ACADEMY of SOCIAL SCIENCES

The Academy's response to the UK Government curriculum and assessment review for England 2024

https://consult.education.gov.uk/curriculum-and-assessment-team/curriculum-and-assessment-review-call-for-evidence/

Those highlighted in yellow are the questions that the Academy responded to.

Question	Submitted response
Section 2: General views on curriculum, assessment, and qualifications pathways	
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?	This response, from the Academy of Social Sciences, is based on evidence collated from the social science community including Academy Fellows who are education researchers at HEIs, learned societies in the social sciences and from a small number of people working in school education. The social sciences include the study of education and thus most education research in universities falls in this sector too. We are responding as a national academy, from the perspective of our expert field, the social sciences. The social science sector is well represented in the current school curriculum and pathways, but unfortunately not labelled as such. It includes geography as the 'core' social science discipline from 5-14 and an option at 14-19; and optional choices of business and accounting (14-19), economics (16-19), government and politics (16-19); sociology (14-19); law (16-19); and the social aspects of psychology (14-19). There is strong evidence that the current pathways for study of the social sciences – at GCSE and A Level and in the more vocational pathways - deliver for young people in enabling them to continue into employment directly from school or to progress to university to study a subject of their choice in the social sciences and thereafter into graduate employment. **This review should continue to support those current pathways including a core anchor social science throughout the curriculum (geography) which provides an essential introduction for**

	pupils to understanding people, communities, society, economy, and human / environment interactions for those aged 5-14. This is fundamental to their role as informed citizens of the future and it opens a pathway to wider social science choices beyond 14 and especially at 16-19, and to excellent career prospects. 47% of UK students graduate from university with a social science degree, and the system needs to ensure that students can continue to follow the subject pathway that most appeals to them and which has also been shown to deliver graduate jobs and good career prospects, and earnings broadly comparable with those of STEM graduates (as referenced in Institute of Fiscal Studies report 'The impact of undergraduate degrees on lifetime earnings'[1] and the Academy of Social Science's report 'Positive Prospects'[2]). Key to this is retaining the current parity of esteem across subjects and disciplines and continuing to enable a social science pathway right through the school curriculum and a good choice of options in social science subjects, at GCSE and A Level (or equivalent stages) and for those seeking a vocational pathway. Despite some shortcomings, the existing A-Level system (as an academic pathway) offers academic rigour, develops critical thinking, a facility with numbers and data, and a wide range of other skills, and provides an ability to focus on subjects that meet the needs and strengths of individual students and those of HE and employers. It also offers a balance of knowledge coupled with the embedding of skills such as research and enquiry skills, critical thinking skills, sustainability awareness and competencies, analytical skills, numeracy and statistical skills, writing skills, literacy skills, problem solving skills, team working competencies and basic project skills; these skills must be retained across all key stages and must be accessible to all pupils. We would recommend the review panel read 'Curriculum in a Changing World' (2024) ISBN 1805144820 which is a collection of 50 think pieces showcasing perspectives on curriculum theory and practice, presented by the British Educational Research Association (BERA), in conjunction with the British Curriculum Forum (BCF). It explores historical and contemporary approaches to curriculum design, highlighting the evolution from knowledge-focused curricula to competency-based frameworks. We would like to reinforce the need for a curriculum that combines the teaching of both knowledge and skills together,

	which the social sciences offer through embedding skills in subjects without swinging excessively between either knowledge or skills. In addition to the traditional A level route, the social sciences also offer specialist vocational training through T levels, HTQs and Level 3 apprenticeships pathways. These offer an important (and financially supported) pathway option with multiple routes to success, enabling a progression in education post-16 and meeting the employment needs of those who seek vocational routes and do not wish to or are unable to pursue university. They help provide training in some areas of identified UK skills shortage, such as social care, and also widen the offer to young people, including those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The social sciences are also well placed to offer experiential learning reaching all students, and with subjects such as geography enabling learning outside the classroom from primary level through the A level. The importance of such learning is highlighted Experiential Learning for Children Aged 4-14: A Rapid Evidence Assessment by Ranken et al (2024[3]). It is essential that out of classroom learning and other forms of experiential learning remain embedded within the curriculum and accessible to all pupils. Evidence cited: British Educational Research Association (BERA) 'Curriculum in a Changing World: 50 think pieces on education, policy, practice, innovation & inclusion (2024) ISBN 1805144820 https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/curriculum-in-a-changing-world Britton et al (2020) 'The impact of undergraduate degrees on lifetime earnings' Institute of Fiscal Studies and Department of Education https://ifs.org.uk/publications/impact-undergraduate-degrees-lifetime-earnings Positive Prospects: Careers for social science graduates and why number and data skills matter (2018) published by the Campaign for Social Science https://acss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Positive-Prospects-report-Medium-Size.pdf

	Ranken, E., Wyse, D., Manyukhina, Y. and Bradbury, A., 2024. The effect of experiential learning on academic achievement of children aged 4–14: A rapid evidence assessment. The Curriculum Journal. https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10173743/1/Experiential%20Learning%20REA%20Ranken.pdf
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?	**In order to give the greatest opportunities for social mobility, students should be able to take both academic and vocational pathways within the social sciences and to take combinations from clearly defined sectors (social science, science, arts and humanities). This will offer multiple routes to success.** A 2024 report commissioned by the British Academy and published by National Foundation for Educational Research has shown students are increasingly narrowing the range of subjects they are taking at AS/A-level, especially since decoupling of the AS and A level occurred. Increasing proportions of students are electing to only study subjects that sit within the same major subject group (sector). We strongly urge the re-instatement of AS levels or equivalents and re-coupling to A Levels. Any school curricula must balance skills and knowledge. We would refer to the review panel to the publication 'What should schools teach?' It is vital that skills are embedded within subjects at all ages, enabling student agency and offering all young people the opportunity to access future-facing skills. Some argue that the current system encourages undesirable practices in terms of student choice within schools. Student involvement (experiential learning) and student agency from an early age is evidenced, for example, by Yana Manyukhina It is essential that pupils leave school as well informed and engaged citizens. Social science pathways offer learning around the knowledge and skills that underpin our nearer future economy, enabling a stronger contribution to economic growth and life as informed citizens. The importance of social sciences knowledge and skills is vital to business as demonstrated in the Academy's Vital Business report.

	Furthermore, helping pupils to recognise the skills they are being taught through cognition-based education helps to ensure better student outcomes. We strongly encourage that this recognition is better and more explicitly developed through teaching in all schools. Students who recognise the value of their skills can then progress into employment understanding what they as individuals can contribute. Social sciences such as geography, economics, government and politics, business and citizenship studies provide students with skills applicable to solving real world issues, as set out in later responses. Evidence cited: The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), 2024. Subject Choice Trends Data Dashboards. *Data on combinations of A-levels with other Level 3 qualifications are available on Dashboard 1 under 'All L3'.* Commissioned by the British Academy. Standish, A and Cuthbert, AS (Eds). (2021) What Should Schools Teach? Disciplines, subjects and the pursuit of truth. Knowledge and the Curriculum. UCL Press: London, UK. Manyukhina, Y (2024) Children, choice and the curriculum UCL IOE Blog https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/2024/06/05/children-choice-and-the-curriculum/ Academy of Social Science and The Campaign for Social Science (2020) Vital Business: The Essential Role of the Social Sciences in the UK Private Sector. Sage https://acss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Vital-Business.pdf
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	We are aware that socio-economic status influences subject choice for post-16 students. Evidence shows that there are links between the choices students make and their eligibility for free school meals as well as geographical location as shown by Thomson, D (2023) in 'The widening gap in attainment at Key Stage 4

participation (class ceilings) for learners experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage?	between London and the rest of the country'. Greater evidence-based research is needed into why these disparities exist and the link between socio-economic status and restricted subject choice. We refer the panel to Farquharson, C., McNally, S., Tahir, I., (2022), 'Education Inequalities', IFS Deaton Review of Inequalities which sets out seven 'guiding principles' for policymakers to support a more equal education system. This matters out of principle and because Post-16 subject choice is critical in affecting subsequent training and career options. Evidence cited: Thomson, D (2023) The widening gap in attainment at Key Stage 4 between London and the rest of the country. https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2023/09/the-widening-gap-in-attainment-at-key-stage-4-between-london-and-the-rest-of-the-country/ Farquharson, C., McNally, S., Tahir, I., (2022), 'Education Inequalities', IFS Deaton Review https://ifs.org.uk/inequality/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Education-inequalities.pdf
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 characteristics (e.g. disability, sexual orientation, gender, race, religion or belief etc.)	No response submitted
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 SEND?	No response submitted
Section 4: Ensuring an excellent foundation in maths and English	
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? [e.g.	No response submitted

socioeconomically disadvantaged young people, pupils with SEND, pupils who are otherwise vulnerable, and young people with protected characteristics] Enablers	
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? [Please note, we invite views specifically on transitions between key stages in section 9.]	a) English The importance of oracy skills and the links to higher pupil attainment is shown in the Education Endowment Foundation report (2021) which states '*evidence to suggest that pupils from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be behind their more advantaged counterparts in developing early language and speech skills, which may affect their school experience and learning later in their school lives.'* Some research suggests that an improvement in the teaching of literacy, which is fundamental to all subjects in primary education, secondary education and beyond, is needed. Specifically, there are some deficiencies in the approach to teaching reading in the 2014 national curriculum (Wyse & Bradbury, 2022) and, based on new theory and analyses of existing research evidence, there are recommendations for improved policy and practice in literacy teaching including updated requirements on the teaching of writing (Wyse & Hacking 2024; Wyse & Hacking 2024; Wyse et al 2022) which we signpost the review panel to. Evidence cited: Education Endowment Foundation (2021) Oral language interventions. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/oral-language-interventions Wyse, D., & Bradbury, A. (2022). Reading Wars or Reading Reconciliation?: a critical examination of robust research evidence, curriculum policy, and teachers' practices for teaching phonics and reading. *Review of Education*, *10*(1), 1-53. https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3314 Wyse, D., & Hacking, C. (2024). *The Balancing Act: An Evidence-Based Approach to Teaching Phonics, Reading and Writing.* Routledge.

	Wyse, D., & Hacking, C. (2024). Decoding, reading and writing: the Double Helix theory of teaching. *Literacy*. https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12367 Wyse, D., Aarts, B., Anders, J., de Gennaro, A., Dockrell, J., Manyukhina, Y., Sing, S., & Torgerson, C. (2022). *Grammar and Writing in England's National Curriculum. A Randomised Controlled Trial and Implementation and Process Evaluation of Englicious.* https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10144257/
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? *These include SATs at the end of key stage 2, the phonics screening check and the multiplication tables check.	No response submitted
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?	It is important to recognise that English and maths skills are not only taught through those subjects, but that their learning is reinforced, and given applied meaning and real-world relevance, through the curricula and teaching of other subjects. In the last curriculum review, the data and numeracy skills requirements in several social science subjects, most notably in geography, were significantly increased. More generally, data, analytical and written skills are already well embedded across KS3 and 4 social science subjects. Currently missing from the curriculum is the teaching of financial literacy, which is vital for young people whether pursuing employment or further education post-19. One option, among several possibilities, is for this to be taught through maths. The recent Lords report by Clare Brader (2024) and the ongoing follow up inquiry focuses on the importance of young people being taught about money, where financial education should sit within the curriculum, and whether the provision of financial education should be extended to primary schools and post-16 education https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/financial-education-in-schools/

	Moreover, early access to understanding financial literacy may also be important as illustrated in the APPG Inquiry report on financial education for young people, and recommends it is taught through PSHE as early as primary level https://www.young-enterprise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Inquiry-on-primary-school-aged-financial-education-Report.pdf Financial literacy is often taught via PSHE, making use of external resources such as Money and Pensions Service MaPS 'Talk money week toolkit for schools for KS3 and up. The challenge is for schools to allocate sufficient time to PSHE and for it to be recognised as important. If financial literacy was part of the curriculum (e.g. in maths) it would ensure all students have access to it. The social sciences offer an alternative or reinforcing vehicle for delivery of financial literacy within real world contexts. Aspects of it are already often taught within economics and business studies, making it relevant and engaging. However, access and uptake will depend on student course choice in this case. https://www.young-enterprise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Inquiry-on-primary-school-aged-financial-education-Report.pdf Evidence cited Brader, C (2024) Financial education in schools. House of Lords Library. https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/financial-education-in-schools/ All Parliamentary Working Group Inquiry on financial education for young people (2021) https://www.young-enterprise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Inquiry-on-primary-school-aged-financial-education-Report.pdf Money and Pensions Service MaPS 'Talk money week toolkit for schools https://maps.org.uk/en/our-work/talk-money-week#Download-the-Toolkit-for-Schools
19. To what extent do the current maths and English qualifications at a) pre-16 and b) 16-19 support	No response submitted

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)?	No response submitted
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?	No response submitted
Section 5: Curriculum and qualification 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)? Please provide detail on specific key stages where appropriate. *This includes both qualifications where the government sets content nationally, and anywhere the content is currently set by awarding organisations.	No response submitted
23. Are there particular changes that could be made to ensure the curriculum (including qualification	No response submitted

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?	No response submitted
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?	No response submitted
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?	The rich combination of quantitative and qualitative skills and knowledge developed in the academic study of social sciences at school currently support students' future life, study and work in substantive ways. They provide a strong foundation for a wide range of further study and career opportunities and concern issues of fundamental concern and importance for future citizens. They are valued by employers as reported in the Academy of Social Sciences's Positive Prospects report. Much of that development through social sciences occurs in the 14-19 phases, and especially currently at 16-19. In 2021/22, 63 per cent of AS/A-level students took a social science subject. Social science subjects embed the learning of transferable and subject-specific skills and embed them through real world examples relevant to students' lives and experiences. Transferable skills include: • Research and enquiry skills • Critical thinking skills • Data, numeracy and statistical skills • Communication skills – orally and in writing • Problem solving skills • Basic project skills • Diversity awareness competencies • Sustainability awareness and competencies • Team working competencies

	Subject-specific skills include political and media literacy, business skills, financial literacy, computer mapping skills and many others. In terms of knowledge, the social science subjects collectively embed an understanding of people, community, society, economy and business, government and politics, places, and human environment interactions in our changing contemporary world, both locally and in a global context. In short, social science subjects are at the heart of developing and enhancing knowledge and skills in key areas essential to the UKs future (Skills and Post-16 Education Act, 2022). These include stronger employment and economic growth, a culture of lifelong learning, and a greater civic role in communities. They also help meet employers demands for better numeracy skills among school leavers as reported in the Academy's Positive Prospects report. Students need to have the ability to reason using numbers. The British Academy report makes a compelling case for these skills - Count Us In | The British Academy '*The ability to understand and interpret data is an essential feature of life in the 21st century: vital for the economy, for our society and for us as individuals. The ubiquity of statistics makes it vital that citizens, scientists and policy makers are fluent with numbers. Data analysis is revolutionising both how we see the world and how we interact with it.'* The report showed '*A number of subjects at school provide a rich context for the development of quantitative skills in schools – and not just in subjects which are formally labelled as mathematics or science, which can wrongly be seen as the only place to teach statistical and numerical understanding. Learned societies and subject associations have an important role to play here to enable the development of quantitative skills to be embedded within subject-based learning, thus demonstrating both application and relevance.'* And that in social science subjects such as geography, for example, *'the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) have sought to influence critical points in the education system to enable a generation shift in confidence and competence with quantitative skills: through engaging the Department for Education on curriculum reform and progression, advising Awarding Bodies on specification development, supporting teachers with professional development and also though engaging students (citation 20 in the report)'* Teaching data skills

	through subjects such as geography has required upskilling of teachers and work such as the Royal Geographical Society's Data Skills in Geography - RGS aimed to enhance and support teachers and students in their: • understanding of data skills; • confidence in their use and application, including integration of the skills into schemes of work; and • knowledge of their value to further study and employment. **It is essential that this review recognises the value that social sciences knowledge and skills bring at school level, and that the social science root subject at 5-14 (geography) and social science pathways options (14-19) all remain accessible to all students to ensure the pipeline of skills into future employment and the wider social and societal benefits that accrue from studying these subjects. A core social science (geography) must continue to be taught as part of a core curriculum 5-14, thus preparing the ground for subsequent social science pathways.** **What could be changed to better support this:** 1. The sustaining of specialist teaching capacity in the social sciences is an essential support; as is the use of appropriate timetabling that does not force students to confine their choices to within one sector (eg just sciences or just social sciences); 2. The provision of a broad choice of social science subjects at GCSE and A level in all schools, including those in deprived areas, and reinstatement of greater choice equivalent to an optional AS level that that sits alongside selected A levels, in order to broaden the curriculum and encourage students to take options from other 'curriculum sectors'. 3. The updating of curricula in relevant existing subjects to additionally encompass emerging new skills needs of the future, most notably green skills*, financial literacy skills, AI skills, and an extension of critical thinking skills to evaluate information reliability on the internet and social media. 4. Foster an increase in uptake of EPQs. The uptake in EPQs has increased from 0.7% in 2007/8 to 13% in 2013/14 demonstrating the desire for critical thinking skills and the role it plays in preparing students for HE as Gill (2024) found that students taking an EPQ were more likely to progress

	to HE (88.5% within the next 3 years) than those not taking the qualification (66.8%). The 2023 report by Cambridge Assessment showed students taking EPQ were more likely to be female, to attend independent or selective schools, to be high attainers, have low levels of deprivation, speak English as a first language, and attend a girl's school. There is an argument therefore to say that more able pupils from disadvantaged areas and backgrounds should be supported and encouraged through support in their schools to stretch to an EPQ. 5. Much better provision of, and access to, high quality, contemporary careers advice. This is an area in which significant improvements can be made and should be made for all schools and especially for those in deprived areas / with a significant proportion of students from deprived or lower socio-economic backgrounds. The report 'Transition to Ambition' (2021) by Policy Connect's cross-party Skills Commission concluded that it is crucial that England's careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) system works efficiently so that as many people as possible can be properly supported with their transitions into further study and employment. The CIAG delivered to young people and adults inside and outside education is vital to tackle England's persistent skills gaps and workforce shortages. 6. Address the ongoing digital divide to ensure all pupils have access to appropriate equipment in school and to technological skills development. The gap, which was widened during the pandemic, needs narrowing and embedding IT skills into the curriculum through existing subjects can yield better outcomes than the teaching of IT skills in standalone subjects. As access to technology increases students need to not only be aware of disinformation but need to also develop the skills to critically evaluate online resources; and social science subjects are well placed to embed this into the curriculum. *The need to develop Green skills in the curriculum is recognised in the recent Skills England report 'Driving growth and widening opportunities': '*Developing a skilled nature workforce will include ensuring we have skilled workers in environmental education, data collection and analysis, planning activities, environmental conservation, and species-specific action' and 'Cross-sector*

	relevance and transferable nature of green skills' alongside the need to recognise a growing area within clean energy jobs. The need to develop a critical awareness of sustainability issues nationally and globally is also vitally important to citizens of the future. Geography at GSCE and A level teaches about climate change and sustainability, including the values and attitudes. However, it is vital that these competencies and skills are taught from KS3 in the curriculum pathway. There is a need to further develop learning around the sustainability agenda, particularly with regard to social justice and climate change action. Students are increasingly aware of the importance of civic and global citizenship and the social sciences offer the ability to teach this within existing subjects, without adding more to an already overcrowded curriculum. Evidence cited: Positive Prospects: Careers for social science graduates and why number and data skills matter (2018) published by the Campaign for Social Science https://acss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Positive-Prospects-report-Medium-Size.pdf The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), 2024. Subject Choice Trends Data Dashboards. *Data on combinations of A-levels with other Level 3 qualifications are available on Dashboard 1 under 'All L3'.* Commissioned by the British Academy. The British Academy (2015) Count us in: quantitative skills for a new generation. https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/220/Count-Us-In.pdf Royal Geographical Society's Data Skills in Geography https://www.rgs.org/schools/projects-and-partnerships/data-skills-in-geography Gill,T (2016) Uptake and results in the Extended Project Qualification 2008-2015. Cambridge Assessment. https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/306859-uptake-and-results-in-the-extended-project-qualification-2008-2015.pdf

	Gill, T. (2024). The extended project qualification in England: does it provide good preparation for higher education? *Oxford Review of Education*, 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2024.2325966 Policy Connect's cross-party Skills Commission is pleased to present its latest report, Transition to Ambition: Navigating the careers maze https://www.policyconnect.org.uk/research/transition-ambition-navigating-careers-maze Department for Education (2024) Skills England: Driving growth and widening opportunities https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66ffd4fce84ae1fd8592ee37/Skills_England_Report.pdf
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?	The rich combination of quantitative and qualitative skills and knowledge developed in the academic study of social sciences at school currently support students' future life, study and work in substantive ways. They provide a strong foundation for a wide range of further study and career opportunities and concern issues of fundamental concern and importance for future citizens. They are valued by employers as reported in the Academy's Positive Prospects and Vital Business reports. Much of that development through social sciences occurs in the 14-19 phases. In 2021/22, 63 per cent of AS/A-level students took a social science subject. Social science subjects embed the learning of transferable and subject-specific skills and embed them through real world examples relevant to students' lives and experiences. Transferable skills include: • Research and enquiry skills • Critical thinking skills • Data, numeracy and statistical skills • Communication skills – orally and in writing • Problem solving skills • Basic project skills • Diversity awareness competencies • Sustainability awareness and competencies

	• Team working competencies Subject-specific skills include political and media literacy, business skills, financial literacy, computer mapping skills and many others. In terms of knowledge, the social science subjects collectively embed an understanding of people, community, society, economy and business, government and politics, places, and human environment interactions in our changing contemporary world, both locally and in a global context. **In short, social science subjects are at the heart of developing and enhancing knowledge and skills in key areas essential to the UKs future (Skills and Post-16 Education Act, 2022). These include meeting the needs of the Industrial Strategy (stronger employment and economic growth), a culture of lifelong learning, and a greater civic role in communities. They also help meet employers demands for better numeracy skills among school leavers** as referenced in The Academy's Positive Prospects report and in the two reports below concerning geography specifically: Embedding statistics at A Level Harris, R 2018, 'From data to knowledge: teaching data skills in geography', Geography, 1 (1). https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/142257813/data_skills2.pdf Harris, RJ, Tate, N, Souch, C, Singleton, A, Orford, S, Keylock, C, Jarvis, C & Brunsdon, C 2014, 'Geographers Count: A Report on Quantitative Methods in Geography', Enhancing Learning in the Social Sciences, 6 (2), 43 – 58. https://doi.org/10.11120/elss.2014.00035 A report by the British Academy's Skills programme has shown through its report 'Qualified for the future' *that 'graduates who study arts, humanities and social science disciplines are highly employable across a range of sectors and roles. They have skills employers value – communication, collaboration, research and analysis, independence, creativity and adaptability – and are able to build flexible careers which may move across a number of areas of employment while remaining resilient to economic downturns. They are employed in sectors which underpin the UK economy and are among the fastest growing – financial, legal and professional services, information and communication, and the creative*

	industries – as well as in socially valuable roles in public administration and education.' It is therefore vital that subjects such as geography, economics, law and accounting are recognised as having the ability to embed these skills within their curricula.' **It is essential that this review recognises the value that social sciences knowledge and skills bring at school level, and that the social science root subject at 5-14 (geography) and social science pathways options (14-19) all remain accessible to all students to ensure the pipeline of skills into future employment and the wider social and societal benefits that accrue from studying them. A core social science (geography) must continue to be taught as part of a core curriculum 5-14, thus preparing the ground for subsequent social science pathways.** **What could be changed to better support this:** 1. The sustaining of specialist teaching capacity in the social sciences is an essential support; as is the use of appropriate timetabling that does not force students to confine their choices to within one sector (eg just sciences or just social sciences); 2. The provision of a broad choice of social science subjects at GCSE and A level in all schools, including those in deprived areas, and reinstatement of greater choice equivalent to an optional AS level that that sits alongside selected A levels, in order to broaden the curriculum and encourage students to take options from other 'curriculum sectors'. 3. The updating of curricula in relevant existing subjects to additionally encompass emerging new skills needs of the future, most notably green skills*, financial literacy skills, AI skills, and an extension of critical thinking skills to evaluate information reliability on the internet and social media. 4. Foster an increase in uptake of EPQs. The uptake in EPQs has increased from 0.7% in 2007/8 to 13% in 2013/14 demonstrating the desire for critical thinking skills and the role it plays in preparing students for HE as Gill (2024) found that students taking an EPQ were more likely to progress to HE (88.5% within the next 3 years) than those not taking the qualification (66.8%). The 2023 report by Cambridge Assessment showed students taking EPQ were more likely to be female, to attend independent

	or selective schools, to be high attainers, have low levels of deprivation, speak English as a first language, and attend a girl's school. There is an argument therefore to say that more able pupils from disadvantaged areas and backgrounds should be supported and encouraged through support in their schools to stretch to an EPQ. 5. Much better provision of, and access to, high quality, contemporary careers advice. This is an area in which significant improvements can be made and should be made for all schools and especially for those in deprived areas / with a significant proportion of students from deprived or lower socio-economic backgrounds. The report 'Transition to Ambition' (2021) by Policy Connect's cross-party Skills Commission concluded that it is crucial that England's careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) system works efficiently so that as many people as possible can be properly supported with their transitions into further study and employment. The CIAG delivered to young people and adults inside and outside education is vital to tackle England's persistent skills gaps and workforce shortages. 6. The further embedding of data skills for 16–19-year-olds is essential for progression into either higher education or employment. Programmes such as the Q-Step | Study Social Science | Nuffield Foundation showed that students taught quantitative skills modules during their social science degrees have better earning potential than students on similar courses as referenced in Evaluation of the Q-Step programme - Nuffield Foundation. Alongside this the Royal Statistical Society and Advisory Committee on Maths Education provided a series of recommendations around embedding statistics at A level in subjects such as biology, business, chemistry, geography, psychology and sociology '*Assuring the high-quality assessment of statistical skills requires action on several fronts. Without this, it is likely that a laudable goal of assessment reform, that is the embedding of authentic statistical assessment in subjects, will not be fully realised.*[19]' 7. Address the ongoing digital divide to ensure all pupils have access to appropriate equipment in school and to technological skills development. The gap, which was widened during the pandemic, needs narrowing and embedding IT skills into the curriculum through existing subjects can yield

	better outcomes than the teaching of IT skills in standalone subjects. As access to technology increases students need to not only be aware of disinformation but need to also develop the skills to critically evaluate online resources; and social science subjects are well placed to embed this into the curriculum. *The need to develop Green skills in the curriculum is recognised in the recent Skills England report 'Driving growth and widening opportunities': '*Developing a skilled nature workforce will include ensuring we have skilled workers in environmental education, data collection and analysis, planning activities, environmental conservation, and species-specific action' and 'Cross-sector relevance and transferable nature of green skills'* alongside the need to recognise a growing area within clean energy jobs. Geography at GSCE and A level teaches about climate change and sustainability, including the values and attitudes. However, it is vital that these competencies and skills are taught from KS3 in the curriculum pathway. There is a need to further develop learning around the sustainability agenda, particularly with regard to social justice and climate change action. Students are increasingly aware of the importance of civic and global citizenship and the social sciences offer the ability to teach this within existing subjects, without adding more to an already overcrowded curriculum. Apprenticeships are often seen as the skills route to supporting pathways into employment at sub-degree level, however a wide range of skills for employment by those choosing to leave education at 19 are also taught within the FE/academic route for example within A- level business, economics, sociology, accounting, law, and government and politics; all of which remain popular choices by students at A Level and all of which are central to learning the values and attitudes and not just competencies and skills. Evidence cited: Positive Prospects: Careers for social science graduates and why number and data skills matter (2018) published by the Campaign for Social Science https://acss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Positive-Prospects-report-Medium-Size.pdf

	Academy of Social Science and The Campaign for Social Science (2020) Vital Business: The Essential Role of the Social Sciences in the UK Private Sector. Sage https://acss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Vital-Business.pdf The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), 2024. Subject Choice Trends Data Dashboards. *Data on combinations of A-levels with other Level 3 qualifications are available on Dashboard 1 under 'All L3'.* Commissioned by the British Academy. Royal Society (2015) Embedding Statistics at A level. https://royalsociety.org/-/media/policy/Publications/2015/embedding-statistics-at-a-level-07-2015.pdf Harris, R 2018, 'From data to knowledge: teaching data skills in geography', Geography, 1 (1). https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/142257813/data_skills2.pdf Harris, RJ, Tate, N, Souch, C, Singleton, A, Orford, S, Keylock, C, Jarvis, C & Brunsdon, C 2014, 'Geographers Count: A Report on Quantitative Methods in Geography', Enhancing Learning in the Social Sciences, 6 (2), 43 – 58. https://doi.org/10.11120/elss.2014.00035 The British Academy, (2020). *Qualified for the Future: Quantifying demand for arts, humanities and social science skills.* Nuffield Foundation (2022) Evaluation of the Q-Step programme https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/publications/q-step-evaluation The British Academy (2015) Count us in: quantitative skills for a new generation. https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/220/Count-Us-In.pdf Policy Connect's cross-party Skills Commission is pleased to present its latest report, Transition to Ambition: Navigating the careers maze

	https://www.policyconnect.org.uk/research/transition-ambition-navigating-careers-maze Department for Education (2024) Skills England: Driving growth and widening opportunities https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66ffd4fce84ae1fd8592ee37/Skills_England_Report.pdf
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?	Some would argue that there is an overemphasis on content knowledge at the expense of a more balanced approach to content, skills, understanding, and dispositions including children's agency, and critical and creative thinking (Wyse, et al. 2024; Manyukhina and Wyse 2019; Wyse and Manyukhina 2024, and Wyse and Manyukhina, forthcoming 2025). There is also a need for a more linguistically coherent representation of the nature of the subject of English in relation to the multiple languages that pupils speak in schools in England (Wyse et al 2024; Wyse, Bradford and Winstanley, 2023). Evidence cited Wyse, D., Bradbury, A., Manyukhina, Y., & Ranken, E. (2024). *Briefing Paper: The Future of Primary Education in England - In the Hands of a New Government.* https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10193078/ Manyukhina, Y., & Wyse, D. (2019). Learner agency and the curriculum: a critical realist perspective. The Curriculum Journal, Vol. 30 (3), p. 223-243. *The Curriculum Journal*, *30*(3), 223-243. Wyse, D., & Manyukhina, Y. (2024). Curriculum Development. In G. Noblit (Ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education.* Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.1860

	Wyse, D., & Manyukhina, Y. (Forthcoming 2025). *Children's Agency and the Curriculum.* Routledge. Wyse, D., Bradford, H., & Winstanley, J.-M. (2023). *Teaching English, Language and Literacy.* (5th ed.). Routledge.
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?	A broad and balanced curriculum must include social science pathways to study at all levels of secondary education, in addition to science and arts/humanities pathways. Currently the social science pathway is largely done through geography at 5-14 years, with a broadening of subject choice at GCSE and further choice again at A Level. Continuing a social science route from 5-14, with a range of GCSE/A level options which includes within them the breadth of knowledge and skills through the understanding of real-world problems, is essential. Geography is currently the anchor subject for the social science pathway, and it is essential that this and other social science subjects remain part of the curriculum pathways in all schools. Evidence shows that social scientists also have good earning potential, akin to that in STEM subjects, as shown in the Academy's Positive Prospects report for recent graduates. Data from the UK Department for Education Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) Dataset for UK-domiciled first-degree graduates from higher education institutions (HEIs) in England show that social science graduates in all broad subject categories also have good earnings growth potential over the course of their careers. Currently there is a broad and balanced offer within the social sciences pathway, and it is essential to keep that pathway accessible to all students from 5-19 years and to retain the current level of subject choice at 14-19. Restricting options at GCSE and A level would risk limiting the choices that students have for future careers, earnings and further study options. The decoupling of AS and A level has subsequently been recognised as being poor political judgement, and there is an argument for the reintroduction of AS levels (or equivalent) to broaden the range of subjects and could enable students to take a subject in another sector which complements their learning and skills development (for example a student who takes 3 science-based A levels, coupled

	with a social science AS level). The Academy strongly supports such a re-introduction and re-coupling. Evidence cited Positive Prospects: Careers for social science graduates and why number and data skills matter (2018) published by the Campaign for Social Science https://acss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Positive-Prospects-report-Medium-Size.pdf
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?	Pupils need to have access to a broad range of options at A level and not be constrained by undesirable practices in schools whereby option blocks and lack of careers advice are driving decisions and narrowing student agency. Again, we refer to the 2024 report commissioned by the British Academy and published by NFER has shown students are increasingly narrowing the range of subjects they are taking at AS/A-level, especially since decoupling of the AS and A level occurred. Increasing proportions of students are electing to only study subjects that sit within the same major subject group (sector). A 2021 UCAS report ("Where Next? What influences the choices school leavers make?) explored subject choice at university, identifying potential barriers. It found that one in five students could not study a degree subject that interested them because they did not have the right A Level subjects to progress. This is apparent for some social science degree courses, some of which require a specific set of pre-requisite qualifications. For example, almost all applicants accepted to economics degree programmes hold either Maths or economics A level, with 60% holding both A Levels. The point that students start thinking about their choice of degree subject varies, with 58% of Medicine students having thought about their preferred degree subject before starting their GCSEs, compared to only 20% of economics students. This mismatch may mean that some students are blocked from studying social sciences at university due to an absence of appropriate guidance.

	We do not want a system where students can unknowingly close the door on their career aspirations, not least on social science subjects which can lead to highly successful careers financially, with flexibility in the labour market and with great societal need. All young people should have an equal access to high-quality, personalised, timely support to navigate their career journey. At each stage, students should be aware of the impact of their choices, and how it may influence their future pathway. As previously responded to in question 26 we would recommend 'Much better provision of, and access to, high quality, contemporary careers advice. This is an area in which significant improvements can be made and should be made for all schools and especially for those in deprived areas / with a significant proportion of students from deprived or lower socio-economic backgrounds. The report 'Transition to Ambition' (2021) by Policy Connect's cross-party Skills Commission concluded that it is crucial that England's careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) system works efficiently so that as many people as possible can be properly supported with their transitions into further study and employment. The CIAG delivered to young people and adults inside and outside education is vital to tackle England's persistent skills gaps and workforce shortages. Evidence cited The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), 2024. Subject Choice Trends Data Dashboards. *Data on combinations of A-levels with other Level 3 qualifications are available on Dashboard 1 under 'All L3'.* Commissioned by the British Academy. UCAS (2021) where next? What influences the choices school leavers make? https://www.ucas.com/file/435551/download?token=VUdIDVFh Policy Connect's cross-party Skills Commission is pleased to present its latest report, Transition to Ambition: Navigating the careers maze https://www.policyconnect.org.uk/research/transition-ambition-navigating-careers-maze

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?	No response submitted
32. Do you have any explanations for the trends outlined in the analysis and/or suggestions to address any that might be of concern?	There is evidence to suggest that students are increasingly narrowing the range of subjects they are taking at AS/A-level, especially since decoupling occurred. Increasing proportions of students are electing to only study subjects that sit within the same major subject group (e.g. all STEM subjects or all social science subjects), which may explain the trends shown in the analysis provided. Take-up of social sciences has been relatively stable over the past 20 years. In 2003/04, 62 per cent of AS/A-level students took a social science subject, compared to 63 per cent in 2021/22. Whilst demographic characteristics are associated with subject choice, there is also variation among related subjects. For example, female students are significantly more likely to study social sciences such as psychology and sociology, whereas male students tend to study social sciences like business studies, economics and geography as referenced in the British Academy commissioned NFER report August 2024 We are of the view that narrowing the subject base choices of students is not in the best interests of a broad and balanced curriculum or of their long-term education or career development. We think A levels offer much but we deeply regret the loss of AS levels as these served to offer breadth and to encourage students to take courses outside of their chosen sector. In addition, schools should be encouraged to make every effort to provide timetabling blocks that enable students to take subject choices across the different sectors. We are signposting the following publication – Schooling Inequality: Aspirations, Opportunities and the Reproduction of Social Class for the panel. One further and important comment, on the curriculum subject trends over time analysis document provided with this review. We find the sectoral classification used in the analysis paper to be confusing and not a good basis on which to differentiate trends or indeed on which to group subjects. There would be much

	value in recognising existing and well-defined sector groupings, to help make better sense of the analyses provided and to help students see synergies between subjects and to explore mixing their choices across sectors. By this we mean a clear classification of pathways and associated analyses into three: science/STEM; social science; and arts and humanities. For example, currently the humanities and the social sciences are muddled up across two different categories thus confusing both sets of comparative data. We would be pleased to provide more on this in a subsequent conversation or meeting. Evidence cited The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), 2024. Subject Choice Trends Data Dashboards. *Data on combinations of A-levels with other Level 3 qualifications are available on Dashboard 1 under 'All L3'.* Commissioned by the British Academy. Abrahams, J (2024) Schooling Inequality Aspirations, Opportunities and the Reproduction of Social Class. Policy Press. https://doi.org/10.51952/9781447360308
33. To what extent and how do pupils benefit from being able to take vocational or applied qualifications in secondary schools alongside more academically focused GCSEs?	No response submitted
34. To what extent does the current pre-16 vocational offer equip pupils with the necessary knowledge and skills and prepare them for further study options, including 16-19 technical pathways and/or A levels? Could the pre-16 vocational offer be improved?	No response submitted
Section 7: Assessment and accountability	
35. Is the volume of statutory assessment at key stage 1 and 2 right for the purposes set out above?	No response submitted

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?	No response submitted
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?	No response submitted
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)?	No response submitted
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?	No response submitted
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?	No response submitted
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?	No response submitted
42. Are there ways in which we could support improvement in pupil progress and outcomes at key stage 3?	No response submitted

43. Are there ways in which we could support pupils who do not meet the expected standard at key stage 2?	No response submitted
44. To what extent, and in what ways, does the accountability system influence curriculum and assessment decisions in schools and colleges?	No response submitted
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?	No response submitted
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?	No response submitted
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	No response submitted
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	No response submitted
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?	No response submitted

50. To what extent is there enough scope and flexibility in the system to support learners who may need to change course?	No response submitted
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?	We agree with the stated need to balance knowledge and skills in the curriculum and the government's central mission 5, breaking down the barriers to opportunity citing '*the need to develop life skills, like communication, teamwork, and digital skills, which are essential for their futures.'* **However, this is not simply an issue of adding additional skills or subjects, but it is an issue of recognising and ensuring teachers and students identify with the skills that are already embedded in, and taught in, existing subjects**. The Academy of Social Sciences would not be supportive of a new standalone subject or module being introduced to teach 'skills' and would refer the panel to the substantive evidence that exists around the benefits of applied skills being embedded and reinforced through the teaching of other subjects at all key stages. As mentioned in response to Q26 it is important to accommodate some new future-facing skills such as green skills, political and media literacy, use of AI and application of critical thinking skills to web-based content. These can all be accommodated or reinforced within existing social science subjects (and some humanities). Financial literacy can be similarly accommodated, but there may also be a case for this being included as a generic skill in PSHE. Social science subjects are at the heart of developing and enhancing knowledge and skills in key areas essential to the UKs future (Skills and Post-16 Education Act, 2022). These include stronger employment and economic growth, a culture of lifelong learning, and a greater civic role in communities. They also help meet employers demands for better numeracy skills among school leavers. Labour Party (2024) 5 Missions for a better Britain. Breaking down the barriers. https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Mission-breaking-down-barriers.pdf
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? wraparound support enabling transitions between key stages	No response submitted
53. How could technology be used to improve how we deliver the curriculum, assessment and qualifications in England?	No response submitted
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? Any further views	We recognise that teacher recruitment and CPD lies outside of this review, but we remain concerned over the well-documented issues of teacher supply and retention, and of the ability to deliver any outcomes of this review in the absence of a full and well-qualified teaching workforce equipped with relevant subject specialist knowledge (both ITT and ongoing CPD). There is a need for upskilling in schools for teachers and leaders to have the ability to deliver the requirement of Climate Action Plans and we would ask the panel to be cognisant of this. Evidence cited The Department for Education's (DfE) sustainability leadership and climate action plans initiative https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sustainability-leadership-and-climate-action-plans-in-education