



EDUCATION

Parliamentary Monitor

Weekly Debates

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This issue of *EPM Weekly Debates* reports on education debates and oral question sessions in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and petitions in the House of Commons, from 1 to 4 September, 2020 and the period beyond.

In part 2, which gives information on forthcoming debates, information listed for the first time is indicated by three asterisks, thus ***.

Debates and Questions

House of Commons

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Ministerial Statement: Qualification Results and Full Opening

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Part 1: Debates and Questions Last Week

House of Commons

Qualification Results & Full Opening

House of Commons • Ministerial Statement • 1 September 2020

The Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson (Con, South Staffordshire) made a statement about the full opening of schools and colleges in England. He also updated the House on the current position regarding exam results for GCSE and A-level students. The Secretary of State said that although the independent regulator, Ofqual, had introduced a system for arriving at grades that had been believed to be fair and robust, there had been far too many inconsistent and unfair outcomes for A-level and AS-level students and it had not been reasonable to expect them to be dealt with through even a boosted and enhanced appeals process. He added that instead, students had been awarded the grades that schools and colleges had estimated that they would most likely have achieved, or their calculated grades if they had been higher.

Mr Williamson insisted that his Department had taken immediate action to provide certainty as soon as it had been aware that too many students would have received grades that would not have reflected their hard work and ability. He pointed out that for vocational and technical qualifications, the situation had been different because most had not been subject to standardisation like GCSE and A-level grades. But the minister said that awarding organisations that had used a similar model had also reviewed their results to ensure that each student had been treated as fairly as possible. He acknowledged that some students may still be unhappy with their summer grade, and that for some, such as home-educated students, there had not been enough evidence for any grade to be awarded at all. Mr Williamson added that to support such students, in the autumn an extra exam series would be run for all subjects at GCSE, A-level and AS-level and additional opportunities would also be provided for some other vocational and technical qualifications that had received calculated grades.

The Secretary of State pointed out that to ensure that students would be able to progress to higher education, the Government intended to remove the temporary student-number controls that had been introduced for the coming academic year. He said that providers had agreed to honour all offers to students who had met the conditions of their offer, wherever that was possible. Mr Williamson stressed that if a course was full, universities would give students a choice of suitable alternative courses if they were happy to take one, or a deferred place if they preferred to wait an additional year. He added that as many more students had been successful in meeting the grades required to study medicine and dentistry, the Government had removed the caps on student numbers for both subjects for the current year.

The Secretary of State pointed out that the Ofqual board had agreed temporary arrangements with Ofsted to support the ongoing work on the summer's GCSEs, A-levels and AS-levels, and on vocational qualifications, including appeals and autumn exams, as well as preparations for next year's exam season. He said that as the former chief regulator, Sally Collier, had decided that the next stage of the awarding process would be better overseen by new leadership, the Ofqual board had asked Dame Glenys Stacey to act as acting chief regulator until December 2020.

Full opening of schools

Turning to the full opening of schools and colleges in England, the minister said that as they returned, pupils would be kept in consistent groups and older children would be encouraged to distance wherever possible. He added that, at a minimum, whole year groups in schools and colleges

would be kept separate, which would be in addition to the other protective measures, such as enhanced cleaning and hand washing. Mr Williamson confirmed that the Government had advised that pupils in secondary schools should wear face coverings in communal areas if a local lockdown was in place, unless they were exempt. He stressed that strict hygiene protocols were in place and PPE had been distributed to every school to bolster supplies for use in the unlikely event that a pupil developed COVID-19 symptoms on the premises. The Secretary of State said that a small number of home-test kits would also be distributed for anyone who developed symptoms and who would not otherwise have access to testing themselves. He added that all schools would also have access to direct support and advice from local health protection teams to deal with any cases that may occur.

The Department for Education and the Department for Transport had announced an additional £40 million in funding for local transport authorities to ease pressure on public transport, and guidance had also been published for local authorities to manage capacity and reduce the risk of infection on school transport. He added that all students and staff had been urged to walk or cycle to school or college if it was a suitable alternative for them.

The Shadow Secretary of State for Education, Kate Green (Lab, Stretford and Urmston) complained that she had not received advance sight of the Secretary of State's statement until 4.36 pm. She asked Mr Williamson what advice he had given specifically about BTEC students, who faced more uncertainty and delay. Ms Green also asked how many young people who had missed their first-choice university because of the Secretary of State's discredited approach to awarding grades had been granted places.

She said that the challenge for the Secretary of State would be to ensure that pupils continued to receive a full education throughout the year and catch up on the learning they had lost. Ms Green asked when pupils would begin to receive support through both the catch-up premium and the national tutoring fund, and why early years and post-16 providers were ineligible for the catch-up premium. She expressed concern that the funding would be available for only one single year, and Ms Green asked the Secretary of State for a guarantee that every child would have full access to learning in the event of a local lockdown.

She questioned the Secretary of State's plans to provide additional pastoral support, and she asked what extra support would be available for children with special educational needs and disabilities. Ms Green also asked Mr Williamson for more details about how he would ensure that all children would be able to travel safely to school, including respecting social distancing on public transport. Finally, she asked what additional financial support, if any, schools would receive to cover any additional COVID-19-related costs in the current term.

Gavin Williamson apologised to Ms Green for her late receipt of the statement. He said that not everyone would be progressing on to university, and many young people would want to take the opportunity to progress on to further education. Mr Williamson said that funding would be increased for the higher education and university sector through the teaching grant. He added that the drop-off in the number of students coming from European Union countries who would traditionally have come to the UK to study, would obviously have created extra capacity within the system as well.

The Secretary of State pointed out that the Government had already delivered a £1 billion COVID-19 catch-up fund that had been targeted at helping young people from the most disadvantaged and deprived backgrounds and the Education Endowment Foundation had helped to ensure that that money had been targeted at interventions that would deliver results. He said that the Government would continue to work with local authorities in ensuring that the transport infrastructure was in place.

The chairman of the House of Commons Education Committee, Robert Halfon (Con, Harlow) argued that as millions of children had not been learning during the lockdown, there would need to be an urgent assessment, or benchmarking, of all children in school, and data would need to be collected by the Department for Education and regulators to inform the Government's decision as to when the exams should take place in 2021. Gavin Williamson said that his Department would be

working across the sector to ensure that there was an understanding of where some of the learning gaps were.

HC 2020/0097

Exam Results

House of Commons · Oral Questions, PMQs · 2 September 2020

During Prime Minister's Questions, the Leader of the Opposition, Sir Keir Starmer (Lab, Holborn and St Pancras) pointed out that on the day that thousands of young people had had their A-level grades downgraded, the Prime Minister said that: "The exam results...are robust, they're good, they're dependable". Mr Starmer said that although the Education Secretary had said there would "absolutely" not be a U-turn; a few days later, there had been a U-turn.

As the Education Secretary had known well in advance that there had been a problem with the algorithm, the question was when the Prime Minister first found out. The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson (Con, Uxbridge and South Ruislip) said that as a result of the results that had come in, the Government had instituted a change.

Sir Keir asked the Prime Minister again, when he had first been aware that there would be a problem with the algorithm. The Prime Minister argued that Ofqual had made it absolutely clear time and again that in its view the system was robust. He added that as an independent organisation, credit had to be given to Ofqual's views.

HC 2020/0098

Kick-start Scheme

House of Commons · Urgent Question · 3 September 2020

Jonathan Reynolds (Lab/Co-op, Stalybridge and Hyde) asked the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to make a statement on the implementation of the kick-start scheme. The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Thérèse Coffey (Con, Suffolk Coastal) said that the previous day, the Government had launched its new kick-start scheme, as set out in the written ministerial statement and the letter sent to all Members of both Houses. She explained that the £2 billion programme would fund the direct creation of thousands of additional jobs for young people at risk of long-term unemployment, to improve their chances of progressing to find long-term, rewarding and sustainable work.

Dr Coffey said that because a lack of work experience could be a barrier to stepping on to the jobs ladder, through kick-start, employers would be supported to access a "massive" recruitment pool of young people who want to work and are "bursting with potential". She pointed out that employers from all industries and across the private, public and voluntary sectors would be eligible if they could meet the simple criteria on the provision of roles. The minister said that employers would need to show that the additional jobs would provide the experience and support a young person would need to improve their chances of permanent employment. She stressed that the new roles that must not simply replace staff who had recently been made redundant.

Dr Coffey explained that funding available for each job would cover the relevant national minimum wage rate for 25 hours a week, the associated employer national insurance contributions,

and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions, as well as £1,500 for wraparound support. She added that there would be no limit to the number of jobs that could be created, and organisations of all sizes were encouraged to participate.

The minister pointed out that if a business wanted to offer only one or two kick-start jobs, as set out in the online guidance, employers could contact their local employer support managers with an expression of interest, and they would be linked to an appropriate intermediary. She explained that the intermediaries could include local enterprise partnerships, local authorities or business groups, to ensure that the necessary support was in place to deliver placements effectively. Dr Coffey added that the Government would continue to be proactive in terms of involving employers and intermediaries following the scheme's launch.

Jonathan Reynolds said that while the Opposition welcomed the kick-start scheme in principle, it wanted assurances that it would be delivered in a way that would maximise its impact. He added that it had been disappointing that it had taken until September for the scheme to be launched, and it was also disappointing to have to summon Ministers via an urgent question to ask basic questions on how the scheme would work.

Mr Reynolds asked the Secretary of State, how the Government would ensure that the jobs provided under the scheme would be genuinely new, additional jobs, and how the Government would ensure that the jobs that were created would go to those who needed them the most. He stressed that even if 200,000 new jobs were created, Labour could reasonably expect over 1 million young people to be eligible for the jobs, which must go to where they would have the biggest impact. Mr Reynolds asked the minister what feedback the Government had already received on the arrangements the Secretary of State had outlined for small businesses to participate in the scheme, given that the minimum number of jobs that could be created from a bid was 30.

He pointed out that while the jobs would be for a minimum of only 25 hours a week, the Secretary of State had already brought back conditionality and sanctions, which expected people to look for work for 35 hours a week. Mr Reynolds questioned why the Government's expectation was that everyone should be working 35 hours a week, when the jobs that the Government was creating would not be for 35 hours a week. He said that he had been "alarmed" by the Prime Minister's presentation the previous day when he suggested that kick-start could be an alternative to providing continued targeted furlough support, when Germany, France and Ireland had pledged to continue their furlough schemes until 2021.

Dr Coffey said that the reason for the number of hours per week was because it was not just about rebates like the coronavirus furlough scheme. She added that young people would be expected, with their employers, to do more to prepare themselves for the workplace, which may include work search in additional time.

Andy Carter (Con, Warrington South) asked the Secretary of State to confirm that the Government would pay 100% of the cost of wages, national insurance and pension schemes. Dr Coffey said that the Government would pay 100% for 25 hours a week, which was the minimum hours that it would expect people to be working. But she added that, if employers wanted to pay more and do more, they could. The minister pointed out that if small business could not offer 30 jobs over the next 18 months, they could go straight to a contact in the DWP, and the linking would be done for them. She added that over 6,000 people had already started an application the previous day.

Neil Gray (SNP, Airdrie and Shotts) asked why the UK Government had failed to respond to Scottish Government correspondence which had suggested working together on the implementation of the kick-start scheme, which was for Scotland, England and Wales. He pointed out that the Scottish Government had introduced a £60 million youth guarantee, which would guarantee every young person an opportunity for education, a job or training, backed by additional funding for apprenticeships and the new job start payment.

Mr Gray asked the minister why the UK Government had set as a minimum to qualify for the kick-start scheme that employers would need to take on 30 new employees. He also asked the

minister to confirm that kick-start participants would not be paid the real living wage. Dr Coffey said it was not the case that an employer would have to come forward with a minimum of 30 placements over the lifetime of the scheme. She said that it would only be the case if they wanted direct access to the DWP and a direct relationship, which would be completely different from what happened under the future jobs fund. The minister added that the links were in place so that small businesses could go through intermediaries.

In terms of working with the Scottish Government, she stressed that the Scottish Government should be doing elements of the kick-start scheme as it was important that the scheme worked consistently across Great Britain. Dr Coffey said that in Northern Ireland, the area was entirely devolved, but her Department would be working closely with it.

Rachel Hopkins (Lab, Luton South) asked what safeguards the Secretary of State had put in place to ensure that disabled young people would be fully able to benefit from the kick-start programme. Dr Coffey said that the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work had, as with all DWP Ministers, been a key part of making sure that everyone worked as an entire Department. Andrea Jenkyns (Con, Morley and Outwood) asked how kick-start would help young people into work beyond the six-month placement. Dr Coffey said that the creation of thousands of additional jobs through the scheme would, in itself, help to stimulate young people's chances of getting future long-term employment. She stressed that the scheme was only one of the many offers for young people.

Nick Smith (Lab, Blaenau Gwent) asked the minister to clarify how many jobs would be created by the scheme and over what period. Dr Coffey said that as the Government had currently set aside £2 billion to support the scheme, over 200,000 jobs could be created, but she stressed that the number was unlimited. The minister added that there would be opportunities for local employers who were needing skills to take the scheme as an opportunity to bring a young person on, as well as help with training.

Rob Roberts (Con, Delyn) said that while he welcomed the scheme, he was concerned that some unscrupulous employers may use the scheme to reduce the hours of people already on their books, or potentially not to give the hours to people who were already with them on flexible contracts. Dr Coffey said that the Government would continue to assess applications to ensure that employers were not simply displacing existing roles.

Kevin Brennan (Lab, Cardiff West) said he had been disappointed that the scheme had been allowed to be designed in such a way that it would be for the convenience of the Department, rather than small businesses. He urged the minister to go back and talk to officials to see if there could be any way of making the scheme more friendly to small businesses. Dr Coffey argued that the gateway for small businesses was much simpler than it had ever been in previous similar schemes.

HC 2020/0099

House of Lords

Qualification Results & Full Opening

House of Lords • Ministerial Statement • 2 September 2020

On Tuesday 1 September in the House of Commons, the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson (Con, South Staffordshire) had made a statement about the full opening of schools and colleges in England. He had also updated the House on the current position regarding exam results for GCSE and A-level students. (See the report above.) The statement was repeated in the House of Lords by Baroness Berridge (Con, Life), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department for Education.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab, Life), the Shadow spokesman in the Lords on education, pointed out that while the vast majority of schools would reopen fully over the next few days, many issues of concern remained as schools had been denied the necessary information to prepare for reopening because the Government's guidance for head teachers to plan for tier 2 restrictions had only been published the previous Friday. He claimed that ministers' fixation on avoiding grade inflation had led to the adoption of a statistical approach that could never have survived contact with real live students.

Lord Watson argued that Michael Gove's reforms to exams had meant that there had been no back-up to call on. He added that it beggared belief that the Secretary of State had been warned of the debacle and had yet allowed such flawed results to reach publication before the inevitable retreat, thereby causing not just distress to so many students but chaos in the university sector. Turning to the summer's exam results, Lord Watson asked the minister when the Secretary of State first knew of the potential problems with the flawed standardisation approach, and what action he had taken as a result. He cited evidence given by Ofqual to the Education Committee, earlier that day, which had raised serious questions about the Secretary of State's role in the fiasco.

Lord Watson asked the minister how many BTEC students had still not received their results and when the national tutoring programme would take effect, as the Secretary of State had merely referred to "this academic year". He asked the minister whether she was aware that there was scope for the independent sector to demonstrate public benefit under its charitable status by becoming registered tutors under the programme. Lord Watson said that while not all the work should be handed to private tuition agencies, whoever was involved must start soon.

In terms of the return of schools, he asked the minister why early years and post-16 providers remained ineligible for the catch-up premium, and what extra support would be available for children with SEND. Turning to the 2021 examinations, Lord Watson argued that the "tinkering around the edges" that had been proposed by Ofqual would not begin to address the scale of the problem that Years 11 and 13 had faced in the current year and would face in the next. He added that the call from the teaching unions to change the exams more fundamentally had been right, and the question how to "build back better" needed to be addressed.

Lord Watson argued that schools, colleges and universities needed time to plan, and he asked whether ministers were having discussions with the sector and UCAS to ensure that workable arrangements were in place. He asked the minister to guarantee that a contingency plan would be put in place in September in case exams were disrupted again. Lord Watson warned that removing the cap on admissions by individual universities without a strategy for dealing with the fallout from such a decision would merely push the problem into the following year.

Lord Storey (LDP, Life), the Liberal Democrat spokesman in the Lords on children, said that, during the period of school closures, children and young people who had been excluded from school and those in alternative provision were the most vulnerable pupils in the system, and they needed extra support and help. He pointed out that there was concern about the 60,000 home-educated

children and the right time was right to introduce a policy to ensure that home-educated pupils were registered. Lord Storey noted that external, home-schooled students had not received an A-level or GCSE grade and he added that 20,000 students had been informed by their institutions that they would not receive a GCSE grade this year. He said that head teachers had warned that there were no processes whereby the COVID-19 testing regime would automatically inform the head teacher, which would be crucial for the well-being of schools and pupils, and making the return to full-time education successful.

Baroness Berridge said it had been Ofqual's responsibility to have the data to develop the algorithm and then send that algorithm to the various examination boards. She added that there had been "a reaction" at the stages at which the Department had been made aware of additional concerns and Ofqual had met regularly with the department even before the announcement had been made for the exams to be cancelled. The minister stressed that while the Department had reacted, Ofqual was the independent regulator.

Baroness Berridge said that while "a tiny fraction" of BTEC examination results remained to be communicated to students, each year there were normally, unfortunately, a small number of results outstanding. She said that that it was envisaged that the first services from the national tutoring programme, which was to be delivered by the EEF and Teach First, would be delivered in the second half of the autumn term.

On the specific questions on early years catch-up, the minister said that of the £350 million tutoring programme, £8 million had been awarded to Nuffield for early language development and there had been an announcement that there would be small-group tuition for disadvantaged 16 to 19-year-olds. Turning to special educational needs students, the Oak Academy's provision of online lessons had included some for those with special educational needs. She added that the £650 million of main catch-up funding for schools had been weighted per pupil for specialist schools, because of the higher per pupil costs in such settings.

Baroness Berridge confirmed that there would be a contingency plan for examinations in 2021, and there had already been guidance on the curriculum so that schools would know what they were doing from the moment they returned. She said that, for instance, in English literature they knew that pupils would potentially be examined on only three of the four set texts and there had been changes to field work in geography. The minister added that the question of whether there would be a delay had been part of Ofqual's consultation on the 2021 series, and it would be confirmed as soon as possible. She pointed out that there was now a higher education task force, chaired by Michelle Donelan, the Minister for Universities, which met regularly with Universities UK and other stakeholders to work with the sector on the implications of the change in the awarding of grades for A-levels.

Baroness Berridge said that masks had been recommended only where there was a local lockdown, although schools could advise their students on that. She said that because disadvantaged pupils were a concern, there was a £1 billion catch-up fund. Turning to excluded pupils, the minister said that at the end of the summer term the Department had announced additional funds for those leaving AP to make sure that they had additional support and did not end up not in education, employment or training.

She said that the Department was particularly concerned about home education. The minister explained that going back to the cancellation of exams and the work the exam centres had done, obviously some home-educated students had registered at a school and they had sat their examinations in that school. She pointed out that as far as possible, schools had been asked to evaluate the performance of such students if they had any data on which to do so, but there had been situations in which it had just not been possible. The minister added that that was why the autumn series of resits in all subjects would be so important, particularly for home-educated students.

Baroness Berridge said that there had been a recent consultation from the Department on whether to have a register with local authorities and whether to pay exam fees for home-educated

students, because there had been concern about the rise in the number of home-educated students. She added that the House would be updated as soon as she knew what was happening with the consultation.

The former Education Secretary, Baroness Morris of Yardley (Lab, Life), said that while it made sense to have a back-up plan for the examinations in summer 2021, the Government was not considering anything other than a delay of four or so weeks. She pointed out that there was gathering support for the idea of moderated assessments throughout the school year. Baroness Morris asked the minister whether such a scheme would be considered by the Government.

Baroness Berridge said that she had already confirmed that there would be a 2021 contingency plan, Ofqual had already consulted in relation to 2021, and one of the suggestions in that consultation had been a short delay to the sitting of exams. She added that she could not remember whether moderated assessments had been part of the consultation. The minister while there would be a government policy, it would be for Ofqual to run it. She pledged to make sure that the idea of moderated assessments would be put forward. Baroness Berridge added that Ofqual had delegated to a sub-committee of its board chaired by Amanda Spielman, who would take forward what the system would be for examinations in 2021 and the Government recognised that decisions needed to be made as soon as possible.

HL 2020/0100

Industrial Training Levy Order

House of Lords · Grand Committee · 2 September 2020

Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Construction Industry Training Board) Order 2020

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Department for International Trade, Baroness Berridge (Con, Life) said that as the country responded to and recovered from the impact of COVID-19, there could be no doubt about how reliant it was on a skilled engineering workforce. She pointed out that the order before the Lords would enable the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board to continue to play its role in securing and maintaining a sufficient supply of highly skilled labour in the engineering construction industry.

The minister explained that the ECITB, which was an industry body, provided targeted training grants to employers to enable workers to access and operate safely on engineering construction sites, drive up skill levels and incentivise training that would otherwise not take place. She added that it also supported strategic initiatives to maintain vital skills in the industry and create a pipeline of skilled workers.

Baroness Berridge pointed out that during lockdown, the ECITB had swiftly introduced a package of support measures including a scheme to retain apprentices and graduates and a new scholarship to support new entrants. She said that over the coming three-year levy period, the ECITB expected to raise around £80 million, to invest in skills training. The minister added that the latest available figures had showed that in 2018, 99.4% of the levy raised had gone directly into supporting training.

Turning to the detail of the draft order, she explained that the key change from the previous 2017 levy order was an increase in the levy rate for offsite employees, who were defined by the geographical location of their work, which was mainly at a distance from an engineering construction site such as a chemical works or power station. Baroness Berridge pointed out that the offsite rate was increasing to reflect the substantial growth in demand for training grants for offsite workers in

recent years. She added that the previous year, offsite training had taken out almost 25% of total grant expenditure, yet it had paid in only 13% of the total raised.

The minister said that the ECITB considered that the demand for offsite training would be likely to increase further still as companies harnessed opportunities from new technologies and more work was conducted remotely. She explained that the increase from 0.14% to 0.33% of an employer's annual payments to workers for services would be phased in over the three-year period of the levy order to minimise its impact on employers. Baroness Berridge reassured the Lords that the sector affected had given overwhelming support for the increase.

She said that the order also recognised that SMEs were a critical part of the engineering industry but at the same time they were less likely to have an in-house training budget. The minister explained that as such, it retained the exemption thresholds from the 2017 levy order, which would ensure that smaller engineering construction firms could access the support that the ECITB provided without having to contribute financially. She added that the ECITB expected that around 25% of all establishments within the scope of the levy would be exempted from payment.

Baroness Berridge stressed that the ECITB had consulted industry on the levy proposals via its consensus process. She pointed out that consensus consisted of two tests: both the majority who paid the levy and those who paid more than half the levy raised must agree to the proposals. The minister assured the Lords that both tests had been overwhelmingly met. To summarise, she explained that 75% of all companies in scope of paying the levy, who together were likely to pay 87% of the value of the levy, had voted in favour of the proposals.

Lord Addington (LDP, Life) asked the minister how the groups the Government was supporting had been set. He also asked how people with special educational needs or other disabilities were being encouraged to get involved.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab, Life) said that the Opposition had welcomed the introduction of the latest version of the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board levy, which had gained the status of a most venerable instrument. He pointed out that in 2019, the ECITB had made grants of just under £20 million to subsidise employers' training costs. Lord Watson said that while the figure would be substantially lower in 2020, it would be helpful if the minister could indicate what estimate the ECITB had made to her officials about what it expected it to be. Given the effects of the pandemic, he asked the minister whether the ECITB intended to return or retain levies paid in the current year that were currently unable to be used for training purposes, and if it were the latter, whether it intended to reduce the amount taken from employers in levy payments in 2021 as a consequence.

Lord Watson noted that there had been no mention in the Explanatory Memorandum of how the ECITB levy interacted with the apprenticeship levy. He pointed out that there were many apprentices in the engineering construction sector whose employers were being asked to pay two training levies, albeit that they were differently focused. Lord Watson said that, given that in general many apprenticeships were taken up by people aged 25 and above, it was surprising that greater resistance from employers in engineering construction had not been evident. He said that while the Explanatory Memorandum had pointed out that 25% of employers had registered their opposition to the levy in the ECITB's consultation, there had been no hint as to the reasons for such a sizeable minority position.

Baroness Berridge (Con, Life) turning to Lord Addington's question about encouraging people into the industry, specifically those with special educational needs, she said that the industry training boards existed in specific industries and they were mainly funded by statutory levies on employers in their sectors. The minister said that Lord Addington would receive a letter from the chairman of the ECITB on his specific issues. But she added that as the ECITB was bound by the equality duties, it was under an obligation to ensure that a diversity of people was recruited into the sector.

Turning to Lord Watson's questions, Baroness Berridge said that in terms of whether the ECITB intended to return or retain levies paid in the current year or reduce levy payments in 2021, it did not have the legal power to issue levy rebates. She explained that it derived its powers to collect

a levy through the Industrial Training Act 1982, the 2017 levy order. The minister added that as the legislation would need to be amended to allow the ECITB to give rebates, it did not intend to reduce levy payments in 2021. In terms of Lord Watson's question about the reasons for employers opposing the levy, the minister pointed out that the ECITB did not ask employers to document their reasons. However, she added that of the 25% that Lord Watson had mentioned, 10% of levy-paying employers had not supported the proposal, and 15% had not responded.

HL 2020/0101

Part 2: Future Debates and Question Sessions

The House of Commons

*** Monday 7 September. Oral questions, Department for Education.

*** Tuesday 8 September. Adjournment debate. The inclusion of Black history in the history curriculum. Theresa Villiers (Con, Chipping Barnet.)

*** Wednesday 9 September. Opposition Day debate. The personal role and involvement of the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Education in this summer's exams fiasco.

*** Thursday 17 September. When the House rose for the summer recess in July, this was the date set for the House to rise for the Conference recess. Since then some if not all of the party conferences will take place on a more restricted basis and virtually, if at all. No dates for the party conferenced recess are now listed, although debates have been scheduled until Friday 16 October.

*** Tuesday 13 October. When the House rose for the summer recess in July, this was the date set for the House to return from the Conference recess. Now debates have been scheduled to recommence on Friday 23 October. The exact dates of the party conference recess will be announced in due course.

The House of Lords

*** Monday 7 September. Ministerial statement. Implementation of the Kickstart scheme. Baroness Stedman-Scott (Con, Life) Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Department for Work and Pensions.

*** Tuesday 8 September. Oral question. UCAS End of Cycle Report 2019 findings on low entry rate for white ethnic group students from state schools. Lord Farmer (Con, Life).

*** Wednesday 9 September. Debate in Grand Committee. Report from the Science and Technology Committee, *Science Research Funding in Universities*. Lord Patel (CB, Life).

*** Monday 14 September. Oral question. A permanent programme of free school meals and activities during future school holidays. Baroness D'Souza (CB, Life.)

*** Monday 14 September. Regulations in Grand Committee. Draft Professional Qualifications and Services (Amendments and Miscellaneous Provisions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020. Lord Callanan (Con, Life) Parliamentary Under Secretary, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

*** Tuesday 15 September. Oral question. Arrangements needed for A Level and GCSE examinations in the 2020/2021 academic year. Lord Storey (LDP, Life) Liberal Democrat spokesman in the Lords on children.

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*** Wednesday 23 September. Oral question. External expert advice prior to the use of the algorithm to determine A-level results. Baroness Garden of Frognal (LDP, Life).

*** Thursday 24 September. Oral question. Expansion of mental health services for young people to deal with concerns expressed during the COVID 19 pandemic. Baroness Massey of Darwen (Lab, Life).

*** Tuesday 13 October. When the House rose for the summer recess in July, this was the date set for the House to return from the Conference recess. Now debates have been scheduled to recommence on Friday 23 October. The exact dates of the party conference recess will be announced in due course.

Education Parliamentary Monitor

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Editor

Tracy Coryton

Writers

Demitri Coryton and Tim Mangrove

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