

Greater Manchester Baccalaureate (MBacc) Young People's Perspective



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Introduction

About the Greater Manchester Youth Combined Authority (GMYCA)

The creation of the Greater Manchester Youth Combined Authority (GMYCA) in February 2018 marked a ground breaking initiative, establishing a platform where young people can influence the policy-making processes.

The first of its kind, the GMYCA brings together young people from all 10 youth councils and 16 youth-focused organisations to provide advice to the Mayor and the Combined Authority on crucial matters and initiatives.

What we do

Our purpose is to scrutinise and provide effective recommendations for projects within the Greater Manchester (GM) region. Notably, projects like the Our Pass, which grants free bus travel and discounted tram fares to those aged 16-18, stand as testament to our commitment to fostering tangible improvements and benefits for young people.

Our input to MBacc

In our November 2023 monthly meeting, we had the privilege of engaging with the MBacc Team for the first time. After a presentation detailing the projects concept and current plans, we embarked on a collaborative discussion, sharing our perspectives, concerns, and innovative ideas. The Mbacc Team then adapted the project's trajectory according to our feedback including our ideas and creating solutions to our concerns.

Following this, Mayor Andy Burnham entrusted us with a significant responsibility to capture the opinions and desires of young people in GM regarding the Mbacc project. Therefore, we devised a survey sent across GM to collect a diverse arrange of opinions, critiques, and suggestions from our peers. Using this, we have produced three core recommendations, referred to as our '3 Asks', from the viewpoint of the young people in GM.

This report was written by members of the Youth Combined Authority- Maisha, Sapphire, David, Whitney and Anastasia.



An image of the YCA November 2023 meeting, where Sharon Weetman presented the MBacc work to the group for the first time

Why MBacc?

Why is Mbacc in Greater Manchester needed

In our current education system, from the moment we are able to shape our own educational journey, we are immediately pushed towards the more academic route.

We are encouraged to pick options that make us more attractive students to universities. We are told to complete our GCSEs, then A levels then, finally, university. It is a clear, straightforward, well-trodden route that is extensively supported by academic institutions.

Academic vs Technical

This is great for those of us who want to undergo the academic route but what support is available for those who want to pursue a more technical route? What information is available to students about alternative routes? What are the pathways to these routes? This imbalance in the education system is what the Mbacc aims to address.

Apprenticeship Support

Apprenticeships are often the less sought out alternatives to university and those that often undertake this route feel alienated, blindly navigating the apprentice realm as they don't tend to have additional support catered for this route. As well as this, apprentice schemes often fail to outline a syllabus style outline of what they'll be covering under the scheme.

The EDSK detailed on their report that over 47% of their apprentices fail to complete their apprenticeships. There are numerous reasons for this but 70% (115,000) of them stated it was due to the poor quality of their training.

So quite clearly there needs some form of review of the apprenticeship training. As well as providing additional support to adjust to work life for apprentices, something that externally matches the university's support network, which will in return sustain them throughout the crucial developmental years in young adulthood.

Apprenticeships used to be more about the willingness to learn and focused less on academia; however, it has started to shift towards grades driven in their selection process, thus directly excluding the candidates that would benefit most from it and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This is also seen through substantial amounts of apprentices receiving low pay; some making less than minimum wage which is yet another deterrent when choosing which route they want to take.

Why MBacc?

The MBacc will give a clear and equal path to all young people in Greater Manchester, whether they want to take the academic or technical route. The MBacc will benefit young people by:



Creating a clear alternative path to support those that want to pursue technical careers



Linking young people directly to employers



Helping young people develop valuable skills that will enable them to thrive in the world of employment

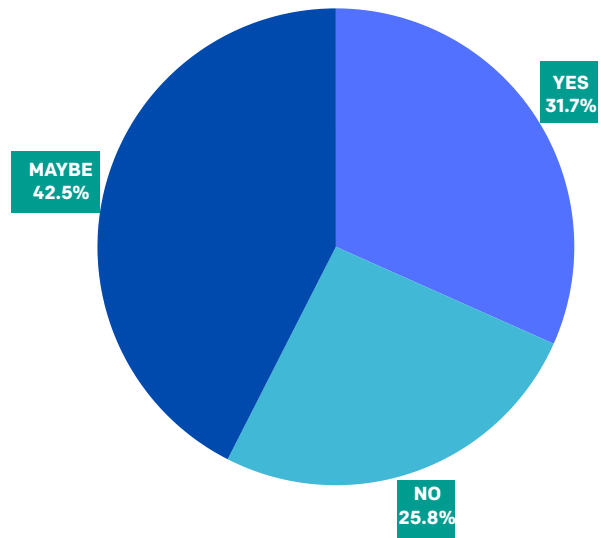
The Current Options

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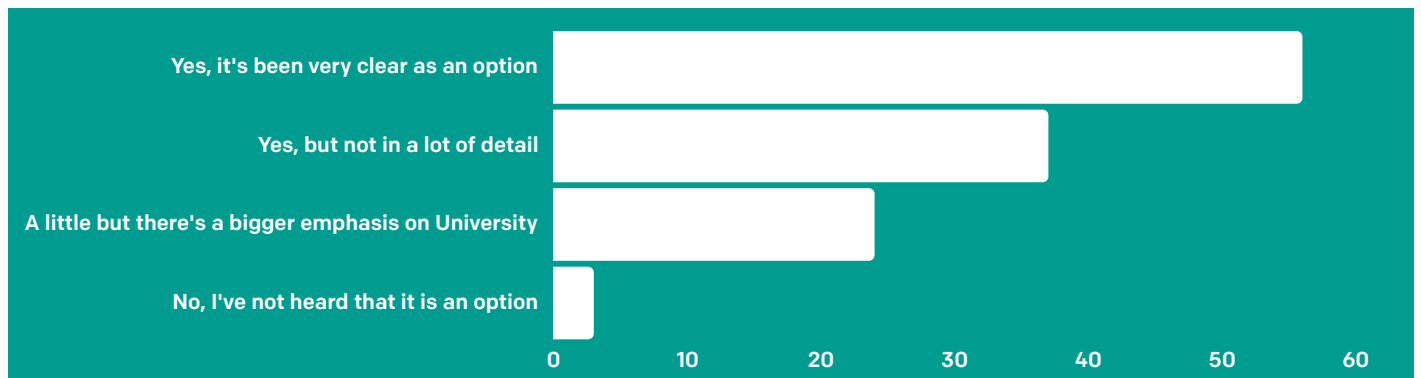
What do young people think about their current options?

In order to create this report, we drew upon two forms of information. Firstly, we summarised the discussions of the YCA during their November 2023 meeting around the MBacc. Secondly, we created and shared a survey for young people across Greater Manchester to gather more specific feedback from those outside of the YCA, which received 120 responses.

Q: Thinking about when you will/you have chosen subjects in school e.g. GCSEs, do you think you have had enough options for your chosen career?



Q: Thinking about the career information you have received in school, have you been told about apprenticeships as an option?



In the notes of the November YCA meeting the very first bullet point read 'Currently- some find GCSE choices boring,' A statement which I've found being replicated in my discussions with people in my age group as well as those in younger years selecting their GCSE options.

However one major concern which can be gathered from the survey is of many people believing that they do not have enough options. Students were asked, 'do you think you have had enough options for your chosen career?' They had the options of Yes, No and Maybe. In total only 68% of respondents answered either No or Maybe, further emphasising the need to have a fresh technical route for students in Greater Manchester.

Our Findings

After crunching the numbers of the survey there are a few notable takeaways. ONS figures at the start of 2023 showed that 5.3% of people had apprenticeships as their highest level of qualification. This may be explained by the 53% of students revealing that the option of having an apprenticeship had not been explained in detail.

A worrying statistic considering that only 30% of respondents answered with the yes option when asked if they had enough options for their chosen career. Taking an apprenticeship may well be the best option for those who plan to, or would like to take a more technical career route, a fact which seems to be being increasingly ignored by career advisors and parents.

By far the most one-sided response to a question on the survey was Question 4, 'Have you heard of the MBACC before?'. Only 10% of people who did the survey said Yes to this question with the overwhelming majority of people saying that they had never heard of the proposed scheme.

Only one in five have heard of the MBacc



Finding advice and information

Students across Manchester, including those who don't take the traditional GCSE to A-Level to University route seem to have found their other choices through websites such as GMACS.

However, another interesting statistic from the survey was that 10% of respondents found their career information through social media. In our 'Asks' section of this report, we request having a designated website/portal echoed by the majority of respondents. As more and more people receive their advice from social media, a locally targeted social media campaign, similar to that of the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service in the summer 2023, may have to be considered in the next couple of years as the MBacc is rolled out into schools. When asked about the main concerns about selecting the MBacc route the respondents said that a lack of information would be a major hinderance. A website or some kind of easy access to information will be crucial to the programmes success.

When answering the question about where young people find careers support, they said mostly through school resources with 59% of the response. So one of the best ways to encourage the MBacc route is through getting the career advisors, form teachers and tutorial leaders on board at the initial roll out. When students responded in relation to GCSE subjects 52.5% think they may have seen enough variety in courses for them towards their future career.

1

Have a designated website/portal for MBacc, where young people and others can go to get all information regarding this option



2

Make apprenticeships a more attractive opportunity, through promotion of a GM Apprentice Living wage for young people on apprenticeships



3

Create an interactive route map for the MBacc, showing specific pathways for different jobs or different subjects chosen at GCSE level



Thanks

We would like to thank the Greater Manchester Combined Authority for the chance to be able to work on this amazing project. We are truly honoured to be able to take part in what will be a major step forward for education in our city. In particular, we wish to thank Sharon Weetman for working alongside us on this report and engaging with the YCA.

We wish to thank Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham, who has repeatedly given us his support and backing. His whole hearted dedication to our group as well as the city is not something we take for granted so we'd also like to give a massive thank you to him.



Members of the GMYCA 2022-2024 cohort alongside Mayor Andy Burnham during their December 2023 meeting, when this report was requested.



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**YOUTH
COMBINED
AUTHORITY**
DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY
FOR GREATER MANCHESTER

Facilitated by:

youth focus^{NW}
Improving the lives of young people