



# Department for Education

Professor Julia Buckingham  
SCORE  
6-9 Carlton House Terrace  
LONDON  
SW1Y 5AG

Castle View House  
East Lane  
Runcorn, WA7 2GJ

Tel: 0370 0002288  
[www.education.gov.uk/  
contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus)

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Dear Professor Buckingham

Thank you for your letter of 4 June, addressed to the Secretary of State, about key stage 4 accountability. As you can appreciate, the Secretary of State receives a large amount of correspondence and cannot always reply personally. On this occasion I have been asked to reply.

The proposed accountability reforms for secondary schools, as outlined in our consultation earlier this year, are designed to ensure that schools have strong incentives to offer a broad and balanced curriculum. The proposals are designed around the academic core of the EBacc, and aim to ensure high standards of teaching in a wide range of subjects, including each of the sciences.

Our proposals to reform the secondary school accountability framework balance the use of threshold and progress measures. It is vital that schools ensure that pupils secure good English and maths qualifications, and our proposals would retain a threshold here. However, we recognise that the use of threshold measures alone has previously carried the potential to distort schools' teaching practice. Our proposed reforms would therefore also publish average points score measures (for attainment and progress) across eight qualifications: English, mathematics, any combination of three other current EBacc subjects (combined science, physics, chemistry, biology, computer science, geography, history, and languages, save only that combined science cannot count in addition to any of physics, chemistry and biology); and three further high value qualifications in these subjects, other academic subjects, arts subjects or vocational qualifications that meet the department's pre-defined criteria.

I appreciate your suggestion that the threshold measure should include at least two sciences and that the average points score measure should specify at least two science qualifications. However, we consider our proposed reforms already provide increased incentives for schools to deliver each of the sciences, and will improve the standing of these subjects alongside other EBacc subjects. We believe strongly in the important role of science within schools, and our expectation is that our proposed accountability reforms will strengthen the role of science teaching.

Once again, thank you for writing.

Yours sincerely

Leona Smith  
Ministerial and Public Communications Division