

Address for correspondence:

Steven Fawkes

9 Neville Street

Durham City, DH1 4EY

5th. February 2012

Dear Sir,

English Baccalaureate and Asset Languages

On behalf of the Language Alliance I am writing to express our surprise at the decision not to allow Asset Languages qualifications to count towards the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), as they provide equivalence to GCSE in a number of languages for which there is currently no GCSE qualification available.

Asset exams can be taken at different levels and the Intermediate stage is a Level 2 qualification which equates to GCSE. Asset qualifications are considered by experienced professionals in the field to be at least as rigorous as the GCSE, and in some areas possibly more so.

We understand that part of the reason why Asset qualifications were not approved was because the four skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) are separately assessed (and the accreditation is therefore smaller than a full GCSE). However, in our view it could be stipulated that candidates would have to pass all four skills with Asset in order for their qualification to count for the Ebacc.

We are also concerned that Asset Languages qualifications might be at risk of losing their place in the Achievement and Attainment Tables because each skill qualification counts for 25% of the GCSE. Since there is a method for counting Asset qualifications in the current system, it seems unnecessary to make such a change, and given the aim of the government to redress the recent decline in language learning, we feel that such a move would be unhelpful, as it would reduce the potential number of Language candidates.

The Asset Languages accreditation makes an important contribution to the valuing of languages through the wider range of languages it accredits and through its close focus on assessing separate skills, which is motivating for many of our learners. Asset Languages complements the higher profile being given to languages by the current government, through the work of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as well as the Department for Education. We welcome the renewed attention to Languages in Key Stage 4 which the introduction of the EBacc has generated and the reversal of the trend which was reducing the number of language learners. We are aware of the national need to diversify the range of languages in which we are proficient and therefore recommend reconsideration of any decision not to allow Asset Languages qualifications to count for the English Baccalaureate.

For the Language Alliance

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The Language Alliance

.. seeks to bring together interested individuals and groups in education, citizenship, disability, social inclusion, local democracy, international development or world peace who share a common interest in supporting language learning (whether this be foreign languages, world languages, sign language, English, etc.)

The Alliance acts as a broad-based independent Forum, predominantly within England, to:

- share information, views, concerns and ideas, and offer mutual support in times of change
- monitor change alongside the achievements and development of national strategy and policy for languages
- propose action relevant to the aims of the Alliance's constituent groups
- identify and advise policy makers, at all levels, of relevant research and of practical means by which they can strengthen and widen ongoing strategies
- work to bring to the attention of a wider public the importance of language to the development of community understanding and empowerment on a local, national or international level.

Members of the Alliance attend meetings as individuals, but since its inception, the Alliance includes members and visitors from the following organizations, among others:

ALA , ALL

BAAL, Black Country Pathfinder, British Academy , BBC Worldwide, British Council, British Deaf Association.

CILT, CLIE, CUDAH

Department for Education

Friends of Classics

GDST

Institute of Linguists, ISMLA

Japan Foundation

Links into Languages/ Routes into Languages, LSC

Maison du Quebec, MGLT

NALA, NALDIC, NATECLA, NIACE, Nuffield Foundation

OFSTED

SALT

TUC

UCML

Several Universities

Several Embassies

Several Cultural Agencies