



The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP  
Prime Minister

Sent via: [pmpost.ext@no10.gov.uk](mailto:pmpost.ext@no10.gov.uk)

30 January 2024

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to ask for your help in securing a smooth journey towards the full roll-out of the Advanced British Standard.

When we met in the autumn to discuss the ABS I was struck by how personally committed you are to increasing the hours of teaching that young people have in the critical 16 to 18 phase of learning. You talked about the overwhelming evidence there is that we need to give a broader, more rounded education to every young person, at every level of learning. You are absolutely right.

We share your ambitions, so it was great to see the consultation document on the ABS published before Christmas. We are engaging closely with officials in the Department for Education to help shape the thinking, the design and the delivery of what you have rightly said should be a 10-year change programme. And we will continue to support over the years ahead, working with college leaders to ensure its success.

The changes we will need to see over the coming years are exciting and complex and it is clear that there are many steps towards achieving the vision. That's why our submission this week to the Chancellor ahead of his spring budget asks for three decisions now which will move us towards delivering the changes you want to see:

A plan to close the pay gap – colleges cater for more than half of all 16 to 18-year-olds in education, and yet their lecturers are paid on average £9,000 per year less than school teachers. That pay gap cannot persist if the ABS is to be a success.

A tax cut for colleges – colleges pay around £200m per year on VAT, unlike schools and academies where VAT is reimbursed. The result is that college students have less resource spent on them than their peers in schools.

Extend funding for tuition support – the tuition funding introduced in recognition of the impact of Covid-19 on young people ends this summer. Extending it, at the cost of around £100m per year, would help ensure those young people with the greatest need for support are able to progress and achieve.

Your vision for the ABS is a very good one. Your Chancellor has the opportunity in March to help make it a reality.

Thank you for your leadership on this and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Hughes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

David Hughes CBE  
Chief Executive, Association of Colleges