

## **Academy of Social Sciences Response to Smith Review**

21 July 2017

The Academy of Social Sciences welcomes Professor Sir Adrian Smith's important [Review of Post 16 Mathematics](#), and the breadth and depth of his analysis. We were glad to see his recognition that number and data skills are important for groups far beyond those who will go on to study maths and sciences at university. We agree with his assessment that data and number skills will be increasingly important for those studying social science subjects and working in social science careers after university, and that in the long-term the UK must raise its game in expecting virtually all students to engage with number and data skills after age 16.

The Academy particularly welcomes Sir Adrian's appreciation that the long-standing challenge of improving UK schooling in mathematics and statistics will require having different pathways by which school students with different aims and aspirations can improve their data and number skills. This will include increasing the quantitative content in various A-level subjects (such as geography, psychology and so on), greatly increasing the provision and take up of 'core maths' qualifications, as well as increasing take-up in mathematics and statistics AS and A levels. We understand that this will require greater investment in teaching capacities and skills, and that this will take time.

The Academy of Social Sciences will do its part to work with our member learned societies and with universities to improve better signalling of the importance of these skills to schools, school students and undergraduates in the social sciences. Indeed, we are working with SAGE Publishing to produce summaries of the evidence about the importance of data and number skills for all these audiences.

We also note that the funding challenges that Sir Adrian identifies will require targeted investment by the Department for Education. In addition to the funding challenges for core maths and further mathematics that Sir Adrian addresses, we believe that the DfE should also consider funding for schools offering AS maths as a stand-alone qualification for those students who would benefit from qualifications higher than core maths but who are doing three other A-levels; our view is that this could be particularly helpful in raising skills for aspiring social scientists (and some other sciences as well). While this would require changes to the funding model and the AS exam regime, it would fit in well with current teaching provision, helping matters in the short-term. We believe it is also an essential step in ensuring provision of appropriate routes for the widest range of students to improve their skills in number and data analysis.

### **Commenting, Professor Roger Goodman, Chair of the Academy of Social Sciences, said:**

"To meet the challenges that lie ahead, and in the light of the UK's current policies on industrial strategy, the UK needs to extend its support for the highest level of number and data skills that students could aim for, and we believe AS maths is an important ingredient in

this. Appropriate pathways to developing and improving these skills would be of immense benefit to many aspiring social scientists.

“The Academy of Social Sciences applauds the thrust of Sir Adrian’s Review and is already engaged in work, including with our member learned societies, to ensure there is clearer signalling to universities, schools, students and undergraduates, about the growing importance of number and data skills.”