



**Runnymede Trust Press Release: For Immediate Release  
13 June 2010**

**Black students half as likely as white peers to achieve English  
Baccalaureate**

Black Caribbean students are half as likely as white British students to achieve the new English Baccalaureate benchmark in their GCSEs, analysis by the Runnymede Trust and the Institute of Education has found.

The new measurement, recently introduced for schools in England, requires pupils to achieve A\* - C grades in maths; English; two science subjects; a foreign language; and either history or geography. Only 6.8 per cent of black Caribbean students taking their GCSEs in 2010 would have met these requirements, compared to 15.4 per cent of white British students.

Previously, the benchmark was 5 A\* - C grades in maths, English and three other unspecified subjects, which 39.4 per cent of black Caribbean students achieved in 2009, the last time these figures were released.

In light of today's findings, the introduction of the English Baccalaureate has led to fears that the goal posts are being moved for black Caribbean pupils applying for A Levels, and ultimately university courses. Pupils who had already selected their GCSE subject options for 2011 will also be expected to meet these new standards.

There are already concerns about the disproportionately small number of black graduates from the UK's most prestigious universities, with Oxford only admitting one black Caribbean student last year.

The analysis also found that while 15.4 per cent of white British pupils achieved the English Baccalaureate benchmark in 2010, the figures for many minority ethnic groups were far lower:

- 8.5 per cent for mixed race (white and black Caribbean) students
- 9.3% per cent Bangladeshi students
- 10.3% per cent Pakistani students
- 10.4% per cent black African students

These inequalities were discovered following analysis by Professor David Gillborn of the Institute of Education and staff at the Runnymede Trust, after the

data was released in response to a parliamentary question from MP Shabana Mahmood.

It is worth noting that not every minority ethnic group is less likely to meet the Baccalaureate requirements; based on figure from 2010, 34.1 per cent of Chinese and 24.2 per cent of Indian pupils achieved the necessary grades in the relevant subjects.

Commenting, Runnymede director Dr Rob Berkeley said:

*“These figures show yet again that our schools are failing many minority ethnic students. Inequality in achievement between different ethnic groups has been a persistent issue in the education system, and the English Baccalaureate highlights that unequal attainment is a greater issue than we previously thought.”*

He added: *“Given these inequalities, we are extremely concerned that there are no strategic initiatives from the government to tackle this issue. Ring fenced funding for ethnic minority achievement is urgently needed, in a similar vein to what is available for children on free school meals under the Pupil Premium”*

Commenting, Professor David Gillborn, of the Institute of Education, said:

*“The English Baccalaureate worsens race inequalities in any selection system that adopts it. Black Caribbean young people are half as likely to attain the English Bacc compared with their white counterparts and so they are immediately disadvantaged by the imposition of a measure that they do not have a fair chance of attaining.”*

He added: *“The key problem with the English Bacc is that most pupils do not even have the opportunity to achieve the required grades. Research has consistently shown that teachers expect less from black pupils, whom they place in less prestigious subjects and in lower level exam papers where the highest grades are simply not available.”*

## **Notes to Editors**

1. Rob Berkeley and David Gillborn are available for interview. To arrange an interview, or for any other queries, please call Vicki Butler on [vicki@runnymedetrust.org](mailto:vicki@runnymedetrust.org) or 020 7377 9222.
2. The Runnymede Trust is a social policy research organisation focused on race equality and race relations. We work by:
  - Identifying barriers to race equality and good race relations
  - Enabling effective action for social change
  - Influencing policy at all levels through providing thought leadership and robust evidence

Further information is available on the Runnymede website:

[www.runnymedetrust.org](http://www.runnymedetrust.org)

3. Further information on the Institute of Education is available here:

<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/>

4. The original data was provided by the government in response to a parliamentary question asked by Shabana Mahmood MP. The full question and answer is available here:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm110513/text/110513w0002.htm#11051351002372>