



**ASDAN**  
education

# press release

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## **A qualification deemed second-rate by ministers has been proven to have a significant impact on attainment at GCSE.**

ASDAN's Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE), which Michael Gove, the Education Secretary, said would not be included in school performance tables from 2014, helps pupils achieve greater GCSE success than their peers. A study from the University of the West of England of more than half a million pupils found that young people who passed CoPE raised their chances of achieving A\* to C grades in English by 10% and achieving five A\* to C grades including English and maths by 5%. The impact was most significant on those in less privileged educational groups.

Researchers found the course engaged and motivated young people, and gave them the learning skills required to up their marks in what ministers consider to be more rigorous subjects.

In January this year Mr Gove said that most vocational and all skills-based qualifications would no longer be included in school league tables because they had "no equivalency" to more traditional qualifications such as GCSEs, AS and A-levels. But these findings show that CoPE can have a significant impact on student achievement in these academic qualifications and therefore cannot be ignored.

CoPE was found to particularly benefit those who had low attainment in English at age 14, almost doubling the pass rate by age 16, with an estimated 21% gaining A\* to C compared to only 11.5% of other pupils; in particular, young people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities with low KS3 attainment in English showed a remarkable 30 percentage point increase in their English GCSE results; SEN pupils improved their results by 10 percentage points and those eligible for free school meals actually outperformed their peers from more affluent households when also undertaking CoPE.

The research, led by Neil Harrison, with Professor David James and Kathryn Last of the Bristol Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning and Education (BRILLE) at the University of the West of England (UWE) was based on analysis of data from the National Pupil Database comprising more than 500,000 pupils who completed GCSEs in 2010, and included case studies from schools currently offering the CoPE qualification. It compared achievements of pupils that undertook CoPE with those that did not, taking their background circumstances into account.

Elizabeth Hayes, the headteacher of Boldon School, South Shields said: "All the students in Year 11 take this qualification at my school. It is an excellent course and the young people gain many life skills from the work they do, including team building, presentation skills and working

together, sharing ideas and understanding different points of view. It is a very accessible course for all young people whatever their ability, and success – although hard won – is valued by the students and employers. I am dismayed it is not to be included in the future performance tables; this decision totally undervalues the achievements of students across the country.”

Marius Frank, CEO of ASDAN Education, stated: “We recognise that a whole education experience must go beyond being able to pass a series of written examinations; it amounts to blinkered elitism to suggest otherwise.

“These findings completely vindicate ASDAN’s stand against what many see as a retrograde step in terms of education policy. No one questions the need for rigour, high performance and high standards, especially in terms of being literate and numerate. It is therefore ironic that ministers have disincentivised the use of the very qualifications that can have a high impact on core standards, help close the gap between the privileged and the marginalised, and actually drive the government’s social mobility agenda!

“However, ASDAN is heartened by the number of headteachers who have already indicated that they will continue to offer CoPE alongside GCSEs in the knowledge that achieving a qualification outside the performance measure will have a high impact within it. More importantly, young people are engaged and motivated, and the skills that help them become life-ready and work-ready are explicitly developed and accredited.”

#### Notes for Editors

1. ASDAN Education is a charitable social enterprise whose mission is to build an enduring culture of achievement. We create the opportunity for learners to achieve awards and qualifications by blending activity-based curriculum enrichment with a framework for the development, assessment and accreditation of skills for learning, skills for employment and skills for life. [www.asdan.org.uk](http://www.asdan.org.uk)
2. The Bristol Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning and Education (BRILLE) supports research and knowledge exchange within and beyond the Department of Education at the University of the West of England (UWE). [www.uwe.ac.uk](http://www.uwe.ac.uk) and <http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/cahe/edu/research/researchcentre-brille.aspx>
3. Further information about the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) is available from <http://www.asdan.org.uk/media/downloads/CoPEBooklet.pdf>
4. The summary report is available from [www.asdan.org.uk](http://www.asdan.org.uk)
5. Contact and press enquiries: Barbara Benson (tel: 07969 921569 email: [barbarabenson@asdand.org.uk](mailto:barbarabenson@asdand.org.uk))