

Letter to The Times, 7th October 2023

Sir, The A-level system is not fit for purpose, so reform is welcome (“Sixth formers will take five subjects in new qualification to replace A-levels”, Oct 5; letters, Oct 6).

Young people need a broader range of skills for both work and life, and including some form of maths and English to age 18 will help with that, as will combining academic and technical skills in a new qualification. We are already playing catch-up with other countries that have broader education systems.

However, the challenges will be many: there are not enough specialist teachers, there is still snobbery about a perceived superiority of an academic education and there will be those who are simply resistant to change. To overcome these challenges will require a cross-party consensus that works with all stakeholders, from students and their parents to teachers and policymakers.

Sir Adrian Smith

President of the Royal Society