

Confirmed Assessment Arrangements for Reformed AS and A level Qualifications

covering:

A levels and AS qualifications:

Ancient languages
Geography
Mathematics
Further mathematics
Modern foreign languages



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Confirmed assessment arrangements for reformed GCSEs, AS qualifications and A level qualifications for first teaching in 2016

In July 2014 we consulted on the assessment arrangements for a number of qualifications that will be first taught from September 2016. The Department for Education (DfE) consulted in parallel on proposed content requirements for the same qualifications.

In the table below we list those subjects on which we consulted and, where we have already consulted on arrangements for GCSEs or AS qualifications and A levels in that subject, we outline where the development of the subject is up to.

	GCSE – covered in this consultation?	AS qualifications and A levels – covered in this consultation?
Ancient languages	No. We have already consulted ¹ and the new qualifications are due to be taught from September 2016.	Yes
Art and design	Yes	No. We have already consulted ² and new qualifications are accredited ahead of first teaching in September 2015.
Computer science	Yes	No. We have already consulted ³ and new qualifications are accredited ahead of first teaching in September 2015.
Dance	Yes	Yes

¹ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/modern-foreign-and-ancient-languages>

² <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/a-level-regulatory-requirements-october-2013>

³ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/a-level-regulatory-requirements-october-2013>

	GCSE – covered in this consultation?	AS qualifications and A levels – covered in this consultation?
Geography	No. We have already consulted ⁴ and the new qualifications are due to be taught from September 2016.	Yes
Mathematics	No. We have already consulted ⁵ and new qualifications are accredited ahead of first teaching in September 2015.	Yes however first teaching has now been postponed to 2017
Further mathematics	Not offered at GCSE	Yes, however first teaching has now been postponed to 2017
Modern foreign languages	No. We have already consulted ⁶ and the new qualifications are due to be taught from September 2016.	Yes
Music	Yes	Yes
Physical education	Yes	Yes

In this document we confirm the decisions we have made in relation to the AS and A level qualifications in:

- Ancient languages
- Geography
- Mathematics

⁴ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/gcse-reform-june-2013>

⁵ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/gcse-reform-june-2013>

⁶ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/modern-foreign-and-ancient-languages>

- Further mathematics
- Modern foreign languages.

Announcements about the outcomes of consultation on the following subjects will follow early in 2015:

- GCSE: Art and design, computer science, dance, music and physical education
- AS and A level: dance, music and physical education

There are a number of key decisions about the purpose and the design of reformed AS qualifications and A levels that we have already taken. You can find more information on the reforms to these qualifications on our website.⁷

In reaching these decisions we have carefully considered the responses to our consultation and the potential impact of our decisions in terms of regulatory burden and on those with protected characteristics. We are also publishing our assessments of the potential impact of our decisions.⁸

Assessment objectives

In light of the consultation responses and the updated content requirements, we have finalised the assessment objectives on which we consulted. We will include these assessment objectives in the subject-level conditions for these qualifications. In the meantime, however, we have put them on our website⁹ so that they can be considered alongside the subject content requirements published by the DfE.¹⁰

We have not yet decided what the final assessment objectives will be for AS qualifications and A levels in mathematics and further mathematics. Once these are finalised, we will confirm our decisions early in 2015.

Balance of exam and non-exam assessment

We have previously consulted on and agreed a common set of principles that we are applying to all GCSEs, AS qualifications and A levels as they are reformed. Where subject content can be validly assessed by exams, set and marked by exam boards,

⁷ www.gov.uk/government/publications/timeline-of-changes-to-gcse-as-and-a-levels

www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-the-facts-gcse-and-a-level-reform

⁸ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016

⁹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-objectives-ancient-languages-geography-and-mfl

¹⁰ www.gov.uk/government/speeches/publication-of-reformed-a-level-content

this should be the default method of assessment. Where other forms of assessment are necessary to assess essential subject skills or knowledge, the non-exam assessment must:

1. strike a balance between valid assessment of essential knowledge and skills, sound assessment practice and manageability;
2. be designed to fit the requirements of the particular subject, including the relative weighting of exams and other components assigned to it;
3. be designed so that the qualification is not easily distorted by external pressures from the wider system.

Having carefully considered the responses to our consultation and the updated subject content requirements against these principles, we have now decided what the balance of exam and non-exam assessment should be for the qualifications on which we consulted. The table below summarises the decisions we have taken about the amount of non-exam assessment needed for each of the AS and A level subjects covered in this document.

Where we have indicated that a subject will include a proportion of non-exam assessment, this weighting will be mandatory and will apply to all qualifications in that subject.

Table 1 – Overview of our decisions on the proportion of non-exam assessment.

Subject	AS qualification weighting of non-exam assessment	A level weighting of non-exam assessment
Ancient languages	None	None
Geography	None	20%
Mathematics	None	None
Further mathematics	None	None
Modern foreign languages	30%	30%

Ancient languages AS qualifications and A levels

AS qualifications and A levels in ancient languages are currently assessed entirely by exam. The content published by the DfE includes knowledge, understanding and skills that can all be assessed validly by exam. Responses to our consultation were mixed on whether there should be non-exam assessment in this subject. Some

respondents suggested that coursework would help students to develop independent study and research skills and to broaden their knowledge of the subject. However, this would not be in line with our principles on non-exam assessment. We have therefore decided that reformed AS qualifications and A levels in ancient languages should continue to be assessed entirely by exam.

Geography AS qualifications and A levels

In current geography AS qualifications and A levels students are expected to undertake fieldwork to develop their skills and understanding of the subject but they are not directly assessed on their fieldwork skills. In view of the importance of fieldwork to students' understanding of the subject and for progression to study geography in higher education, we have decided that reformed A levels in geography should have 20 per cent of marks allocated to non-exam assessment focused on fieldwork skills. We have decided that reformed AS qualifications in geography, however, should be assessed by exam only. Our decisions reflect the requirements of the subject content and take into account issues that we can see about the manageability of conducting non-exam assessment as part of AS qualifications, which will usually be taught over a one-year period.

Mathematics and further mathematics AS qualifications and A levels

As noted earlier in this document, the date for first teaching of these qualifications has been put back to September 2017. We have, however, taken decision on the balance of exam and non-exam assessment for these subjects.

We have decided that AS qualifications and A levels in mathematics and further mathematics should be assessed entirely by exam. Some responses to our consultation raised concerns about the constraints this would impose on the optional content in further mathematics consultations. Optional content is by definition not essential to the subject, which makes it difficult to argue that there is a need for non-exam assessment in this subject. Our decision not to permit non-exam assessment on the basis that any optional content must be assessable by exam is consistent with decisions we have taken for other reformed AS qualifications and A levels where not all of the content is prescribed. We therefore remain of the view that these subjects should be assessed entirely by exam.

Modern foreign languages AS qualifications and A levels

We proposed that 30 per cent of the assessment in the new AS qualifications and A levels in modern foreign languages should be by non-exam assessment. The content requires students to demonstrate spoken skills when giving presentations, having discussions and responding spontaneously to different themes and initiating face-to-face interactions in the target language. These skills cannot validly be assessed by exam. There was strong support from respondents to the consultation

for these proposals, which were seen to reflect the importance of speaking the target language. In light of this feedback and the continued focus on these skills in the subject content requirements, we have decided that 30 per cent of the assessment in the new AS qualifications and A levels in modern foreign languages should be by non-exam assessment.

The first language qualifications to be reformed based on the updated content requirements will be French, German and Spanish AS qualifications and A levels. These will be developed in time for first teaching in 2016. Reformed qualifications in other languages will be reformed in time for first teaching in 2017. We have decided that all reformed AS qualifications and A levels in modern languages should have the same requirements for non-exam assessment, with no exceptions for specific languages. This means that in future, all AS qualifications and A levels in modern languages must require students to demonstrate their spoken skills, in accordance with the subject content requirements.

Remaining 2016 subjects

We and the DfE have also recently consulted in parallel on the content and assessment arrangements for a further group of qualifications planned for first teaching in September 2016. These are:

- citizenship studies, cooking and nutrition, design and technology, and drama GCSEs;
- drama and theatre AS qualifications and A levels.

We are currently considering the responses to our consultation and will confirm the final assessment arrangements for these qualifications in February 2015, when DfE will also be publishing the final content requirements.

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