

Digest of Language-related Responses to the DfE Curriculum and Assessment Review 2024

Committee for Linguistics in Education

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17 April 2025

The DfE Curriculum & Assessment Review (CAR)

Set up in 2024 to review England's existing national curriculum and statutory assessment system, the Department for Education's Curriculum and Assessment Review seeks "to refresh the curriculum to ensure it is cutting edge, fit for purpose and meeting the needs of children and young people to support their future life and work". More specifically, it aims to deliver:

- "An excellent foundation in core subjects of reading, writing and maths.
- A broader curriculum, so that children and young people do not miss out on subjects such as music, art, sport and drama, as well as vocational subjects.
- A curriculum that ensures children and young people leave compulsory education ready for life and ready for work, building the knowledge, skills and attributes young people need to thrive. This includes embedding digital, oracy and life skills in their learning.
- A curriculum that reflects the issues and diversities of our society, ensuring all children and young people are represented.
- An assessment system that captures the strengths of every child and young person and the breadth of curriculum, with the right balance of assessment methods whilst maintaining the important role of examinations" ([Review Aims](#), July 2024).

The CAR issued a very detailed 54-question call for evidence that closed on 22 November 2024, and it reported on 18 March 2025 on [interim findings](#) and key areas for further work, leading to the final review with recommendations in Autumn 2025 ([ibid](#)).

The current document focuses on language education, and it offers a digest of the responses submitted by 19 organisations with expertise in this field.

Key acronyms and abbreviations in what follows:

CAR	DFE Curriculum & Assessment Review
ALL	Association for Language Learning
AQA	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance
BC	British Council
BA	British Academy
BGA	British-German Association
CIOL	Chartered Institute of Linguists
CLE	Coalition for Language Education
CLiE	Committee for Linguistics in Education
EA	English Association
L@MFL	Linguistics@MFL
NALA	National Association of Language Advisors
NALDIC	National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum
NATE	National Association for the Teaching of English
NATECLA	National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults
TBF	The Bell Foundation
TCA	The Classical Association
UCFL	University Council For Languages
UKLA	UK Literacy Association
WoLLoW	World of Language, Languages of the World

Executive Summary

The present document and its focus on language education

This document is an overview of a broad range of submissions on language education provided by 19 expert organisations, made up of subject associations covering English (NATE, EA), literacy (UKLA), EAL (English as an additional language at school: NALDIC), ESOL (English for adult speakers of other languages: NATECLA), Home, Heritage & Community languages (HHCLs; ALL, NATECLA), Modern Languages (ALL, BGA, L@MFL, UCFL), Classics (TCA), and bodies with a wide cross-curricular brief for languages (AQA, BC, BA, CIOL, CLE, CLiE, NALA, TBF, WoLLoW). These organisations had either published or agreed for their submissions (or summaries of their submissions (EA, TCA)) to be posted on a webpage hosted by the Committee for Linguistics in Education (CLiE) – [2024 C&A Review – Committee for Linguistics in Education](#) – and this collection of texts provides the material for the digest that follows.

Although there are significant stakeholder organisations that are not included in this summary,¹ these 19 submissions combine to provide a rather comprehensive view of what professional specialists in different areas of language education think of the current provision for 5-19 year olds in England, along with many of their ideas for improvement. The *current* text is intended to help navigate this substantial collection, and it identifies key commonalities, points of divergence, and areas calling for further discussion or evidence. It is offered in the first instance as a resource for language organisations themselves, facilitating further interaction and/or alignment as the CAR's consultation unfolds. Beyond that, the text can be read as a snapshot of the current state of play and hopes for the future of curriculum and assessment in language education.

The first stage in the production of this document has been collaboratively undertaken by volunteers linked to the BA, BAAL, CLE, CLiE and LAGB.² The second stage involved circulation to the associations and organisations whose submissions the document refers to, which have led to minor revisions in this final text. Because it follows the section headings in the CAR's *Call for Evidence* and seeks accountability to the associations/ organisations and their submissions (which varied in the manner and detail of their responses), the main part of this digest is unavoidably repetitive. To help the reader track particular topics, there is an index at the end (digital searches may also be useful). Indeed, for their detailed arguments and their often extensive references to supporting research, readers should consult the individual submissions.

The views of the 19 expert organisations can, however, be drawn together more succinctly as follows.

¹ This is because they did not make a submission to the CAR, did not wish to make their submission public, or did not respond to the CLE and CLiE invitations to participate in this comparative overview.

² Jenny Amos, Charles Forsdick, Eva Eppler, Zhu Hua, Richard Hudson, Petros Karatsareas, Viktoria Magne, Ros Mitchell, Ben Rampton and Camilla Smith.

Summary of the view of language in education articulated across the 19 submissions

Across the 19 submissions, there is strong agreement with the CAR's objectives, a shared view that both curriculum and assessment currently fail to meet the goals laid out in the CAR's Terms of Reference (see above), and a broad consensus on the need for significant reform in language education.³

For **social justice and inclusion**, to break down the barriers to opportunity, and to improve attainment, progress, participation and access, there is general agreement that the curriculum, teaching, assessment, materials and the learning environment need to be more flexible and more open to students with individual or intersecting characteristics (socioeconomic, gender, ethnicity, religion, SEND, ESOL/EAL) (see Section 3 below).

On the **curriculum**, there is clear agreement on:

- *Building communicative repertoires*: The curriculum should promote effective development in English for all children. It should continue to offer all children the opportunity to learn and/or maintain languages other than English (LOTE), and there should be increased flexibility for EAL learners (e.g. Section 5).
- *Diversity*: The curriculum needs new emphases to reflect contemporary society and culture, and these should extend to modes of communication – oracy and digital technology (see e.g. paragraphs 4.2 and 9.3) – as well as to the contemporary world's linguistic and cultural diversity, which needs to be reflected both in curriculum material and in an active recognition of the multilingualism that many students bring from home and its potential educational contribution (e.g. Section 3).
- *Knowledge about language/language awareness*: This should go beyond grammar, punctuation and spelling, providing rich reflection on language in its formal, discourse and socio-cultural dimensions (e.g. 4.3). Language awareness activity should take account of the child's first language(s), including Home, Heritage and Community languages (HHCLs), and deepen understanding by bringing in other languages and styles.
- *Cross-curricular links/language across the curriculum*: The curriculum needs to address language development and language awareness in all subject areas, both academic and vocational, and language needs to be reconceptualised not just as a subject but as an integral part of the school's ethos and culture (5.1, 6.2, 8.2).
- *Greater curriculum continuity* is needed across all Key Stages to support transition and children's ongoing engagement (9.1, 9.2).

On **assessment** in language education, there is widespread agreement that:

- The burden of tests and end-of-course exams is heavy, national tests are skewing the curriculum undesirably (e.g. 2.5, 7.1), and the grading of MFL assessment is too severe (e.g. 7.4).
- The range of available qualifications is too narrow, and alternative skills-based assessments are needed both in English and in languages other than English (e.g. 2.5, 8.3).

³ Although it did not submit a response to the CAR's call, there is also a great deal of overlap here with the British Deaf Association's [Manifesto for British Sign Language](#).

- Much greater diversity and flexibility in assessment methods are required, both to connect adequately with a broader curriculum in language(s), and to respond to diverse learners' needs (e.g. 7.1, 9.3).
- The potential of digital/online assessment methods should be explored, to promote individualisation and assessment for learning, as well as greater diversity/flexibility in summative assessment (9.3).

A number of specific aspects of **assessment** are identified as **urgently needing reform**:

- The effectiveness of the Phonics Screening Check and the Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling tests at primary level needs to be reassessed (4.6, 7.5).
- GCSE English Language is currently not fit for purpose (e.g. 4.6).
- "Resit" requirements for learners who fail GCSE English (and Maths) should be abandoned, and alternative vocationally oriented qualifications for the 16-19 age group should be developed and recognised (7.2).
- Qualifications should be provided in a wider range of Home, Heritage and Community languages (3.4).
- Alternative criterion-referenced qualifications, both pre- and post-16, need to be developed and recognised, both for HHCLs and for modern languages for non-specialists (7.4, 8.3).

On several specific issues, the diversity of views points to the need for further discussion and/or evidence:

- there is clear consensus that language learning at Key Stage 4 needs to be improved, but some associations call for the replacement of EBacc with alternatives, while others acknowledge its role in stabilising the decline in languages and recommend its restructuring (6.2, 7.6);
- more generally within assessment, there needs to be more discussion of the relative merits of summative approaches and coursework, the increased involvement of teachers in assessment, and the adoption of a broader range of alternative modes (7.1);
- there are also some nuanced differences in what submissions say about particular developments, such as digital technologies (9.3) and Knowledge about Language (4.5).

Indeed, more generally in language education (as in other areas), the design and delivery of curriculum and assessment raise complicated issues that call for extensive stakeholder discussion, drawing on a broad range of evidence, and there are also significant implications for funding and teacher training (two issues which did not feature in the CAR's questions). Nevertheless, this overview of the 19 submissions collected on the [CLiE webpage](#) points to a great deal of *consensus* on values and priorities in language education,⁴ and this should provide a very strong base from which "to refresh the curriculum to ensure it is cutting edge, fit for purpose and meeting the needs of children and young people to support their future life and work" ([CAR](#) above).

⁴ A broadly comparable consensus can also be seen around the recent [Founding Statement](#) of the Coalition for Language Education and its [signatories](#), as well as in [CLiE's responses](#) to prior government consultations and other educational developments (1993-2024).

Section 1: About you

The Review questions:

1. Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?
2. If you are responding as an individual, in what capacity are you responding?
3. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, which of the below best describes which part of the sector your organisation represents?
4. What is the name of your organisation?
5. What is your role within the organisation?
6. What is your name?
7. What is your email address?
8. Are you happy to be contacted directly about your response?
9. Would you like us to keep your responses confidential?

This text is not itself a submission to the DFE's Curriculum & Assessment Review (CAR). Instead, it is an attempt to draw together the submissions of 19 expert organisations working in and across different areas of language education 5-19: English, English as an additional language for young people at school (EAL), English to speakers of other languages (ESOL), Home Heritage and Community Languages (HHCLs), Latin & Classical Studies, Literacy, and Modern Languages (MFL).

In December 2024, the Coalition for Language Education and the Committee for Linguistics in Education invited their affiliated associations and others to share submissions with a view to comparing them, and 18 organisations responded positively. These were: Association for Language Learning (ALL); British Council (BC); The Bell Foundation; British Academy (BA); British-German Association (BGA); Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL); Coalition for Language Education (CLE); Committee for Linguistics in Education (CLiE); English Association (EA); Linguistics@MFL (L@MFL); National Association of Language Advisors (NALA); National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC); National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE); National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA); The Classical Association (TCA); UK Literacy Association (UKLA); University Council For Languages (UCFL); World of Language, Languages of the World (WoLLoW). The submission of the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) was available in full on its website, contained an extensive discussion of language, and is included in the overview as well.⁵ In what follows, the acronyms of all these organisations are used to reference their submissions.

These submissions (or summaries of the submissions (EA, TCA)) have been posted together on a webpage hosted by CLiE – [2024 C&A Review – Committee for Linguistics in Education](#), and the comparative overview that follows has been drafted by: Dr Eva Eppler (Chair; University of Roehampton), Dr Jenny Amos (University of Suffolk), Prof Charles Forsdick (Cambridge University), Prof Dick Hudson (UCL), Dr Petros Karatsareas (University of Westminster), Dr Viktoria Magne (University of West London), Prof Ros Mitchell (Southampton University), Prof Ben Rampton (King's College London), Camilla Smith (UCL) and Prof Zhu Hua (UCL).

⁵ Other exam boards, such as [Pearson Edexcel](#) and [OCR](#) (Oxford, Cambridge & RSA Examinations) have only published summaries, and these have not been included in the digest.

Section 2 General views on curriculum, assessment, and qualifications pathways

The Review questions:

10. What aspects of the current a) curriculum, b) assessment system and c) qualification pathways are **working well** to support and recognise educational progress for children and young people?
11. What aspects of the current a) curriculum, b) assessment system and c) qualification pathways should be **targeted for improvements** to better support and recognise educational progress for children and young people?

This section lays out a range of issues amplified in subsequent sections. There is a general consensus across the submissions that, overall, current provision for language education is too narrow, and that, in the interests of equity and access, there is an urgent need for greater breadth, coordination and support across curriculum and assessment at all stages in literacy, English, EAL, ESOL and languages other than English.

2.1 There is widespread agreement among language education stakeholders that the current **curriculum, assessment, and qualification pathways require significant reform** to better support language learning across different contexts. Organisations express concerns about declining uptake, inequitable access, and outdated assessment methods. Despite some positive aspects - the statutory status of languages at Key Stages 2 and 3, the English Language A Level, the aims and purpose of the Programmes of Study for modern foreign languages (MFL) at Key Stage 3 (ALL), the existence of GCSEs and A Levels in some HHCLs, and the planned GCSE in British Sign Language (BSL) - the overall system is seen as failing to meet the needs of a linguistically diverse and globally connected society, and the potential of digital technologies needs further exploration.

2.2 In the **curriculum for modern foreign languages**, the inconsistency and a lack of continuity between Key Stages 2 and 3 (ALL, BA, CLiE, TCA) is a recurrent concern. ALL and BC call for better transition structures to prevent students from effectively restarting language learning in secondary school, and there is broad agreement that early language learning should be properly structured, with clearer guidance on expected outcomes (ALL, BA).

2.3 CLE and TBF comment on the rigidity of the current **curriculum for English**. GCSE English Language and Literature are outdated and require urgent reform, with a more diverse and engaging curriculum that includes contemporary texts, spoken language assessment, creative writing and digital communication. These should also feature in a literacy curriculum (UKLA, CLE, TBF), with a balanced approach to phonics and grammar that extends to Knowledge About Language (CLiE, CLE, UKLA).

2.4 There is also significant concern about the lack of breadth in the **post-16 curriculum**. The current three-subject A Level system limits opportunities for students to continue with modern foreign languages beyond GCSE, and ALL, AQA and BA argue that England should adopt a broader curriculum model, similar to the International Baccalaureate.

2.5 Assessment urgently needs reform. Many organisations, including ALL, BA, CLiE, TBF and UCFL, criticise the current reliance on high-stakes exams, which create stress for students and do not adequately reflect real-world language proficiency. TBF, ALL and L@MFL advocate more holistic assessment models that prioritise communication skills and intercultural communication. There is also concern that the current system ‘shines a light on inequalities’ (AQA) and does not accommodate the needs of diverse learners (AQA, BA, TBF), including EAL and ESOL students, for whom formative assessment is needed to better track English language progression (NALDIC, NATECLA, TBF), recognising their potential over time to perform as well as (or better than) monolingual peers (WoLLoW). Several organisations, including ALL, AQA, BA, TCA, UCFL and NATECLA, call for alternative qualification pathways that provide more flexibility for learners. Suggestions include modular courses, vocational language qualifications, and recognition of language proficiency outside of the traditional exam system.

2.6 Equity and access to language learning are recurring concerns. NALA, BC and L@MFL highlight significant disparities between state and independent/private schools, with students in the latter benefiting from better language provision, international exchanges and language assistants. BC draws on statistical evidence (Languages Trends Survey 2024) to show disadvantaged children are far less likely to select a language for GCSE. UKLA draws attention to foundational literacy barriers for disadvantaged children, which limit their ability to engage with language education more broadly. There needs to be a literacy curriculum that supports diverse learners, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds (UKLA, NALDIC).

2.7 There needs to be greater emphasis on **linguistic diversity, intercultural competence and linguistic creativity** to foster deeper engagement with languages (ALL, BA, L@MFL, UCFL). There is consensus that multilingualism should be treated as an asset: multilingual perspectives need to be integrated into the curriculum (NALDIC, UCFL, UKLA, WoLLoW), and there should be greater support for Home, Heritage and Community languages. EAL learners should be supported more effectively, allowing for the development of their home languages alongside English and MFL (NATECLA, NALDIC, TBF, UCFL, WoLLoW).

2.8 Several organisations highlight the ongoing **decline in languages uptake** at GCSE and A level (BA, NALA, L@MFL), attributing this to perceptions of difficulty, severe grading and a lack of motivation among students (BA, ALL, CLE).

Section 3 Social justice and inclusion

12. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any **barriers** to improving attainment, progress, access or participation (**class ceilings**) for learners experiencing **socioeconomic disadvantage**?

13. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways are there any **barriers** to improving attainment, progress, access or participation which may disproportionately **impact pupils based on other protected characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity)**?

14. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any **barriers** in continuing to improve attainment, progress, access or participation for learners with **special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)**?

15. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any **enablers** that support attainment, progress, access or participation for the groups listed above?

Contributions to this section first and foremost stress that discussions of social justice and inclusion need to consider the intersection of different social categories. Socio-economic disadvantages are found to create barriers to language and literacy education, as well as 'cold spots' and two-tier-systems. There is general agreement that education fails to reflect the diversity of contemporary society, that there is insufficient provision for Home, Heritage and Community Languages (HHCLs) as well as support for students who are not yet proficient in English. Inadequate recognition of students with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) is also a frequent theme. The section concludes by highlighting aspects of current educational provision that submissions recognise as positive contributions to social justice and inclusivity. However, some submissions cannot see any such contributions.

3.1 Multiple responses, especially by CLE and UKLA, highlight how socioeconomic background **intersects** with protected characteristics such as race, religion, gender, and disability, compounding educational inequalities. Consequently, there is considerable overlap in the issues raised in responses to Questions 12 and 13. UKLA cautions that using data that homogenises a particular category may mask significant differences within groups defined on the basis of protected characteristics, and several responses (BC, CLE, CLiE) stress that the gender attainment gap in languages is wider than the socioeconomic gap, underscoring the need for nuanced approaches to addressing disparity.

3.2 For languages, differences in access and participation between schools with pupils from different **socio-economic backgrounds** are noted in most responses (BA, BC, BGA, CIOL, CLiE, NALA, TCA, UCFL). Compared to their wealthier peers, learners from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds face significant barriers across various aspects of language learning, including MFL, English as a first language, and 16-19 ESOL. Several submissions also identify regional disparities, with socially or economically disadvantaged areas experiencing 'cold spots' in access to high-quality language learning opportunities.

Stakeholder organisations with access to large longitudinal data (BC) diagnose a persistent resource gap between the private and state sectors, which leads to a two-tier system. This is echoed by several responses (CLiE, L@MLF, TCA, UCLF), which note that, compared to schools in more affluent regions, schools in socially disadvantaged areas often provide fewer opportunities for students to engage in language learning (via, e.g., international engagement, exchange programmes, language assistants, and extracurricular activities). Evidence provided by the BC also highlights how financial pressures in schools, such as setting minimum group sizes, discourage post-16 languages provision, thereby limiting progression into HE.

UKLA draws attention to foundational barriers to literacy for socially disadvantaged children, including limited access to books, limited support to develop the habit of reading, and the digital divide.

To address these barriers, language stakeholder organisations suggest offering more flexible and varied opportunities for language learning. Proposed solutions include remote teaching, partnerships, investment, and providing students with authentic language learning experiences.

3.3 There is also shared concern among stakeholders (AQA, BA, CLiE, NALDIC, NATE, UKLA) that the current NC and materials are **not representative of contemporary society**, and that texts often reflect a narrow, Eurocentric, and monolingual perspective.

Multiple responses draw attention to the fact that the current curriculum fails to adequately reflect the diversity of modern Britain by not including authentic materials, culturally relevant themes, or diverse representation. There are widespread calls for a more inclusive curriculum, teaching and learning materials (e.g., Braille, intralingual subtitles), and assessments that focus on different skill sets (ALL, AQA, CLiE, UKLA). A shortage of teachers who reflect the diversity of the learner population is also noted (e.g., CLiE, NALA). Stakeholders argue that because many learners are not represented in the NC, teaching materials, or teacher demographics, they lack motivation, which impacts negatively on the UK's creative and linguistic potential (e.g. CIOL). Access to Language Assistants, school partnerships and visits also provide motivation for language learning and these are in decline, adversely affecting disadvantaged pupils (BC).

3.4 Another common theme is that **HHCL (Home, Heritage and Community Language) speakers** are underserved by the current educational system, and that HHCLs often face challenges in terms of recognition and assessment. Many responses (e.g., ALL, BGA, L@MFL, CLiE, NATECLA, UKLA, CLE, TBF) emphasise the structural disadvantages faced by students who speak HHCLs, who use English as an additional language (EAL), and for whom proficiency in English and curriculum access are key, particularly at Level 3. A focus on what these students cannot do rather than what they can do leads to marginalisation, which impacts negatively on both their attainment and mental health. NATECLA identifies 16-19 ESOL learners as some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. The Bell Foundation notes that support for EAL learners is often required for up to 6 years.

3.5. The issue of curriculum and assessment structures not being sufficiently inclusive of learners with **special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)** is a common theme in submissions to Question 14 (BA, CLiE, NATE, TCA). These structures are often seen as favouring able learners and creating additional barriers for SEND students. The volume of written exams is also noted as detrimental to the mental health and wellbeing of SEND learners, particularly those who require extra time to complete assessments.

Several responses (AQA, CLiE, NATECLA) raise concerns about logistical barriers to the identification of language difficulties and SEND diagnoses, which NATE attributes to chronic underfunding. Attaining appropriate reasonable adjustments in exams and classroom settings also drew commentary (AQA, TBF).

The need to better inform and train practitioners on the special educational needs of learners with (learning) disabilities emerges as a necessity for inclusion in PGCE and CDP programmes. Several responses emphasise that SEND students are frequently excluded from MFL teaching due to flawed assumptions about their abilities (CLiE, L@MFL), and there is widespread concern that language learning challenges are often confused with literacy

difficulties or with lack of English skills, leading to inappropriate educational interventions (NALA, NATECLA).

3.6 The availability of qualifications in HHCLs, along with the introduction of new qualifications such as the GCSE in BSL, are viewed by several responses (BA, CLiE, CLE) as **positive steps toward greater representativity and inclusivity** in the current curriculum and assessment system. Similarly, the efforts of teachers, specialist support staff and the [EAL marker](#) are acknowledged as significant enablers. NATECLA and the Bell Foundation, however, note that the EAL marker is discontinued at age 16, with no further tracking of language needs beyond that age, leaving a gap in support for older learners.

UKLA emphasises the importance of fostering a school-wide culture of reading and promoting the enjoyment of reading, which it views as crucial for improving student engagement and literacy outcomes. Varied individual proposals, such as digital exams, the [Permission to Speak](#) and [Pupil Premium](#), are sketched by AQA, UCFL and NATE. While these responses identify specific enablers, several responses emphatically mention that the current curriculum and assessments do not include any enabling factors.

Section 4: Ensuring an excellent foundation in maths and English

16. To what extent does the **content** of the national curriculum at **primary** level (key stages 1 and 2) enable pupils to gain an excellent foundation in a) English and b) maths? Are there ways in which the content could change to better support this aim?
17. To what extent do the English and maths **primary assessments** support pupils to gain an excellent foundation in these key subjects? Are there any changes you would suggest that would support this aim?
18. To what extent does the **content** of the a) English and b) maths national curriculum at **secondary** level (key stages 3 and 4) equip pupils with the knowledge and skills they need for life and further study? Are there ways in which the content could change to better support this aim?
19. To what extent do the current maths and English **qualifications** at a) pre-16 and b) 16-19 support pupils and learners to gain, and adequately demonstrate that they have achieved, the skills and knowledge they need? Are there any changes you would suggest that would support these outcomes?
20. How can we better support **learners who do not achieve level 2 in English** and maths **by 16** to learn what they need to thrive as citizens in work and life? In particular, do we have the right qualifications at level 2 for these 16-19 learners (including the maths and English study requirement)?
21. Are there any particular challenges with regard to the English and maths a) curricula and b) assessment for **learners in need of additional support** (e.g. learners with SEND, socioeconomic disadvantage, English as an additional language (EAL))? Are there any changes you would suggest to overcome these challenges?

This section describes how the submissions discuss English, placing it in the wider context of contemporary life and society. English as a subject needs to consider much more than print literacy, oracy deserves higher priority, and language calls for explicit attention across the curriculum in a range of ways: modern languages have cross-curricular potential, EAL and

ESOL need to be integrated into the curriculum much more systematically, and there is considerable curricular scope for the development of explicit knowledge about language and languages. Turning to current educational assessments of students' English, the situation is seen as mixed: some are good, some should be dropped, and some need further development.

4.1 There was a good deal of support for broadening the remit of the subject of English **beyond traditional print literacy**, to include digital literacy (CLiE, NATE), multimodal communication (CLiE) and visual literacy (NATE; UKLA).

4.2 There was considerable support for promoting the teaching of **oracy** (BA, NATE, TBF, UKLA), with less emphasis on writing (NATE, TBF). This should be combined with explicit study of oral language (NATE), and oral language should be reintroduced to GCSE English Language as an integral element (AQA, EA). The teaching of oral language should be broadly based and should not focus narrowly on formal presentations or on features of Standard English (NATE). It should also be extended to those with speech disabilities (BA).

4.3 Every teacher should teach the language of their subject (AQA, EA, NALDIC, NATE, TBF), and, in that respect, 'all qualified teachers should be language teachers' (NALDIC). But, there are other important **cross-curricular links** in which the learning of foreign languages supports literacy in the first language (TCA, UCFL, BGA) and also general cognitive skills (BGA). What we need is 'a languages curriculum which links more closely to all other aspects of the curriculum' (WoLLoW). And, connecting the curricula for languages and for English, we need 'a languages curriculum which conveys the value of languages and language awareness not only in economic terms, but in relation to cultural awareness, community cohesion, mutual understanding, a sense of identity and a sense of belonging' (WoLLoW).

4.4 There was widespread concern that the present curriculum does not prepare students for the 'diversity, difficulty and dissent' (NATE) of the modern world, and, in particular, for the **linguistic diversity** associated with multilingualism.

Schools should give better support to EAL pupils: first, they should distinguish those who are already fluent in English from those who are not, including the newly-arrived (and avoid the present tendency to classify the latter as SEND; TBF); and, second, they should provide the latter with a curriculum and assessment that are more appropriate to their needs, including alternative qualifications in English and Maths (CLiE, NATECLA, NATE, TBF). One possibility is that the English curriculum for EAL pupils should combine language and literature more closely than at present (NATE); another is to fund the IELTS test for ESOL learners (CLiE, NATECLA). At present, provision for EAL pupils (and ESOL pupils over 16) is 'fragmented and inconsistent' (TBF), and 'policy and practice regarding EAL are both educationally unsound and unjust' (NALDIC).

Improved provision for EAL speakers should be part of a larger package for all pupils in which they learn more about multilingualism and, in the process, come to understand the benefits and stresses around diversity. The target would be 'a languages curriculum which [...] encourages bilingual pupils to remain bilingual [...] and encompasses, aligns and values all languages, English, "MFL", "heritage/family/community" languages, [including] "classical

languages” (WoLLoW, TCA). Pupils’ multilingualism can and should be celebrated across the curriculum, and, especially, in language-based subjects (UCFL).

4.5 Knowledge about language should be developed in an explicit, analytical approach that covers not only grammar but also vocabulary, discourse and the socio-cultural patternings of language (BA, CLiE, NALA, NATE, UCFL, UKLA), especially at primary level (WoLLoW).

At GCSE, there should be a much clearer separation between language and literature, removing literature from the GCSE in English Language (UKLA). Unlike the present exam, it ‘should be closer in content to the A Level, bring back spoken language, and include multi-media and new media forms: journalism, games, non-fiction, and other non-literary writing... [develop] more formal linguistic knowledge and make explicit English’s relevance for the workplace.’ (EA, BA).

There is some agreement (and no significant divergence of views among organisations stating an opinion) on the need for grammar to be taught explicitly, and, indeed, on the idea that this could be part of the curriculum based on linguistics (L@MFL). This could be a site for training in scientific method, going beyond calls for ‘better sequenced grammar over the curriculum’ (EA) to investigations of complex linguistic structure that can be extended from secondary down into primary schooling (CLiE).

4.6 At primary school, **assessment** with the Phonics Screening Check (PSC) only measures one strategy for reading (CLiE, EA) and encourages teaching to the test (CLiE, BA). So, the PSC should be abandoned in primary schools (UKLA). Moreover, the pedagogy should be relaxed to allow a variety of approaches, rather than just phonics (CLiE, NATE).

There is considerable criticism of (and no support for) the grammar test at Key Stage 2, because it takes too much teaching time and yields few benefits for writing (EA, NATE); and there is too much grammar in the Classical Greek GCSE (TCA). The test of grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS) in primary school is unrelated to the writing portfolio (CLiE), and should either be removed altogether (EA, UKLA) or replaced by ongoing teacher assessment (NATE). The Writing Portfolio can stay, but the marking criteria need to be clearer (CLiE, EA, UKLA).

The current English GCSE exams are not fit for purpose (BA, EA). They are narrow in scope, encourage teaching to the test (AQA, EA, NATE), do not guarantee basic literacy (AQA) and contain too much literature (EA, UKLA). One objection is that GCSE English Language ‘reinstalls’ Key Stage 2 grammar (AQA), while another is that it ignores modern linguistics (CLiE). Either way, it fails to recruit students for the A Level exam (AQA, NATE), and, instead, there should be ‘a more explicit focus on language study in the KS3 curriculum and in GCSE Language and a recognition that language has its own body of knowledge’ (UKLA). The A Levels in English are generally satisfactory (EA).

There should also be better provision and qualifications in functional skills for the ‘forgotten third’ who fail GCSE (AQA, BA general, EA, NATE) and here teachers should do more frequent formative assessment (EA, NATE).

Section 5: Curriculum and qualifications content

22. Are there particular curriculum or qualifications subjects where: (a) there is too much content; not enough content, or content is missing; (b) the content is out-of-date; (c) the content is unhelpfully sequenced (for example to support good curriculum design or pedagogy); (d) there is a need for greater flexibility (for example to provide the space for teachers to develop and adapt content)?
23. Are there particular changes that could be made to ensure the curriculum (including qualification content) is more diverse and representative of society?
24. To what extent does the current curriculum (including qualification content) support students to positively engage with, be knowledgeable about and respect others? Are there elements that could be improved?
25. In which ways does the current *primary* curriculum support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for life and further study and what could we change to better support this?
26. In which ways do the current *secondary* curriculum and qualification pathways support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for future study, life and work and what could we change to better support this?
27. In which ways do the current qualification pathways and content at 16-19 support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for future study, life and work and what could we change to better support this?

Picking up on the priorities sketched in §4, this section first reports on recommendations for updating and broadening the language and literacy curriculum at primary school, focusing both on English and languages other than English, also underlining the importance of pleasure, creativity, interculturality and critical understanding. This is then developed in the recommendations for secondary and 16-19 education, and these cover qualifications and assessment as well.

5.1 Associations commenting on issues of provision at **primary KS1-KS2** generally agree that the language and literacy curriculum needs broadening and updating, with systematic attention to oracy, to vocabulary development, to creative writing, to reading culturally appropriate texts for pleasure, and to multimodal and digital literacy. Knowledge about language currently deals only with the grammar of Standard English, and needs to be significantly widened to encompass language variation, multilingualism, and social dimensions of communication (CLE, TBF). Subject English should be developing citizenship, critical literacy, and intercultural understanding (UKLA). EAL specialists deplore the absence of any EAL assessment framework in KS1-KS4, noting the unsuitability of existing assessments for this group (NALDIC).

Those who comment on primary languages other than English (ALL, BA, TCA, CLE, CLIE, L@MFL, UCFL) all support their place in Key Stage 2, but acknowledge current problems of delivery and transition to Key Stage 3. The practical limitation of provision to French and Spanish, and absence of Home, Heritage and Community Languages (HHCL), is non-reflective of contemporary communities. There is general agreement that primary languages should include a strong language awareness component (developing a 'multilingual outlook', BA), and on the need for guidance on teaching time and expected language learning outcomes. Some Associations (BA, CLiE, UCFL, WoLLoW) question the

current NC commitment to ‘sustained progress’ in a single language, and see the language awareness strand complementing and partly or completely replacing this.

Several associations draw attention to the need to strengthen attention to language across the curriculum, embedding literacy and oracy development in all subjects (ALL, BA, EA, NATE, TBF, UKLA, WoLLoW). Others point to the ‘language awareness’ dimension as common to all languages (CLE), the educational benefits of translanguaging (CLE, TBF, UKLA), or integrating study of a new language with other subjects (BA, WoLLoW). All these ideas imply greater flexibility in curriculum design and delivery.

5.2 At secondary KS3-KS4, GCSE English is generally criticised as overloaded yet narrow and outdated in content, and responses argue for substantial redesign of English programmes throughout Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 (AQA, CLE, EA, NATE, TBF). A stronger focus on spoken language and on media is generally supported, as is increased flexibility and encouragement for teachers to choose literary and other texts reflective of contemporary cultural diversity (NATE). Opportunities to write creatively and at length, drama, and rich opportunities for spoken interaction, will create more agentive language users. Critical language awareness will allow learners to explore linguistic diversity and relationships between language, power and identity (CLE).

Again, EAL specialists deplore the absence of any EAL assessment framework in KS1-KS4, despite the unsuitability of existing qualifications in English for this group (NALDIC). The submission by the Bell Foundation stresses the need for an ongoing EAL focus on vocabulary development, critical thinking, and reading comprehension in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Much greater flexibility is needed to promote curriculum relevance for locally diverse communities.

Those who comment on languages provision (ALL, BA, CIOL, CLE, CLIE, L@MFL, UCFL) are committed to universal language study up to Key Stage 4, but commonly acknowledge that current programmes are unsuited for many. The range of languages on offer is too narrow, with marginalisation of HHCLs in particular. The recently reformed GCSE in French/Spanish/German has a systematic focus on linguistic development, but downplays culture and practical communication. It is recognised that there is no current appetite in schools for further GCSE reform in languages other than English (ALL), but several associations (ALL, BA, BC, TCA, UCFL) make proposals for complementary programmes which address the issues.

5.3 There is a common view that the **16-19 curriculum** is now too narrow and overspecialised (AQA, BA, BGA, CIOL, TCA). Associations concerned with languages other than English generally favour development of alternative skills-based or vocational qualifications to support ongoing language learning post-16 (BA, BC, BGA, CIOL, TCA). There is relatively limited comment on A Level content, though overload is mentioned (L@MFL, TCA), and the need for more independent study (NATE). English Language A Level attracts positive comments (EA, CLE, NATE).

An ESOL curriculum and qualifications are in place at 16+, but specialists consider these to be in need of review/updating, better to reflect the language needs of further vocational and/or academic study; greater focus is needed on oracy and on vocabulary (NATECLA, TBF).

5.4 There is a substantial consensus around issues of **diversity, representation and respect for others**. There is very general agreement that across all key stages, the curriculum should include ‘more diverse texts, materials and resources that reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of the pupil population, and that integrate cultural references and contexts from pupils' home languages into the curriculum’ (CLE, CLiE, L@MFL, NALDIC, NATE, TBF, UCFL, UKLA), while the BGA highlights the inherent benefits of language learning to perspective-taking and out-group acceptance. TCA also strongly advocates for greater diversity in set text selections to increase cultural awareness and engagement. All this is essential to engage and motivate learners at all levels. Teachers will require both increased flexibility and support to make informed and relevant choices (AQA); increased engagement with HHCLs is needed.

Associations generally believe that the study of English and languages other than English should actively be developing intercultural understanding and respect for others, through, e.g., raising awareness of the ‘richness and legitimacy of linguistic diversity’ (L@MFL), encountering ‘different perspectives and world views’ through reading (UKLA), embedding culture in the learning of new languages (ALL), and addressing topics such as ‘race, identity, belonging and migration’ (NATE).

5.5 In terms of **preparation for life and further study**, the narrowness and content overload of many current qualifications is widely seen as problematic and not serving all learners. Preparation for life requires greater focus on critical thinking and independent inquiry (AQA, NATE). Several associations (AQA, BA, CIOL, CLiE, EA, GA, NATE, TBF, UCFL) make diverse proposals for alternatives, especially more practically and vocationally oriented qualifications in English and languages other than English, at Key Stage 4 and 16-19.

Among specific proposals to support further study, the BA recommends specifying minimum core content of a rudimentary kind for languages at Key Stage 2 to support transition to Key Stage 3. More broadly, ALL proposes the (re)introduction of a set of criterion-referenced languages assessments which could not only support transition, but also sustain the study of HHCLs and of languages other than English among non-specialists at all levels. ESOL specialists (NATECLA) propose amendment of the 16-19 ESOL curriculum to develop a stronger focus on the academic English required for higher study.

Section 6 A broad and balanced curriculum

28. To what extent does the current **primary** curriculum support pupils to study a broad and balanced curriculum? Should anything change to better support this?
29. To what extent do the current **secondary** curriculum and qualifications pathways support pupils to study a broad and balanced curriculum? Should anything change to better support this?
30. To what extent do the current qualifications pathways at **16-19** support learners to study a broad curriculum which gives them the right knowledge and skills to progress? Should anything change to better support this?
31. To what extent do the current curriculum (at primary *and* secondary) and qualifications pathways (at secondary *and* 16-19) ensure that pupils and learners are able to develop **creative skills** and have access to **creative subjects**?

32. Do you have any explanations for the trends outlined in [curriculum subject trends over time](#) and/or suggestions to address any that might be of concern?

Starting from general agreement that the current language & literacy curriculum is too narrow, this section lists a range of specific recommendations for the primary, secondary and 16-19 curricula. There are more comments on qualifications and assessment (including the EBacc), and a range of reasons are offered for the decline in students following MFL and English.

6.1 There is strong agreement that, in the **primary curriculum**, language learning is currently marginalised, particularly due to SATs and over-assessment pressures. Language learning should be integrated more deeply into the curriculum, and the social aspects of English and languages other than English (CLE), as well as language awareness (BA), need to be embedded more fully (CLiE). So, for example: languages need to be conceptualised not just as a subject, but as more broadly integral to a school's ethos and culture, and unconscious bias towards specific languages and cultures needs to be addressed (ALL); definitions of literacy need to include the social, personal, multimodal and digital (UKLA); the role of language in literacy and oracy development needs to be recognised (BA); and an inclusive curriculum preparing students to engage with social realities and inequalities should take an asset-based (rather than deficit-oriented) approach, leveraging their skills and experience (UKLA). Turning to the place of linguistic analysis, the current curriculum lays too much emphasis on technical skills concerned with English spelling, punctuation and grammar (CLE), but, if it is properly distinguished from prescriptive approaches to 'correct' language use, Knowledge about Language (KAL) and a reflective awareness of language structures at sound, word, sentence and discourse level deserve more support (CLiE).

6.2 In the **secondary curriculum**, there is a consensus on the urgent need for the reform and broadening of English and languages other than English (CLiE) in the following areas: the need for flexible and inclusive approaches to MFL (CIOL), including alternative qualifications (CLiE, ALL, NALA), vocational routes (UCFL), and recognition of HHCLs (ALL); the failure of the EBacc, despite its commitment to languages, to improve language learning (AQA, EA, NALA), uptake and provision (BA, BGA), as well as its negative impact on creative subjects (AQA); and the importance of better teacher training and retention to improve language education quality (BA, CIOL).

Suggestions for broadening the curriculum include: learning languages holistically with other subject areas (computing, business and English); Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLiE, NALA); making language a core subject, included in social sciences, humanities and arts (BA); all students studying a language until at least GCSE level, with options for vocational language studies for those following technical pathways (UCFL); digital skills portfolio for languages (ALL); critical language awareness (see also 4.5, 5.1, 5.2), placing greater focus on the relationship between language, power, and in/justice (CLE); increased support for classical subjects and ancient languages in state schools and at Key Stage 3, bridging provision at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 (TCA, UCFL). On the EBacc, there is some disagreement: the AQA advocates its discontinuation, but the BA, BGA and L@MFL call for a restructuring, recognising its commitment to languages, and TCA would like to see the framework widened to include more subjects.

6.3 There is widespread agreement on the need for broader **16-19 qualification pathways** to counteract the narrowing of subject choices. Suggestions include embedding languages into other subjects via Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLiE, NATECLA); a linking of subject areas such as English and languages other than English with maths, science, computing, business, to enable young people to be able to convincingly talk and write about these subjects (CLiE); inclusion of Home, Heritage, and Community Languages (HHCL) through partnerships (ALL); reducing A Level content and freeing up more time for other qualifications (AQA); the development of alternative Level 3 qualifications for languages (BA); embedding literacy and oracy across the curriculum (EA); reducing content in Classical Greek and Latin due to difficulty and diversifying materials to reflect contemporary society and encourage critical cultural engagement (TCA); and reducing barriers to ESOL learners (NATECLA). Three responses agree that the current A Level English Language curriculum is a good example of how language analysis can be taught (CLE, CLiE, EA).

The need for alternative qualifications or pathways is echoed in several associations. NALA suggests reintroducing AS levels to restore broader subject engagement, and AQA makes a case for ‘minors’, while BGA asks for ‘a broader range of meaningful, rigorous and high-value pathways in languages post-16’, a position also supported by TCA.

6.4 The DFE’s report on [curriculum trends over time](#) highlights a decline in **creative subjects** – design and technology (AQA), humanities and arts (BA) – that extends to language-based subjects like English and languages other than English (NATE, ALL, CLiE, BA). Submissions identify several issues related to the development of creative skills and access to creative subjects. These are: a lack of a translingual and transcultural orientation to language and language pedagogy (CLE), limited recognition of the role of languages (both MFL and English) in developing creative skills (BGA, CLiE), a lack of development of creative skills in MFL teaching (NALA, CLiE), a lack of ‘joined-up’ thinking in curriculum planning (CLiE), shortage of qualified teachers and financial resources (AQA), the need for extracurricular investment (BA), and an undervaluing of oracy and pupils’ creative potential (CLiE). NATECLA and CLiE highlight the therapeutic benefits of creativity, volunteering and sport, particularly for ESOL learners. BGA details the benefits of learning languages other than English for enhanced creativity.

Section 7 Assessment & Accountability

35. Is the volume of statutory assessment at **key stages 1 and 2** right for the purposes set out above?
36. Are there any changes that could be made to improve efficacy without having a negative impact on pupils’ learning or the wider education system?
37. Are there other changes to the statutory assessment system at key stages 1 and 2 that could be made to improve pupils’ experience of assessment, without having a negative impact on either pupils’ learning or the wider education system?
38. What can we do to ensure the assessment system at key stages 1 and 2 works well for all learners, including learners in need of additional support in their education (for example SEND, disadvantage, EAL)?
39. Is the volume of assessment required for **GCSEs** right for the purposes set out above? Are there any changes that could be made without having a negative impact on either pupils’ learning or the wider education system?
40. What more can we do to ensure that: a) the assessment requirements for GCSEs capture and support the development of knowledge and skills of every young person; and b) young people’s wellbeing is effectively

considered when assessments are developed, giving pupils the best chance to show what they can do to support their progression?

41. Are there particular GCSE subjects where changes could be made to the qualification content and/or assessment that would be beneficial for pupils' learning?
42. Are there ways in which we could support improvement in pupil progress and outcomes at key stage 3?
43. Are there ways in which we could support pupils who do not meet the expected standard at key stage 2?
44. To what extent, and in what ways, does **the accountability system** influence curriculum and assessment decisions in schools and colleges?
45. How well does the current accountability system support and recognise progress for all pupils and learners? What works well and what could be improved?
46. Should there be any changes to the current accountability system in order to better support progress and incentivise inclusion for young people with SEND and/or from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds? If so, what should those changes be?

This section describes the widespread (but not unanimous) view that there is too much summative assessment in language & literacy education, and it sketches the range of opinion on continuous assessment and the possibilities emerging with digitalisation. It then outlines assessment issues for English, for EAL & ESOL, and for MFL. After that, it turns to the submissions' predominantly critical view of current measures of accountability in language education, moving from primary to secondary to 16-19 and ESOL .

7.1 The current focus on high stakes summative **assessment** in education in England draws extensive commentary. Only one organisation (AQA) robustly defends this approach in principle, as a means of recording attainment reliably at a particular moment in time. However, AQA agrees with all others who commented (BA, CLIE, NATE, TBF) that, at present, there is over-assessment, particularly at GCSE, within and across subjects. Meanwhile, assessment tasks are narrow and have a constricting backwash effect.

Forms of continuous assessment which could contribute to qualifications were canvassed in the majority of submissions. These included teacher-assessed coursework, externally marked projects and assessments, modular assessments, performance-based assessment, learner profiles and portfolios. However, some noted that teacher opinion was divided on the reintroduction of coursework (AQA, BA, CLIE, EA), and any moves to bring qualifications-related assessment more in-house must actively involve and support them (BA, CLIE, NALA, NATE, TBF). ESOL-focussed submissions argued strongly for greater flexibility while also stressing the need for rigorous moderation and standards for teacher-led assessment (NATECLA).

Several submissions pointed to the potential of digital assessment, which could, in principle, allow for greater flexibility of timing and of tasks, and also for the individualisation of assessment, supporting formative as well as summative assessment (ALL, AQA, CLIE, UCFL). This is clearly an area for future research and development.

7.2 In **English at Key Stage 2**, the reading texts and writing criteria for SATs were critiqued by specialists (NATE, UKLA). GCSE English Language was widely criticised for a curriculum which ignores knowledge about language, and 'turning off' potential A Level students in English; A Level English Language was viewed positively. The policy that students who do not achieve a Grade 4 in GCSE English must re-sit the examination was also widely criticised

(BA, CLE, CLiE) as few then achieve a better grade. Instead, varied individual proposals were sketched for alternative English qualifications at 16-19 (AQA, BA, NATE).

7.3 Associations concerned with **EAL and ESOL** argued for greater flexibility in all assessment/qualifications pathways, and greater attention to access arrangements. A review of ESOL qualifications is required to ensure that 16-19 programmes and standards are better focused on the language needed for further/higher study (CLiE, NATECLA, TBF).

7.4 All of the **MFL**-focused Associations draw attention to the historic issue of severe grading at GCSE and A Level (ALL, BA, BC, BGA, L@MFL, UCFL). While efforts to correct this were acknowledged, further work is needed. These associations also argued for alternative MFL qualifications, appropriate for Home, Heritage and Community Languages (HHCLs), for languages in the primary school, and for non-A Level students at 16-19. ALL proposes development of a set of criterion-referenced skills assessments, linked to the CEFR and similar to the former [Asset Languages](#) scheme. These assessments could support primary-secondary transition, and a 'languages for all' strategy in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, among other uses. BA proposes a new one-year 'applied languages' qualification at Level 3, plus vocational languages qualifications for FE.

7.5 Discussion of **accountability at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2** centred mainly on national literacy tests: the Phonics Screening Check (PSC: Year 1), the Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation test (GSP: Year 6), and other Standard Assessment Tests (SATs). The five who commented on the PSC took the view that it did not contribute meaningfully to raising children's attainment in reading, and most proposed it should be scrapped (CLE, CLiE, EA, NATE, UKLA). PSC was seen as particularly problematic for SEND and EAL children. UKLA and NATE also proposed removal of the GSP test, to be replaced (for NATE) by teacher assessment. Revisions were also proposed for the Y6 SATs reading test and writing assessment. Many submissions noted the narrowing of the Year 6 curriculum due to the use of SATs as a school accountability measure (AQA, CLE, CLiE, NALA, NATE, TBF, UCFL), and a few propose alternative approaches which would fully separate the functions of documenting individual children's progress and institutional accountability (CLE, UKLA).

One submission (NATE) criticises the role of Ofsted in promoting narrow accountability in KS1/KS2, though others cite Ofsted as criticising test backwash (BA). Those concerned centrally with the education of EAL learners regret the decline of Ofsted expertise and attention to EAL, and call for the reinstatement of EAL attainment recordkeeping by schools (NALDIC, TBF).

7.6 Accountability at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 for the 11-16 age range hinges largely on GCSE examinations, which are widely criticised for content overload and/or narrow summative assessment methods with negative backwash effects (BA, CLE, NATE, TBF). Institutional accountability is currently operationalised through two measures: the EBacc and Progress 8.

The EBacc promotes the study of traditional academic subjects at GCSE, including English and languages other than English. The role of the EBacc in stabilising the decline in languages is acknowledged by languages-focused groups who generally support its continuation, at least until the end of KS4 (ALL, BA, BGA, CA, UCFL, L@MFL). However, others (AQA, CLE, CLiE, NALA, TGA) argue the EBacc has not achieved its goals of

overcoming disadvantage and promoting success in the selected subjects, while, at the same time, marginalising creative subjects. AQA recommends its discontinuation.

Progress 8 is a value-added measure which aims to evaluate institutions on the learning gains made between Y6 SATs and GCSEs. Seven submissions mention it (AQA, BC, CLE, CLIE, NALA, TGA, NATE); most find it problematic in its present form, rewarding socially advantaged schools and privileging EBacc subjects. (However, AQA recommends reform rather than abolition.)

7.7 Only the Associations concerned with ESOL students commented specifically on **accountability issues for the 16-19 age group**. Students who may be new arrivals with limited English may be offered a restricted curriculum, and/or be entered for inappropriate qualifications (e.g. GCSE English) because of the role of achievement rates in institutional accountability and the related financial incentives/penalties experienced by colleges (CLIE, NATECLA, TBF).

Section 8: Qualification pathways 16-19

47. To what extent does the range of programmes and qualifications on offer at each level meet the needs and aspirations of learners? (a) Level 3 (b) Level 2 (c) Level 1 and entry level
48. Are there particular changes that could be made to the following programmes and qualifications and/or their assessment that would be beneficial to learners: (a) AS/A level qualifications (b) T Level and T Level Foundation Year programmes (c) Other applied or vocational qualifications at level 3 (d) Other applied or vocational qualifications at level 2 and below
49. How can we improve learners' understanding of how the different programmes and qualifications on offer will prepare them for university, employment (including apprenticeships) and/or further technical study?
50. To what extent is there enough scope and flexibility in the system to support learners who may need to change course?
51. Are there additional skills, subjects, or experiences that all learners should develop or study during 16-19 education, regardless of their chosen programmes and qualifications, to support them to be prepared for life and work?

There is a good deal of agreement across submissions that for 16-19 year olds, the range of language qualifications is too narrow, that A Level on its own is not enough, and that the languages should have a place in vocational education. Possible alternatives can be found elsewhere both in current and previous qualification schemes, and a range of new possibilities are suggested, bringing benefits to (and potentially unifying) different types of language learning (MFL, HHCL, Classical, ESOL).

8.1 Of the 19 languages submissions to the curriculum and assessment review, 12 express a clear view on qualification pathways 16-19 (ALL, AQA, BA, BGA, CIOL, CLE, CLIE, NATE, NATECLA, TBF, TCA, UCFL). Among these, there is a clear consensus that **the range of qualifications currently offered at this level is insufficient** and that there is a need for an evidence-led exploration of alternatives that offer young people additional opportunities for skills development across a broad range of languages. Language-learning needs to be more accessible at this stage of education for a broader range of learners on various pathways, providing an alternative to the narrow range of qualifications and options currently represented by A Levels. Across several submissions (BA, UCFL), there is a frustration about

the restriction of languages post-16 to those who have previously studied these subjects at GCSE.

8.2 In outlining possible alternatives, submissions recommend drawing on learning from **previous and existing initiatives**, such as [Asset Languages](#) (ALL) and the [Languages Ladder](#) (BA). Several also cite the model of a broader range of subjects provided by the International Baccalaureate (ALL, CIOL, CLE, NATE) and suggest that responses to the [2024 consultation on Advanced British Standard](#), where there is again relative consensus in the languages community around the broadening of the curriculum at Key Stage 5, may be instructive in this area (ALL, BA). The EPQ ([Extended Project Qualification](#)) is cited in several submissions as an existing opportunity that might be developed further to enhance the focus on languages and intercultural study (AQA, NATE). There is a firm indication that international comparisons would be informative, not least because England is an outlier in terms of the narrowness of its curriculum at Level 3 (ALL, CLE, CLiE). This is noted for instance in relation to relevant vocational courses, such as hospitality and tourism, where the lack of integrated language learning appears to be a significant missed opportunity (ALL). Observations about languages and vocational qualifications (including T-levels) (NATE) are linked to the need for an urgent review of options in Further Education (BA, BGA, UCFL). At the same time, there is criticism of an explicit division between ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’ pathways, and a commitment to high-quality (spoken) language skills for all learners (CIOL).

A number of responses see the development of alternative qualification pathways as a response to the detrimental impact on language uptake post-16 of the decoupling of AS from A2 (ALL, AQA, BA, BGA, TCA), although there is a clear warning against unintended consequences, i.e., alternatives should complement existing A Levels in languages for students not currently studying them and not detract from them (BA).

8.3 Turning to **new possibilities**, one submission (UCFL) suggests that *ab initio* options post-16 would either allow a diversification of skills among those who have studied other languages at GCSE, or encourage those who have not taken a language at Key Stage 4 to re-engage. The development of a broader range of qualifications is seen as an opportunity to bring all languages (including Home, Heritage and Community Languages) under a single umbrella (ALL, BA), an objective linked to the adoption of a criterion-referenced approach (e.g., drawing on CEFR or equivalents) that would ensure comparability and facilitate transition between qualifications (ALL, CLiE, NATECLA).

Proposals relating to alternative qualifications in languages other than English outline a range of possible models, including a one-year option in ‘Applied Languages’ or ‘Using Languages’ (BA). In such proposals, there is a commitment to more varied forms of assessment, including modular structures (BGA, CLE). The diversification of qualifications in Home, Heritage and Community Languages (HHCLs) is seen as a means of raising aspirations in these subjects (CLE). In the area of classical languages, there is again a sense that alternative qualification pathways would improve access (TCA), an objective that might also be served by the adoption of *ab initio* approaches within existing qualifications.

Other submissions focus on EAL and ESOL and make a clear case that academic A Levels are often not appropriate for learners for whom English is an additional or second language (CLiE, TBF). There are warnings against the risk of perpetuating hierarchies of qualifications

(NATECLA), and a suggestion that some existing qualifications – such as [ESOL Skills for Life](#) – merit greater recognition (NATECLA). In this area, there is some consensus that educational institutions and employers need enhanced understanding of the value of ESOL qualifications and a greater appreciation of what each level demonstrates about young people’s English proficiency (NATECLA).

Section 9: Other issues on which we would welcome views

52. How can the curriculum, assessment and wraparound support better enable **transitions** between key stages to ensure continuous learning and support attainment?
53. How could **technology** be used to improve how we deliver the curriculum, assessment and qualifications in England?
54. Do you have any further views on **anything else** associated with the Curriculum and Assessment Review not covered in the questions throughout the call for evidence?

This section reports on general agreement that transitions across Key Stages are very problematic for MFL, and sketches suggestions on how to address them. There also needs to be a more coherent strategy for helping EAL and ESOL students who face challenging transitions on arrival in the UK. Digital technologies offer substantial opportunities as well as risks, and the range of generative AI’s implications for language education have yet to be charted.

9.1 For **MFL**, there is strong agreement that the **transition** from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 is problematic (ALL, BA, CLE, CLiE, UCFL, WoLLoW). Smooth transition requires ‘regular, low-stakes assessment’ (AQA) and resourcing (CLE). Moreover, ‘learners need to experience a sense of progress from one Key Stage to the next, and develop language learning strategies and an awareness of subject relevance’ (CLiE). One solution is to teach general language awareness at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 (WoLLoW), with one submission (BA) suggesting this should be in combination with basic progress in one language, as a core minimum. Another important MFL transition is from KS3-4, where pupils need ‘better teaching and resources’ to encourage them to choose a language (UCFL).

9.2 For **EAL** and **ESOL** students, the main **transition** is their arrival in the UK, when it is important for a school or college to identify what they have already learned in previous schools (CLiE, NATECLA). More generally, ‘there should be a coherent England-wide strategy for supporting ESOL/EAL that guarantees access to ESOL and EAL for young people, allowing learners to progress quickly towards work and further study.’ (NATECLA)

9.3 Most submissions welcomed the opportunities provided by **digital technology**, but the BA response worried about the possibility of exacerbating existing inequalities in digital access. A more positive view was that ‘combining results from assessments with other forms of data (including demographic information and curriculum metadata) and AI has the potential to provide a truly personalised approach to improving learners’ opportunities to progress’ (AQA). Another was that ‘a step change in the educational uses of digital technologies may be coming, with the advent of generative artificial intelligence and its

implications for changed language practices throughout society' (CLE). National exams are moving towards digital format: 'digital exams in GCSEs and A-levels will be a reality [...] by the end of this Parliament' (AQA, with support from NATE).

For MFL, the main reservation about technology was that social relations are important in language learning and teaching (BA, CLE, UCFL). However, plenty of benefits of digital technology were recognised: the possibility of personalised learning and testing, of automatic marking, and of enhanced access to CPD resources for teachers (ALL). A typical view is that 'digital technologies can enhance language teaching and learning and offer potential to support multilingualism in education' (BA). Moreover, technology can even enable authentic communication opportunities (ALL, CLiE); for example, video-conferencing increases student motivation (CLiE).

The English submissions said little about technology, but one recognised its unavoidable impact: 'Subject English will inevitably need to reflect major developments in technology such as AI, learning media such as YouTube and personal devices such as smartphones' (NATE).

9.4 Under 'anything else', one submission argued that in view of the scale of the crisis in MFL, 'the UK's languages capability requires government intervention' (BC), and indeed, a call for **educational policy change** permeates almost all of the submissions reviewed in this overview.

DIGEST INDEX

BSL: 3.7

Creativity: 2.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 6.4

Digital media: 2.1, 3.7, 4.1, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.4

EAL: 2.5, 2.7, 3.5, 3.7, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 7.3, 7.5, 8.3, 9.2

EAL assessment: 2.5, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 7.3, 7.5, 8.3, 9.2

English: 2.3, 2.5, 3.2, 3.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 7.2, 7.5, 8.1, 8.2, 9.3

English assessment: 2.3, 4.6, 7.2, 7.5, 7.7, 9.3

ESOL: 2.5, 2.7, 3.2, 3.5, 3.7, 4.4, 5.3, 5.5, 6.3, 6.4, 7.1, 7.3, 7.7, 8.3, 9.2

ESOL assessment: 2.5, 3.4, 4.4, 5.3, 7.3, 7.7, 8.3, 9.2

Knowledge about language/language awareness (including grammar & phonics): 2.3, 2.7, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 7.5

Home, Heritage & Community Languages (HHCLs): 2.7, 3.3, 3.4, 3.7, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 6.2, 6.3, 8.3

HHCL assessment: 3.3, 3.4, 7.4, 8.3

Latin & classical studies: 2.7, 4.5, 5.4, 6.2, 6.3, 8.3

Latin & classic studies assessment: 4.5, 8.3

Language across the curriculum/Cross-curricular links: 4.3, 5.1, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 8.2

Linguistic diversity & multilingualism: 2.7, 3.3, 3.7, 4.4, 4.5, 5.4, 6.1, 6.4,

Literacy: 2.6, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7, 4.1, 4.3, 4.6, 5.1, 6.1, 7.2, 7.5

Literacy assessment: 4.6, 7.2, 7.5

Modern languages (also MFL): 2.2, 2.6, 2.7, 3.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 7.4, 7.6, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 9.1, 9.3

Modern languages assessment 2.2, 2.5, 6.2, 7.1, 7.4, 7.6, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1, 9.3

Multimodal communication: 4.1, 5.1, 6.1

Oracy: 2.3, 3.3, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.3, 9.3

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND): 3.1, 3.5, 4.2, 4.4, 4.6, 7.5

SEND assessment: 3.5, 7.5

Teacher training: 3.6, 5.4, 6.2, 9.4

Transitions and continuity: 2.2, 5.1, 5.5, 7.4, 8.3, 9.1, 9.2