

IFST Response to P8 Measures Consultation

Question 11: How far do you agree that these changes to the Progress 8 model strike a better balance between breadth and flexibility compared with the current P8?

IFST are greatly concerned that including GCSE Food and Nutrition within the 'choice' slot in the proposed changes will significantly marginalise this critical subject within the overall curriculum. GCSE Food and Nutrition should be included within the 'breadth' slot, not the 'choice' slot.

A sound education pathway for food and nutrition is critical to support many of the government's targets and strategies across economic growth, health, wellbeing, and sustainability.

The UK food system is a primary driver of economic wealth and growth; as the UK's largest manufacturing sector, it provides significant investment in UK business, science, innovation and technology. The recent House of Lords enquiry and subsequent Government Food Strategy (July 2025) have highlighted a need for a concerted, joined up approach to health and nutrition. The strategy includes aims around food security, public health, resilience, creation of vibrant food culture and education. To meet these aims we must have well-educated students with an understanding of food science and nutrition to enter the workforce. Understanding of nutrition and practical culinary skills are also critical to enable a healthy population for the future, and an overall reduction in NHS spending.

IFST strongly believe that GCSE Food and Nutrition gives a firm foundation for students to tackle many of these challenges for the future. It must not be marginalised within the curriculum. The GCSE opens pupil's eyes to this area providing a pipeline onto higher education courses and jobs. Deprioritising it risks significant industry implications. A weakened pipeline from KS4 through KS5 and higher education will reduce the number of people entering the food industry, including land-based careers and roles in nutrition, public health, food technology, hospitality, and manufacturing, sectors that are vital to both the economy and national wellbeing.

Placing food and nutrition in slots 7-8 gives less opportunity for students to choose it, and for schools to even offer F&N as a choice. Reduced KS4 uptake will increase vulnerability of the subject at KS3, making it more likely to be deprioritised causing lower investment in staffing and facilities, and long-term erosion of provision.

Food and Nutrition is nationally recognised as part of Design and Technology throughout KS1–3, including within plans for the new national curriculum, yet at KS4 it sits outside D&T. IFST believes that Food and Nutrition should be offered in the 'breadth' slot like D&T.

IFST do not agree that these changes strike a better balance between breadth and flexibility. These changes should expand opportunity, not create structural barriers that disadvantage subjects and limit pupil choice. We strongly urge reconsideration of GCSE Food and Nutrition's placement to within the 'breadth' slot.

Question 12: What are your views on the inclusion of a fourth category (science) for breadth slots 5 and 6? [Options: Support inclusion of a fourth category / Do not support inclusion of a fourth category / Unsure].

IFST would support creation of a fourth category (science) in the breadth slots. However, we believe it is essential that this category reflects the full range of subjects that genuinely develop scientific understanding. GCSE Food and Nutrition should be recognised within the proposed fourth 'science' category. The subject is firmly rooted in scientific principles such as nutrition, food chemistry, biology, and food safety. Through studying the course, pupils develop analytical skills, engage in hypothesis testing, and gain an understanding of scientific processes. These learning outcomes are directly aligned with the aims of the new proposed fourth science category.

There is a growing need for STEM educated individuals as outlined in the governments National Food Strategy (see our answer to question 11). The subject provides vital life skills, supports health and wellbeing, and provides pathways into a wide range of careers across the food sector.

Considering the proposed model currently includes Design and Technology within the 'breadth slot', IFST believe that GCSE Food and Nutrition should also be included. If this fourth category (science) is not created, we strongly believe that GCSE Food and Nutrition should still be included in the breadth slot alongside D&T.

Question 13: Do you agree that Progress 8 should allow technical awards in the breadth and choice slots, with a maximum of two across all slots? [Options: Strongly agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly disagree].

IFST disagree that technical awards are included in 'breadth' slots. Technical awards should only be included in 'choice' slots. We feel it is important to ensure that inclusion of technical awards does not disadvantage subjects already vulnerable within the proposed progress 8 model.

As discussed, we believe GCSE Food and Nutrition should be included in the 'breadth' slot rather than the 'choice' slot currently proposed. If included in both breadth and choice slots, technical awards will increase competition for limited curriculum space.

Question 20: Do you think there is merit in an adaptation to this proposal that includes science as a required subject for pupils entered for 5 or more GCSEs/other approved qualifications? [Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly disagree].

With increased technological advancements there is an increased need for STEM graduates. Science is a fundamental subject which the UK government should support.

GCSE Food and Nutrition should be recognised within the proposed fourth (science) category in the breadth slot. The subject is firmly rooted in scientific principles such as nutrition, food chemistry, biology, and food safety. Through studying the course, pupils develop analytical skills, engage in hypothesis testing, and gain an understanding of scientific processes. These learning outcomes are directly aligned with the aims of the new breadth-category model.

Question 21: Do you have any other comments on the proposed changes in this chapter?

Including GCSE Food and Nutrition in the 'breadth' category will help develop a well-educated youth, meet government strategy aims and develop a workforce for the future of the food sector. It will help support UK advancement in food science and technology (cultivated meats, gene-editing etc.).

Our regulatory authorities will increasingly require a workforce with many of the skills developed through a pipeline of education in food science and technology to be effective in risk management and support of UK research and development.

Question 31: Are there any risks that the proposed changes could unfairly impact on certain types of schools or on certain groups of pupils (e.g. those from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with SEND)? Please explain the impact, specifying which proposal your response relates to.

IFST do have equality concerns. Students who thrive in applied, practical subjects (like GCSE Food and Nutrition) may have fewer opportunities to succeed and engage in their learning.

With the current SEND reforms, schools are tasked with creating a "Universal Curriculum." Food is often the most accessible, high-engagement subject for students with complex needs. Marginalising it in these P8 measures directly contradicts the government's push for inclusivity.