



## **Brief summary of main points of discussion at GCSE roundtables**

### **Think tanks:**

In this session, discussion centred on the need for additional learning and project work. Participants discussed the importance of engaging all students and there was much debate about whether a 'one size fits all' approach was appropriate. There was a good deal of discussion around accountability within the system and the negative effects caused by league tables (such as schools over-focussing on those 'on the borderline'). There was a general consensus that students should have a greater scope for making their own choice [of qualification] and even shaping their own curriculum.

### **Current users of the GCSE (e.g. teaching professionals):**

There was much debate about assessment (as in there is currently too much assessment) and accountability as well as the need for a 'broad, balanced and relevant' curriculum; what it should look like and how prescriptive – or not – it should be. Many recognised the need for some sort of qualification(s) or 'recognition of achievement' at 16 whilst others felt that it was pointless and that a four-year programme of learning would be better. There was a broad agreement that GCSEs cannot be all things to all people and there was a good deal of debate around the need for other routes that delivered "more practical, work-based and different styles of learning".

### **Student and parent organisations:**

This session saw a lot of debate about the purpose of qualifications. Like the 'current user' group, participants recognised the need for more project work and called for a better learning experience within the classroom. They recognised that accountability is driving the system and were keen to point out the high level of expertise that teachers have. There was some interest in the concept of a 14 year old's baseline certificate leading to having vocational qualifications that build confidence and team work, removing key stage tests, extending phase-two learning, and re-structuring schools.

### **'Direct' users of the GCSE (e.g. employer organisations, sixth form colleges):**

Participants broadly agreed that the current system of putting students into groups with other students of the same age can be detrimental to learning. There was some interest in the concept of a 14 year old's baseline certificate which might lead to a graded system similar to music tests and the possibility of a transcript which is a graduation certificate. Many commented on the need for a close link between education and employment, and emphasised the importance of making students fit for the workplace – following widespread from businesses that students are lacking in basic English and maths. There was also a call for more project and cross-subject work during a four year phase-two learning, and a call for Government to gain a 'national understanding' of what education should be about and where it should be going.