

Sixth form education: priorities for 2021

Priority 1: No student left behind by Covid

- Covid has had a hugely negative impact on qualification delivery and the wider student experience. Young people have lost out on learning, but have also not been able to engage in extra curricular activities or spend time with their peer group, and many have found their mental and physical health has suffered as a result. The impact on economically disadvantaged students has been particularly stark. While the government has made both core and targeted funding available to 5 to 16 schools to aid Covid recovery, 16 to 18 education has received no core funding and a smaller amount of targeted funding. What's more, this funding is targeted exclusively at students with low prior attainment in GCSE English and maths and can only be spent on small group tuition.
- The need for catch up and recovery support extends far beyond students that did not perform well in two of their GCSEs, so we are urging the government to introduce more flexibility in how Covid support funding for 16 to 18 year olds can be spent. Our members have been [very clear](#) that Covid-recovery interventions that take place during the core college day (e.g. via funding for increased teaching or support) will have a much greater impact than bolt on activities like summer schools. The government must get investment levels right, but also give college and school leaders the flexibility to tailor interventions to meet the needs of individual students.

Priority 2: Protect Applied General Qualifications (e.g. BTECs)

- The government is committed to introducing a binary system of T levels and A levels where the vast majority of young people pursue one of these qualifications at the age of 16. However, we believe that the newly-reformed AGQs (BTECs being the best known brand) also have a vital role to play in the future qualifications landscape. Some young people will require a different pathway to that offered by T levels or A levels, and AGQs make an enormous contribution to both social mobility and economic growth. The government's second stage [consultation](#) on the future of AGQs closed in January. Our [campaign page](#) includes the SFCA response and other supporting materials.
- We believe the government's plan to defund the majority of AGQs will leave many students without a viable pathway at the age of 16 and will hamper progress to higher education or skilled employment. Defunding AGQs to increase the take up of T levels would be disastrous for social mobility and economic productivity. We are urging the government to guarantee that AGQs such as BTEC will still be available to students in the future. In our view, funding should not be removed for any applied general qualification unless an impartial, evidence-based assessment has concluded that it is not valued by students or employers.

Priority 3: Raise the Rate of funding for sixth form students to at least £4,760 per year

- The national funding rate for 16 to 18 year olds is insufficient and it must be raised to at least £4,760 per year, increasing annually in line with inflation This was the first recommendation in the education select committee's [report](#) on school and college funding and is the main aim of the [Raise the Rate](#) campaign. Focusing on core funding is essential - micro interventions aimed at particular subjects or qualifications will continue to have a micro impact.
- In the September 2019 spending round, the government announced that it would raise the rate for 16 and 17 year olds to £4,188 per year - a welcome step in the right direction after a decade of underinvestment. However, this was a one year deal (confirmed for a further year in the September 2020 spending review), in contrast to the three year funding deal for 5 to 16 education. In the longer term, the government should ensure that 16 to 18 year olds receive the same level of investment in their education as younger students.