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Submitted to Curriculum and Assessment Review
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Foreword from the Review Chair

Background to the Review

Why does the Review matter?

What is in scope of the Review?

About this call for evidence

Who is this call for evidence for?

Section 1: About you

1 Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation

Section 1: About you

3 If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, which of the below best describes which part of the sector your organisation represents? [If more than one applies, please select the one that you think is most important to understanding your consultation response.]

Other (please describe)

Please describe:
Overarching national organisation which represents the interests of Modern Languages, Linguistics and Cultural and Area Studies in Higher Education throughout the UK

4 What is the name of your organisation?

Organisation name:
University Council For Languages

5 What is your role within the organisation?

Job role:

I am the Vice-Chair for Languages and Intercultural Education

Section 1: About you

6 What is your name?

Name:
Professor Marcela A. Cazzoli

7 What is your email address?[Please note: If you are willing to be contacted about your submission, please provide your email address. You do not have to give your email address, and your views will be considered whether or not you provide this.]

Email address:
marcela.a.cazzoli@durham.ac.uk

8 Are you happy to be contacted directly about your response?[Please note: The Review may wish to contact you directly about your responses to help our understanding of the issues. If we do, we will use the email address you have given above.]

Yes

9 Would you like us to keep your responses confidential?

No

Reason for confidentiality:

Definitions

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?

What is working well?:

There are clearly aspects of the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways that work well in supporting and recognising educational progress for particular groups of children and young people, as well as among disadvantaged groups. It is clear that where there are stories of success, they have hard working and extremely committed teaching and support staff at their centre. As academics working across the transition from schools to universities, we encounter some of the most committed teaching professionals and have been inspired to support them to make the best of the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, which they do despite the barriers to success those structures produce.
It is clear from the data around educational success in England that, as currently constituted, curricula, assessment and qualifications exclude many pupils who do not see themselves within the subject disciplines and curricula they are being taught. The government's own data on GCSE results attainment for 2022 shows strong disparities in success among different ethnic groups and among those in receipt of free school meals. For instance, data for the school year 2021 to 2022 shows that pupils from specific ethnic backgrounds score lower than average in GCSE assessments, with 'white Gypsy or Roma pupils [having] the lowest average score (21.0) followed by Irish traveller pupils (29.2) and black Caribbean pupils (41.7)' – this is set against average Attainment 8 score for all pupils in England, which was 48.8 out of 90.0. For those pupils in receipt of free school meals, the average score is at 36.9, with 'every ethnic group [having] lower average scores than non-eligible pupils' (GCSE results (Attainment 8). While it is arguable that socio-economic factors outside schools create such disparities, the evidence shows that a distinct lack of inclusive curricula, for instance in the teaching of Black history and culture, creates a not unreasonable impression of systemic racism and exclusion that is built into the educational system in England (https://www.cam.ac.uk/stories/black-british-voices-report). As the Runnymede Trust found in a 2020 report on Race and Racism in in English Secondary Schools, a 'narrow and insular curriculum constitutes a fundamental barrier to a more racially equitable education system.' (Race and Racism in Secondary Schools) The above data also clearly shows how socio-economic and other protected characteristics overlap, suggesting pupils with protected characteristics are likely to be doubly disadvantaged when compared to their White British counterparts.

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?

What should be improved?:

While the current system works for many pupils, there is nothing to suggest that improvements or changes to that system, particularly with a view to improving inclusivity, will detract from existing success. Indeed, it is likely that creating more inclusive curricula and reforming the current assessment system and qualification pathways will be of benefit to all children and young people. This is particularly the case for Humanities and Social Science subjects, such as English Literature, Modern Languages, Geography, Politics and History where a more holistic creative, critical and scientific education can better support pupils to have a rounded, globally aware, and reflexive knowledge and skills for further educational opportunities, the workplace and life in general (see https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/latest/news/creativity-and-critical-thinking-craved , and https://www.salzburgglobal.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Documents/2010-2019/2017/Session_586/EN_SalzburgGlobal_Statement_586_-_Multilingual_World_English
As academics specialising in Modern Languages, Area Studies and Linguistics research and education, we would emphasise the need for a more holistic education offer across subjects that can more explicitly engage disadvantaged groups, such as for instance a History curriculum integrates colonial history into its curriculum and assessment, or a Modern Foreign Languages curriculum focused on the diverse cultures that make up modern Europe, or a Geography curriculum that emphasises the indisputable links between colonialism and climate change.
In terms of targeting improvements, the government should:
1. Work to maintain the breadth of the educational offer at KS4 through to KS5, as this has been shown to equip students with a wider set of skills and enable them to have broader options for work, professional training and further education. This must include subjects such as music, arts, drama and sports, but not at the exclusion of other vital subjects which have suffered as a result of previous shortsighted educational policy such as Modern Foreign Languages. Importantly, a broad educational base, such as that on offer in the EBacc, mitigates the limitations on choice at an early age placing particular burdens on those from socio-economically deprived backgrounds. Indeed, the government's own informational webpage on the English Baccalaureate, cites evidence from UCL Institute of Education and the Sutton Trust that supports such an approach (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-baccalaureate-ebacc/english-baccalaureate-ebacc).
2. Encourage the review of curricula within all existing subjects to empower teachers, who are the experts in their subjects, to design and deliver a creative, culturally oriented education, based upon the principles of inclusion, social justice and anti-racism.
Reform assessment practices to include a wider set of options, for example using coursework at KS4 in particular. This would allow for all students, but particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and with protected characteristics to have a range of assessment options that allow them to play to their relative strengths and abilities. In Modern Foreign Languages specifically, assessment systems could be more flexible, acknowledging the expertise of teachers to shape teaching to their students' needs; examples might include more practical, real-world usage of language, not just exams, to make learning more engaging and culturally relevant (see Transnationalizing Modern Languages: Reframing language education for a global future; Controlled Assessment in Modern Foreign Languages Final report).
4. Consider how establishing a broad-based education can enable pupils to opt for different qualification pathways at the age of 16, such as A or T Levels and apprenticeships. But recognize existing evidence which shows that creative, critical and scientific knowledge and skills are vital to the economy and to encouraging citizens to thrive in work and life (see Transnationalizing Modern Languages: Reframing language education for a global future) .
5. Reflect on how the prevailing emphasis on STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) has influenced perceptions of other disciplines, such as the Humanities and Social Sciences. While the promotion of STEM is undeniably important, it is equally vital to acknowledge the contributions of the arts, humanities, and social sciences in fostering critical thinking, global awareness, and addressing the needs of the UK's service-based economy.

A more balanced approach is essential, particularly in light of the 2017 British Academy report which highlighted that nearly 80% of the UK economy relies on the service sector. Fields such as legal services, accountancy, hospitality, retail, and advertising depend heavily on skills nurtured by Arts, Humanities, and Social Science disciplines. These areas complement STEM in addressing the diverse needs of society and the economy.
6. Provide a more structured and consistent approach to integrating language teaching into primary and secondary education. This can be achieved by re-establishing languages as core subjects and dedicating sufficient time to their instruction (see Milton, 2022). To ensure effectiveness, there should be a minimum of 1-2 hours per week to language learning in primary schools, ensuring consistent exposure and practice, and a well-structured progression from primary to secondary education, allowing students to build on the vocabulary, grammar, and communication skills acquired in earlier years.
7. Provide targeted support and training to primary school teachers to enhance their ability to support educational progress in foreign languages. This should involve equipping them with the necessary tools to deliver motivating and engaging language lessons, making language learning enjoyable for children and helping them build a solid foundation for future learning.

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?

Barriers for socioeconomically disadvantaged:

While challenges exist throughout the curriculum, the socioeconomic gap in language education is particularly concerning. With Modern Foreign Languages facing a steep decline in many UK areas due to limited resources and a shortage of teachers, there is an urgent need for substantial reforms. These changes are essential to overcome barriers that hinder attainment, progress, access, and participation for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. To cite some specific examples:
1. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds often lack access to high-quality language teaching, especially in schools with limited resources or no language departments (see Lanvers, 2017).
2. The decline in language uptake exacerbates this disparity. The closures of university language departments further limit progression opportunities, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds (see Ayres-Bennet, 2024).
3. The materials used for language teaching need to reflect the world that learners inhabit; they need to reflect the multicultural reality of contemporary society and should provide the basis for communication on topics of immediate interest.
4. As Hunt and Holmes-Henderson (2021) have shown in relation to Classics education, whose own crisis in recruitment is often seen alongside Modern Languages, there is most often a lack of access in geographical areas of poverty.
5. The increasing emergence of 'cold spots' to languages provision in England seriously exacerbates the problem of access and participation, particularly since universities train the next generation of languages teachers (see Muradás-Taylor B, Taylor P. 2024).
6. Outdated perceptions that ancient languages are the preserve of the financial and intellectual elite are now increasingly present within Modern Languages, even while this myth has been disproved by Holmes-Henderson's 2023 DfE-commissioned study analysing the impact of ancient languages on the cognitive development of young people with SEND, EAL and FSM, Ancient languages in primary schools in England (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/637f5e708fa8f56eae3e7241/Ancient_languages_in_primary_schools_in_England_-_A_Literature_Review.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.)

Barriers based on protected characteristics:

The current curriculum and assessment systems often lack accommodations for students with disabilities, particularly in language learning, which relies heavily on traditional methods like written exams or listening comprehension. The development of more inclusive materials, such as providing braille resources, subtitled or sign-supported videos, and adapted assessments that focus on different skill sets, allowing these students to fully participate and demonstrate their language skills.
More 'technical' approaches to languages education that have deprioritised more culture-focused teaching are also connected to a lack of attention to race and racism in languages education, and engagement with issues that are deeply relevant to the concerns of pupils today. The "Permission to Speak" series with the educational publisher Pearson is an instructive example of the types of approaches that could be more embedded in the curriculum with a view to expanding representations of target language countries that dominate language learning resources (https://www.pearson.com/en-gb/schools/subject-resources/modern-languages/why-languages-matter/diversity-and-inclusion/permission-to-speak.html; see also Panford, 2021).

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?

Barriers based on SEND:

Currently, language assessments primarily rely on written exams, creating significant barriers for students with SEND. Though specific accommodations like extra time are often provided, these adjustments do not adequately address the limited variety in assessment methods. This lack of diversity in engagement options restricts the potential for a more inclusive, accessible and enjoyable learning experience.
Given the evidence, we would argue that creative ways of teaching languages should be promoted, those that emphasise communication, creativity, and collaboration rather than rote memorization of grammar rules and a limited vocabulary that currently does not allow for sufficient breath for learners to succeed. To echo what we have already said about culture-focused teaching in relation to bringing greater visibility to questions of race and anti-racism in the languages classroom, such an approach can also be used to improve attainment, progress, access and participation for learners with SEND, because learners will be able to see more of themselves within the curriculum.

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. socioeconomically disadvantaged young people, pupils with SEND, pupils who are otherwise vulnerable, and young people with protected characteristics]

Enablers:

There are clear enablers that support attainment, progress, access or participation among pupils with SEND and other protected characteristics. As research suggests, this has to be about pupils being seen in their curricula and having the opportunities to succeed via multiple forms of assessment and qualification pathways. Particularly when it comes to assessment, the evidence shows that a greater balance and diversity of assessment tasks enables greater inclusion for socio-economically disadvantaged young people, and those that fall under the protected characteristics listed above (https://feweek.co.uk/a-one-size-fits-all-approach-to-assessment-undermines-equity-and-diversity/). While alternative arrangements for examination might already be in place for SEND pupils and those with disabilities, the evidence shows that 'inclusive assessment design is increasingly recognised as good educational practice and benefits all students' (https://www.ctl.ox.ac.uk/included-designing-inclusive-assessments)

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? [Please note, we invite views specifically on transitions between key stages in section 9.]

English and maths - primary content:

Learning modern languages can significantly enhance English teaching, particularly in the areas of oracy and communication skills. Engaging with another language encourages students to think more deeply about how language works and creates a greater awareness of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation that can be transferred to their use of English (see Forbes, 2020; Forbes & Morea, 2024). Modern language learning places a strong emphasis on active listening, clear pronunciation, and confident speaking, which directly supports the development of oracy. Moreover, the process of constructing sentences in a foreign language encourages learners to refine their ability to structure ideas logically, an essential communication skill in any language. By learning how to adapt their tone, style, and register in a new language, pupils can also gain insights into effective communication strategies that enrich their English-speaking abilities.

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.

English and maths - primary assessment:

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?

English and maths - secondary content:

A solid foundation in English can support foreign language acquisition and vice versa. We could advocate for a more integrated approach where language learning is part of a broader literacy and oracy strategy, reinforcing the benefits of multilingualism across subjects (on oracy, see the important work of Holmes-Henderson,
https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/news/research-impact-innovation-fellows-research-influencing-uk-education-policy-and-practice/).
Schools already recognising the benefits of multilingualism, and particularly among students with 'home and community' languages, have shown impressive results when charting how bringing greater visibility to and celebrating pupils' multiple languages can improve performance across multiple subjects, including maths and English (see Doležalová and Ford, 2024 ;
https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/policybristol/PolicyBristol-report-35-Sept18-transnationalizing-modern-languages.pdf ;
https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/students-who-self-identify-as-multilingual-perform-better-at-gcse#:~:text=Those%20who%20self%2Didentified%20as,spoke

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?

English and maths - qualifications:

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)?

Support for learners who do not achieve level 2 by 16:

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?

Challenges with curricula and assessment - changes to overcome these:

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.

Subject content:

23 Are there particular changes that could be made to ensure the curriculum (including qualification content) is more diverse and representative of society?

Changes to ensure curriculum 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?

Respect for others:

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?

Primary - skills and knowledge needed for life and further study:

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?

Secondary - skills and knowledge for life and further study:

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?

16-19 - skills and knowledge for life and further 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?

primary - broad and balanced:

In primary education, languages could play a critical role in broadening pupils' cultural understanding, enhancing their cognitive adaptability, and laying the foundation for strong communication skills. However, despite their importance, the time allocated to language learning is often marginalized, particularly during assessment periods like SATs preparation, where core subjects such as English and mathematics take precedence. This pressure can leave little room for consistent and meaningful language instruction, resulting in missed opportunities to develop essential skills. To address these challenges, alternative pathways could be explored, such as introducing pupils to language awareness programs before progressing to the acquisition of a specific language. Language awareness approaches focus on exposing children to the diversity of languages and cultures, helping them develop curiosity and an understanding of how languages function, which can serve as a stepping stone to more formal language learning later on (see Tellier & Roehr-Brackin, 2017).

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?

secondary - broad and balanced:

The curriculum should emphasise the importance of languages alongside other subjects like maths, English, and sciences, particularly at secondary level. Languages should be positioned as a core component of a well-rounded education, essential for developing cognitive skills and cultural competency. All students should study a language until at least GCSE level, with options for vocational language studies for those following technical pathways. We need to promote creative ways of teaching languages that emphasise communication, creativity, and collaboration rather than rote memorisation of grammar rules.
Ancient languages are well-supported at KS2 (National Curriculum) and KS4 (EBacc), but their absence at KS3 disrupts progression and hinders teacher recruitment in secondary schools. Adding ancient languages to the KS3 National Curriculum would provide a straightforward solution.

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?

16-19 - broad and balanced:

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?

support for creative skills and access to creative subjects:

Section 6: A broad and balanced curriculum

32 Do you have any explanations for the trends outlined in the analysis and/or suggestions to address any that might be of concern?

Explanations of trends or suggestions to address:

Section 6: A broad and balanced curriculum

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?

secondary - benefit from vocational qualifications:

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?

vocational offer - equip for further study and improvement suggestions:

There should be opportunities for language learning appropriate to the vocational or occupational path that pupils may chose. Language proficiency is a real-world skill needed across businesses and industries, which not only equip students with practical skills for their chosen careers but also prepare them to thrive in a multicultural professional environment. For example, in the hospitality and tourism sectors, proficiency in foreign languages can enhance customer service, allowing staff to communicate effectively with international visitors. Similarly, in global business environments, the ability to navigate language barriers can foster stronger relationships with clients and partners (see https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/foreign-languages-skills-in-the-workforce/, https://www.thedrum.com/news/2024/09/09/no-non-nein-why-language-barriers-are-still-holding-back-global-business-growth#:~:text=Without%20this%20richer%

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?

volume of assessment at key stage 1 and 2:

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?

key stage 1 and 2 assessment improvements:

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?

key stage 1 and 2 assessment improvements to experience:

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)?

key stage 1 and 2 assessment works for ALL learners:

Section 7: Assessment and accountability

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?

volume of assessment at GCSEs:

In terms of language exams, traditional assessment often focus on reading and writing, but language learning involves much more than just reading and writing. Spoken proficiency and cultural understanding are crucial components that are often overlooked; by incorporating oral presentations, interactive dialogues, and cultural projects, students can demonstrate a broader range of skills. These activities not only assess their ability to use the language in practical situations but also deepen their understanding of the cultural contexts in which the language is used (see Turnbull, 2017) .

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?

GCSE assessments - support development of knowledge and skills and considers wellbeing:

Introducing continuous assessment, including projects, collaborative work, and digital tools that allow students to demonstrate their language knowledge and skills in varied, meaningful contexts. The evidence shows that more diverse forms of assessment are good for supporting every young person's success, as well as offering a range of options for young people who have specific needs (see IncludED: A guide to designing inclusive assessments). The challenge regarding fairness and the risks of conferring unfair advantages based on class and wealth are extremely important here, but these challenges must be addressed given the existing system is already excluding many pupils from opting for languages in the first place, based on class.

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?

changes to GCSE qualification content or assessment:

The existing GCSE language curriculum often prioritises grammar and very narrow vocabulary over practical communication skills. Many students may be able to perform well on written exams, but they lack the confidence to use the language in real-life situations.
Further, research shows that previous reviews and new specifications of the languages curriculum, such as the Ofsted Curriculum Research Review for Languages (2021) and the Subject Content Specification for Languages in England (2022), have been flawed in their failure to engage properly with research and the ways in which they have given mixed and incoherent guidance on effectively constructing a vocabulary curriculum with a limited number of words, based on frequency alone (Milton, 2022).
The existing curriculum does not reflect the way language is used in modern global contexts, especially online and in digital communications. It often covers cultural aspects superficially, focusing on traditional topics such as holidays, food, and festivals, but misses out on broader, contemporary intercultural contexts. The research has put forward alternative suggestions, allowing for a much wider variety of themes and topics that are 'relevant to learners and thus both motivating and useful.' (Milton, 2022)
Finally, the current GCSE qualification places a strong emphasis on grammar accuracy in written exams, which may not be the best measure of a student's overall language ability.

Section 7: Assessment and accountability

42 Are there ways in which we could support improvement in pupil progress and outcomes at key stage 3?

support 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?

support pupils who do not meet expected standard at key stage 2:

Section 7: Assessment and accountability

44 To what extent, and in what ways, does the accountability system influence curriculum and assessment decisions in schools and colleges?

accountability system influence curriculum and assessment decisions:

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?

accountability system support and recognise progress for ALL pupils:

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?

accountability system changes to support SEND or socio-economically disadvantaged:

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 2c) Level 1 and entry level

extent to which programmes and qualifications meet needs and aspirations of learners:

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 qualificationsb) T Level and T Level Foundation Year programmesc) Other applied or vocational qualifications at level 3d) Other applied or vocational qualifications at level 2 and below

changes to programmes and qualifications:

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?

improve understanding on how programmes and qualificatoins will prepare them for future:

50 To what extent is there enough scope and flexibility in the system to support learners who may need to change course?

scope and flexibility to support learners changing 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?

skills, subjects or experiences that all learners should develop or study during 16-19:

Languages and Intercultural Communication is one obvious area of 16-19 provision that is currently only available to those studying languages at GCSE but that could be developed with a view to offering skills-based qualifications within the FE and sixth form sector (see Baker, W. (2015). Such provision is common across international education systems, and often continues into university. It might be argued that, as shifts in the global balance of power occur, it will be wise for UK citizens not only to speak other languages, but to know the world through languages (Pratt, 2003) that is to say to adopt a more humble, respectful approach to the world at a time of intense global challenges and change.

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:

There is a worrying trend of declining student interest in languages post-GCSE. The closure of university language departments creates a vicious cycle, where fewer students study languages, leading to fewer job prospects, and further department closures. This needs to be reversed through reimagining of language pathways. The gaps between Key Stages 3 and 4, where language drop-off rates are high, should be addressed by making languages a more compelling option, supported by better teaching and resources. Re-establishing compulsory languages through to 16 should be seriously considered as an option, and indeed has been found to be a popular option among recent polling (https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/news/new-poll-reveals-overwhelming-uk-public-support-for-compulsory-language-learning-in-schools/).
Many primary schools offer a limited range of languages, often focusing on French or Spanish. However, when students transition to secondary school, they are likely to encounter different language options or a lack of continuity in the language they started learning (see Language Trends 2018)

Section 9: Other issues on which we would welcome views

53 How could technology be used to improve how we deliver the curriculum, assessment and qualifications in England?

how can technology be used to improve delivery of curriculum, assessment and qualifications :

Emphasise the role of technology in making language learning more accessible and engaging. Language apps, online platforms, and virtual exchange programs (see Hauck, 2019) can be used to bridge the gap in language provision, especially in areas where schools have limited resources. However, while technology must play a role in the design of the languages curriculum, online learning platforms or AI machine translation must not be seen as a substitute for language teaching provision.
Technology is already used very successfully in the teaching and assessment of ancient languages. We need to be more ambitious about what we are assessing at a time when technology is making unseen translation less and less important. How might we integrate the groundbreaking work on the digitisation of papyrus scrolls into teaching and assessment? How might students design apps and/or web-based/AI resources to optimise the learning of others? This would combine digital literacy, skills for work AND ancient and modern languages in ways which are much more meaningful for young people's futures than 'identify the verb in the passive voice and explain its form.'

Section 9: Other issues on which we would welcome views

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:

One issue that requires further attention is the severe grading of modern languages at GCSE. Evidence shows that students often achieve lower grades in languages compared to other subjects, even with comparable effort and ability (see Blow, 2023; Thompson, 2016). This creates the perception that languages are disproportionately difficult, discouraging students from continuing their studies, further contributing to the decline in uptake at GCSE and A-level. This issue also exacerbates educational inequality, as disadvantaged students may lack access to additional resources, such as tutoring or immersive experiences, that could help them succeed in languages. Addressing this disparity through more equitable grading practices and realistic assessment standards is essential to ensure that all students are encouraged and supported in pursuing modern languages, which are vital for personal, professional, and cultural development in an increasingly globalized world.