will impact on the roles of teachers and other professionals within the system. This has implications for the type of initial and continuing professional education required, as well as for the kinds of tasks which professionals will undertake, and the use of time within and outside the classroom. Authentic assessment practice will take time and the roles of education professionals will need to change in order to reflect the time required for different expectations.

PRINCIPLE 3:

Qualifications and assessment should serve the future needs of society, culture and the economy to enable the nation and young people to thrive in less predictable times socially and economically nationally and internationally

- The world is changing and education has to ensure that future citizens have the knowledge, skills (including soft skills), competences and attributes necessary for both individuals and society and the economy in England. Existing qualifications, in England, stress the importance of knowledge retention which is, to a degree, commendable; but assessment that preferences this only must be recognised as inadequate
- Following the UK's decision to leave the EU and the resultant changes in the labour market, there may need to be a re-focus on the skills needed for the nation to operate more independently. Reliance on technology has grown through lockdowns, and as a society, we are becoming ever more aware of the potential of robotics, machine learning and artificial intelligence to affect our lives. An increasing awareness of the impact of climate change has made the need for a transition to a greener economy and technology much more obvious. The pandemic has demonstrated the importance of key workers particularly in health and social care and education. Further, there have been major shifts in society's thinking about culture, race, gender and social class. As a nation, we have become much more aware of our global connectedness.

- Education has a key role to play in the creation of a society that serves the nation and its citizens well. This includes the need to pay attention to culture, the economy and society. Education has to change to respond the both global and local imperatives to support the nation and all of its young people to thrive in less predictable times economically and socially.
- Technology has the potential to play a major role in the new assessment ERA, not as a substitute for student and teacher decision making but as a support for it.

PRINCIPLE 4:

Qualifications and assessment should be inclusive both in purpose and in the design and development of the system

- For all young people in England to be supported appropriately, assessment and qualifications must shift from a system that was described to IAC as 'a disqualification system', one that seeks to open doors only to a limited number of young people, to one that seeks to qualify all individuals for the next stage of life
- Educated citizens in England need to acquire the knowledge, skills, competences and attributes that will allow them to become confident, independent, adaptable learners who are able to work collaboratively to care for themselves, their communities, their society and their world. The assessment and qualifications system, therefore, needs to be designed to identify and to recognise the achievements of every young person.

- To make this vision a reality for every young person in England, the new ERA must be designed and developed collaboratively, inclusively, with students, parents, teachers, employing organisations, policy makers and researchers. There needs to be sustained dialogue between schools (pupils, teachers and parents) and qualifications users (employers, Colleges and Universities and policy makers).
- If the qualifications system is to support the progress of every learner, then all communities must have a voice in the process of change and ways found to engage all communities. Equitable assessment can only exist if the system is sufficiently flexible to recognise and respond to the needs and aspirations of different communities. Young people from all communities should have a central role to play in this process
- Teachers are fundamental agents in driving change. Teachers in this new assessment ERA will increase their expertise in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, being seen as professionals whose autonomy, choice and voice are used in the service of learners and their communities. Teachers must be fully involved in the design of the system and plans for the transition to this new assessment ERA. This will require a shift in the ways in which professional work and the use of time are managed.
- Countries can learn with one another to tackle shared challenges. Contexts in individual countries are very different. Simply attempting to import solutions from one country into another is unlikely to be successful. There is, however, interesting practice across the world that can be shared as a stimulus to generate new ideas and innovative ways of working.
- Assessment and qualifications that are more equitable and reliable will require attention to be paid both to the design of the system and to how such a system might become practice in every school and every college in ways that remain consistent with the vision. Designing and implementing the process of change is just as important as designing what will change.
- Equitable, reliable assessment, that is inclusive, is unlikely to be uniform. Within an agreed national framework, the system should have sufficient flexibility to allow for local circumstances and local adaptation.

PRINCIPLE 5:

Qualifications and assessment should support progression for all young people, but should not exist only to act as a mechanism for determining the next examination or selection

- The assessment and qualifications system will be an important driver in what is learned in schools and colleges. It is crucial, therefore, that assessment and qualifications are aligned with what matters in the curriculum. It is important to assess what matters rather than teach what is assessed. This principle also requires assessment to reflect what is being learned in ways that respect young people as learners.
- To identify progress in all that matters, a range of approaches to assessment will be required. Examinations remain one important way of gathering evidence but the current system is too heavily reliant on a single assessment method with a heavy bias towards written papers. This single method cannot provide evidence of all that is important for young people as they move to the next stage of their lives.
- The current system is perceived to act as an impediment to many young people and to create undue pressure and anxiety on too many young people including those who do well in examinations.

FROM INTERIM REPORT TO FINAL DOCUMENT

The evidence suggests that the current system in England needs to change to be fit for purpose in the mid to late 21st century. This interim report is part of the evidence gathering process being undertaken by the IAC. It presents the current thinking of the IAC, based on the evidence gathered to date.

We ask you now to consider this interim report and to offer your feedback. The final report from the IAC will identify design principles which should inform the future of assessment and qualifications in England. It will also suggest possible changes to policy and practice.

Long-term change is the goal. In the final report, the IAC will consider timescales for change and identify the extent to which medium-term change might be possible to address issues that lead currently to the exclusion of some young people from meaningful qualifications.

However, any change proposed must be clearly linked to better life chances for young people and all change must be carefully planned. Change must be carefully considered in the context of the current educational circumstances.

YOUR PART IN CREATING MORE EQUITABLE, RELIABLE ASSESSMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS

The IAC is collecting evidence about the future of assessment and qualifications in England. This interim report is part of that process.

We need your views. Please read the report, discuss it with others and consider and respond to the following questions:

- Would the five principles we propose offer a good basis for the future of assessment and qualifications in England?
- What, if anything, would you change and why?

To respond please visit
neweraassessment.org.uk/findings

APPENDIX A: MEMBERSHIP OF THE INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT COMMISSION

The commissioners serving on the IAC have been selected, by the chair, to reflect the wide range of constituents who are concerned with the future of assessment and qualifications in England.

Professor Louise Hayward (Chair) is professor of Educational Assessment and Innovation at University of Glasgow and was a member of the internationally-renowned Assessment Reform Group. In 2018, Louise founded the International Educational Assessment Network and, currently, she is working with OECD on the Learning 2030 programme and UNESCO on assessment in STEM education. Louise has extensive experience in the design and development of national and international assessment and qualifications systems.

Professor Jo-Anne Baird is director of the Department of Education, University of Oxford. Her research covers educational assessment, examination standards, marking and assessment design. Jo-Anne advises governments and international bodies on assessment and qualifications issues, she has worked for and with awarding organisations in a number of roles, is a member of Ofqual's Standing Advisory Group and is chair of AQA's Research Committee.

Dr Robin Bevan is a highly respected serving head teacher who has worked in a number of roles within education. He began as a classroom teacher in the 1980s and has worked in senior leadership for the past 25 years. Robin has extensive academic research experience in curriculum and assessment including an MEd and PhD from Cambridge University. He was appointed to a panel founded by OCR to explore the reliability of examination outcomes and to AQA's Curriculum and Assessment Quality Committee. He was also National Education Union (NEU) national president for the 2020/21 academic year.

Salsabil Elmegri is vice president, further education, of the National Union of Students (NUS) where she is elected to represent the views of further education learners across the UK. Prior to her current role, Salsabil studied access to higher education in biology and chemistry and was vice president, education and welfare, at Bradford College Students' Union.

Professor Vini Lander is professor of Race and Education and director of the Centre for Race, Education and Decoloniality in the Carnegie School of Education. Vini has worked for many years researching the inequalities that persist in education, including in teacher education, and has extensive experience of where and how inequity exists, can appear and can be addressed

Olly Newton is executive director of the Edge Foundation, where he oversees research, reports and runs the Edge Future Learning delivery programme for schools and colleges. In this role, and previously, Olly has extensive experience working with policy makers from across the education sector and political spectrum. This includes 12 years in the Department for Education working on policies including 14-19 diplomas, raising the participation age and finally as Head of Apprenticeship Strategy.

Kerry-Jane Packman is the executive director of Programmes, Membership and Charitable Services for Parentkind – a national charity representing the voice of those with a parenting role to local, regional and national governments and agencies. Kerry-Jane has 20 years' experience of working within the charity sector and has worked closely with parents and families on what they want to see from assessment, qualifications and education more widely.

Professor Dame Alison Peacock is chief executive of the Chartered College of Teaching, a professional body connecting teachers to provide expert teaching and leadership. Prior to joining the Chartered College, Dame Alison was Executive Head teacher of The Wroxham School in Hertfordshire and her career to date has spanned primary, secondary and advisory roles in education.

Matthew Percival is People and Skills Policy Director at the Confederation of British Industry (CBI). The CBI speaks on behalf of 190,000 businesses who together employ about one-third of the private sector workforce. Matthew has significant experience working with businesses on what they think of the current education system and what they would like assessment and qualifications to provide.

Professor Dominic Wyse is a professor of Early Childhood and Primary Education at University College London (UCL), Institute of Education (IOE). The main focus of Dominic's research is curriculum and pedagogy and his work includes significant attention to national curriculum and assessment policies. He is also the current president of the British Educational Research Association (BERA).

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