

# Consultation on careers guidance for schools, sixth form colleges and further education institutions

## Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 1 August  
2012

Your comments must reach us by that date.



**THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online response facility available on the Department for Education e-consultation website [www.education.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations)**

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

**Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.**

Reason for confidentiality:

Name

Organisation (if applicable) **Society of Biology**

Address: Charles Darwin House  
12 Roger Street  
London  
WC1N 2JU

If you have a query relating to the policy content or consultation process you can contact the DfE National Helpline on: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's '[Contact us](#)' page or by emailing: [CareersGuidance.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:CareersGuidance.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk)

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the Consultation Unit on:

Telephone: 0370 000 2288 e-mail: [consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk)

**Please choose one of the following options to best describe you as a respondent.**

<input type="checkbox"/> 11-18 School	<input type="checkbox"/> 11-16 School	<input type="checkbox"/> Academy
<input type="checkbox"/> Sixth Form College	<input type="checkbox"/> Further Education Institution	<input type="checkbox"/> School Representative Group
<input type="checkbox"/> Sixth Form College Representative Group	<input type="checkbox"/> Further Education Institution Representative Group	<input type="checkbox"/> Careers Representative Group
<input type="checkbox"/> Careers Professional	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Student
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Governor	<input type="checkbox"/> Employer
X Other		

Please Specify:

Other: Professional body.

The Society of Biology is a single unified voice for Biology: advising Government and influencing policy; advancing education and professional development; supporting our members, and engaging and encouraging public interest in the life sciences. The Society represents a diverse membership of over 80,000 - including practising scientists, students and interested non-professionals - as individuals, or through the learned societies and other organisations listed here:

[www.societyofbiology.org/membership/organisational-membership/mo-list](http://www.societyofbiology.org/membership/organisational-membership/mo-list)

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the Society for Experimental Biology; British Ecological Society; British Pharmacological Society; Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry; the Society of Biology's Education, Training and Policy Committee; and the Heads of University Biosciences (HUBS); Steve Howard of Nene Park Academy.

The Society of Biology is pleased for this response to be publicly available.

For any queries, please contact Society of Biology, Charles Darwin House, 12 Roger Street, London, WC1N 2JU. Email:

[education@societyofbiology.org](mailto:education@societyofbiology.org)

**1 Should we extend the new duty on schools to secure independent, impartial careers guidance for their pupils, downwards to Year 8 (age 12-13), from September 2013?**

Yes

No

X Not Sure

Comments:

Young people aged 12-13 (Year 8) may already be making choices on subject combinations which may affect their careers in the long run, even if only a very small cohort will actually have a clear career plan. At this age, it is important for students to get advice and guidance on the choice of subjects they will need to do well in and/or study so as not to rule out options down the line; they may have already lost interest or fallen behind in the subjects they later discover they need to pursue a particular career path. Providing good subject advice and information in Year 8 (and even earlier) may help students retain a commitment to doing well in science and maths, and ensure that potential science students don't make decisions that will harm their future chances.

However, without an accompanying increase in financial support, school's budgets would have to be spread even more thinly if the duty for careers advice was extended to this age group. We recommend that careers funding is concentrated on the 14-18 age group, when students are making decisions on the subjects combinations and whether to continue in education, training or to seek employment, unless further financial support is released to schools and ring fenced for this purpose.

For the 12-13 age group, increasing engagement with science through inspirational teaching, relevant and engaging practical work, enrichment activities and external ambassadors acting as role models may be of more benefit for encouraging students to study science than specifically tailored careers advice. There is evidence<sup>1</sup> that students at Key Stage 3 prefer to receive their advice from 'those in the know' rather than careers materials. External people working in the profession are regarded as particularly 'trusted' sources of information, and can show the diverse and diversifying nature of science and science careers and related opportunities. Engagement with practising scientists could be especially beneficial in terms

<sup>1</sup>An evaluation of the Royal Society of Chemistry Careers Materials, National Foundation for Education Research (2006)

[www.rsc.org/ScienceAndTechnology/Policy/EducationPolicy/CareersEval.asp](http://www.rsc.org/ScienceAndTechnology/Policy/EducationPolicy/CareersEval.asp)

of promoting scientific careers. Increasing opportunities for this type of activity may help to reduce the burden on the school in terms of costs and the need to provide careers guidance expertise across all subject areas. Highlighting the practical applications and relevance of science to our everyday lives, as well as to current jobs, is also important to help young people appreciate the importance of the subject.

In some schools, students are offered early delivery of GCSE subjects and have to make choices affecting their future careers in Year 8 rather than Year 9. This is not a strategy that we support as we feel that Year 9 should be used for wider learning of the subject and developing student engagement and interest. Where a school has chosen to take this route, careers guidance must be included in Year 8 when these decisions are being made as part of this programme. We suggest that schools are able to tailor their advice and guidance to when it is most appropriate, rather than obligated to provide careers for Year 8 students.

**2 Should we extend the new duty to secure independent, impartial careers guidance, upwards to young people aged 16-18 in schools, sixth form colleges and further education institutions, from September 2013?**

**Please Note:** If the consultation supports the extension of the new duty to 16-18 in schools, sixth form colleges and further education institutions, the Government will consider extending to other provision including Work-Based Education and Training. However this is out of scope for this consultation.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

We strongly agree with your statement that '*the decisions that young people make during the 16-18 phase of their education are just as important to them in realising their future potential*'. The 16–18 year old cohort of students should be a high priority for receiving careers advice and guidance as they decide whether to progress to higher or further education, training or employment.

The advice should be targeted to the individual and their interests and skills, and include information on future career prospects as well as education and training opportunities. Again we highlight the role that ambassadors can play in this area, providing exposure to scientific careers and acting as role models. This will widen their understanding and potential interests are opened up for more students. This is particularly crucial as reports show that a high proportion of teachers do not feel confident to give information, advice and guidance – particularly in relation to vocational routes<sup>2</sup>.

However, schools and colleges will have to make difficult funding decisions if provision of careers advice becomes a requirement without the provision of additional funding, potentially cutting other pastoral and enrichment activities such as tutorials or music, theatre, dance and sport in order to fund additional careers guidance. Since the 2011/12 academic year, the budget for these guided learning activities has already been cut by 75% for the 16-19 age group<sup>3</sup>, meaning that resources are already stretched thinly. Additional funding to support the provision of careers guidance at this crucial stage is essential in order to provide the advice and guidance needed to

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6260004>

<sup>3</sup> 16-19 Funding Statement, Young People's Learning Agency (2010)  
<http://www.ypla.gov.uk/aboutus/ourwork/16-19-funding-statement/>

support these students in their decision making.

Decisions students make at this point are life changing and therefore must be made with the maximum of support. Partnership with business is critical for providing information on the opportunities available, but funding for detailed and targeted impartial advice must then be provided to allow appropriate support for the students' in the decision making process.

We are uncertain of the timescales for any potential change to the duty of provision of careers guidance, particularly whether this will be in line with the changes of the compulsory participation age to 17 by 2013 and 18 by 2015. Will the duty for careers advice provision be raised in this step wise manner as well? We would advise that the duty to provide careers advice to 16-18 year olds should be brought in as soon as possible, rather than follow the participation age.

### 3 What issues, if any, would arise for your institution from the requirement to provide access to independent careers guidance?

Comments:

We recognise that there is a role for Learned Societies and Professional Bodies such as the Society of Biology in providing careers advice and guidance for school and college students and beyond. The Society of Biology is part of the [Bioscience Careers Group](#)<sup>4</sup>, made up of nine organisations who provide subject specific information about study and careers in the biosciences for both students and careers advisers.

Many Learned Societies have careers websites and produce [resources](#)<sup>5</sup> with careers advice and guidance on their specific discipline which is accurate and up to date. We provide information such as entry requirements and subject combinations for further study, careers profiles, and suggestions for work experience in a biological setting.

An increased focus for us will be ensuring that both students and careers advisers are aware of and make use of these resources. Currently to publicise these resources to careers advisers we run workshops in partnership with other scientific organisations such as the Institute of Physics and the Royal Society of Chemistry, the Institute of Maths and Engineering UK for secondary school careers advisers at the [National Careers Guidance Show](#)<sup>6</sup>. However, there may be a need to go further and provide subject specific training for careers advisers, for example by running our own Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses to keep advisors up to date with biological careers.

The Society disseminates our careers information and resources to students, through our student and school membership schemes, school newsletters and through the [public events](#)<sup>7</sup> that we attend. We recognise the importance of enthusing and engaging pupils with studying science and scientific careers from an early age, and many of our public engagement activities include informal information on studying science and careers guidance, whilst encouraging enthusiasm for the subject in general. Through this work, we aim to introduce children to the diversity of the subject and to inspire them about careers in the biosciences and how to achieve this.

<sup>4</sup> [www.societyofbiology.org/bioscience-careers-group](http://www.societyofbiology.org/bioscience-careers-group)

<sup>5</sup> [www.societyofbiology.org/education/careers/careersresources](http://www.societyofbiology.org/education/careers/careersresources)

<sup>6</sup> [www.nationalcareerguidanceshow.com](http://www.nationalcareerguidanceshow.com)

<sup>7</sup> [www.societyofbiology.org/education/publicengagement](http://www.societyofbiology.org/education/publicengagement)

Societies such as ours carry out the schemes described above as part of our charitable objectives; all of our resources, advice and guidance are freely available. The main issue for our organisation raised from the requirement for independent careers advice is that of expense in terms of both staff time and resources. If we are called on increasingly to provide resources, training and advice for students and advisers, this will require additional resource.

The administration behind developing new initiatives or expanding existing schemes can be costly and time consuming and not all organisations will be able to do this, potentially leaving some subjects better provided for than others. Care must be taken that resources to facilitate career advice are equally visible and available to all irrespective of school type, geography or subject area.

#### 4 Any other comments?

Comments:

##### **Long term careers advice**

The Education Act 2011 states that the advice and guidance must '*offer information on all 16-18 education or training options, including Apprenticeships*'. We are concerned that by focusing only on the 'next steps' that this may not provide students with enough information to make fully informed decisions. We stress the need to provide information on career options after graduation or qualification, and showing the range of options open to students after studying particular subjects. The provision of information on full progression routes through a variety of educational and business routes and the qualifications and subject study needed for each is vital. Studying science subjects such as Biology, doesn't just provide students with a route into a career as a researcher, but opens up opportunities for a whole range of careers.

The transferable skills gained through studying science include problem solving, critical thinking, and analytical skills which are valued by many businesses outside of science<sup>8</sup>. A [report for the Science Council](#)<sup>9</sup> found that 4.6m people are employed as 'secondary science workers' - workers in occupations that are science related and require a mixed application of scientific knowledge and skills alongside other skill sets. This workforce includes people working in a diverse range of sectors including education, ICT, health and consultancy as the largest fields. Prospects website lists the types of careers that biosciences graduates are working in six months after graduation - '*Of those who entered work, almost 15% went into professional and technical jobs, such as research assistant or lab technician. Approximately 9% went into scientific research, analysis and development. About 7% went into management jobs, nearly 5% went into business and finance, just over 4% pursued options in education, almost 3% went into healthcare and more than 4% went into sales and marketing. About 30% were doing clerical work, retail or catering, perhaps to build up work experience or take some time out.*'<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Ready to grow: business priorities for education and skills, CBI/EDI (2010)  
<http://www.cbi.org.uk/business-issues/education-and-skills/>

<sup>9</sup> The current and future UK science workforce, Science Council (2011)  
[http://www.sciencecouncil.org/sites/default/files/UK\\_Science\\_Workforce\\_FinalReport\\_TBR\\_2011.pdf](http://www.sciencecouncil.org/sites/default/files/UK_Science_Workforce_FinalReport_TBR_2011.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.prospects.ac.uk/options\\_biology\\_career\\_areas.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/options_biology_career_areas.htm)

Students need to have information on the longer term consequences of their choices as well as information on their next steps.

### **Quality assurance and costs**

If schools are required to provide careers advice to a larger number of students without any increased funding provision, there will be a pressure to stretch money more thinly and go via the lowest cost option, denying students the best/broadest range of opportunities and leading to a risk of disparity between the provisions of advice across the country. If students are only exposed to local progression routes into careers or higher education, this will restrict their understanding of wider opportunities. We would welcome further information on how schools are to meet the costs of this increased provision.

### [Guidance from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills](#)<sup>11</sup>

supports the development of a commercial market for careers guidance and details a number of services as examples. The matrix standard which will act as a '*badge of quality for information and advice about learning and work*' will give an indication that independent careers advisers are quality-assured but we are concerned that this may result in matrix accredited providers charging schools a premium to provide this advice.

We also welcome the fact that the Government has asked OfSTED to carry out a review of careers guidance and we are keen that the effects of the changes to how careers advice is provided is monitored closely.

### **Subject specific advice and guidance**

Many careers advisers will give advice on subjects areas outside of their own experience, and this is particularly the case with the sciences, with many careers advisers not having a scientific background<sup>12</sup>. Appropriate guidance for advisors is needed to ensure that subject specific knowledge is accurate and up to date, and we mention above that Learned Societies and subject expert groups have a role to play in providing this subject specific advice. The rapidly changing nature of the sciences and the careers these subjects can facilitate mean that any system put in place to deliver careers

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<sup>11</sup> National Careers Service: The right advice at the right time (2012) [/www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/n/12-677-national-careers-service-right-advice-right-time.pdf](http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/n/12-677-national-careers-service-right-advice-right-time.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> A new vision for careers guidance for students study science or engineering, Campaign for Science and Engineering (2007) <http://sciencecampaign.org.uk/documents/2007/CaSE0704.pdf>

advice should itself be self-reflective and dynamic in response to these changes. Careers advisers also need regular contact with or communication from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) directly so as to be able to offer the most up to date advice on entry requirements.

Subject specific careers guidance is particularly important at the stage of choosing GCSE and A level subjects, when subject choices will have a huge impact on future study and career choices. For example, biology is the most frequently studied of the sciences at A level but a large proportion of students chose to study biology with no additional sciences<sup>13</sup>, only to discover their choices are limited by university entrance requirements which ask for biology and another science or maths subject at A level.

Information on the entry requirements for particular degree subjects needs to be particularly clear, and we welcome publications such as the Russell Group's [Informed Choices guide](#)<sup>14</sup> which highlights the importance of taking chemistry and maths alongside biology in order to study biology in higher education. We suggest that HEIs clearly publish accurate information on their preferred entry requirements for entry to biological courses. We need to improve existing provision of advice to ensure that the advice that young people are receiving at this critical point in their education is of sufficient quality.

[Science Community Representing Education](#) (SCORE) produced a series of recommendations for teachers and careers advisers in their report on [‘Choosing the right STEM \(Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths\) degree course’](#)<sup>15</sup>. The report recommends that advisers: create a list of key questions for students to ask when searching for and comparing degree programmes; explore a range of related degree courses with students; use multiple sources of information to identify precise requirements; and raise awareness that studying at least two STEM subjects will keep options open for studying a variety of STEM subjects a degree level.

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<sup>13</sup> Preparing for the transfer from school and college science and mathematics education to UK STEM higher education Royal Society (2011) <http://royalsociety.org/education/policy/state-of-nation/higher-education/>

<sup>14</sup> Informed Choices, Russell Group (2011) <http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/informed-choices.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> Choosing the right STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) degree course SCORE (2010) [www.score-education.org/media/3777/prsummary2010.pdf](http://www.score-education.org/media/3777/prsummary2010.pdf)

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

**Please acknowledge this reply X**

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

X Yes  No

All DfE public consultations are required to conform to the following criteria within the Government Code of Practice on Consultation:

Criterion 1: Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

Criterion 2: Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.

Criterion 3: Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

Criterion 4: Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

Criterion 5: Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

Criterion 6: Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

Criterion 7: Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Carole Edge, DfE Consultation Co-ordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: [carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:carole.edge@education.gsi.gov.uk)

**Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.**

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 1 August 2012

Send by post to: Public Communications Unit, Area 1C, Castle View  
House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2GJ

Send by e-mail to: [CareersGuidance.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:CareersGuidance.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk)