

Developing New GCSEs, AS and A Levels for First Teaching in 2017 – Part 1

covering:

GCSEs

Astronomy
Business
Economics
Engineering
Geology
Psychology
Sociology

AS and A Levels

Design and Technology
Environmental Science
History of Art
Music Technology
Philosophy



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1. Introduction

The scope of this consultation

- 1.1 As most readers will know, changes are being made to GCSEs, AS and A levels taken by students in England. The new qualifications are being introduced in three phases. New qualifications in the first phase will be taught from September 2015¹ and those in the second phase from September 2016.² This consultation is about the design and assessment of some of the new qualifications that will first be taught from September 2017.
- 1.2 In this consultation we are seeking views on the assessment arrangements and assessment objectives for new qualifications in the subjects detailed in the table below, and on whether the GCSEs in these subjects should be tiered.

Subject	GCSE – covered in this consultation?	AS and A level – covered in this consultation?
Astronomy	Yes	No.
Business	Yes	No – we have already consulted and the new qualifications are due to be taught from September 2015
Design and technology	No – we have already consulted ³ and the new qualifications are due to be taught from September 2017	Yes
Economics	Yes	No – we have already consulted and the new qualifications are due to

¹ New GCSEs to be taught from 2015: English language, English literature, mathematics. New AS and A levels to be taught from 2015: English language and literature, English language, English literature, physics, chemistry, biology, art and design, computer science, sociology, economics, history, business, psychology.

² New GCSEs to be taught from 2016: French, German, Spanish, ancient languages, history, geography, science, biology, chemistry, physics, art and design, dance, music, computer science, physical education, drama, religious studies, citizenship studies, food preparation and nutrition. New AS and A levels to be taught from 2016: modern foreign languages, ancient languages, mathematics, further mathematics, geography, dance, music, physical education, drama and theatre, religious studies.

³ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-reform-regulations-for-design-and-technology. This consultation closes on 26th August 2015.

		be taught from September 2015
Engineering	Yes	No.
Environmental science	No	Yes
Geology	Yes	No – we plan to consult in our later 2017 consultation
History of art	No	Yes
Music technology	No	Yes
Philosophy	No	Yes
Psychology	Yes	No – we have already consulted and the new qualifications are due to be taught from September 2015
Sociology	Yes	No – we have already consulted and the new qualifications are due to be taught from September 2015

- 1.3 The Department for Education is consulting⁴ in parallel on the content for the subjects included in this consultation. If you wish to comment on the proposed content for any of the subjects please respond to that consultation.
- 1.4 We will make decisions on the structure and assessment of these qualifications in light of responses to this consultation. We will then consult on the technical regulatory requirements that exam boards wishing to design, deliver and award the qualifications must meet.
- 1.5 It is intended that the exam boards will develop new qualifications in the subjects listed above ready for first teaching by schools and colleges from September 2017. The exam boards' specifications, to be taught from that date, should be available to schools and colleges from autumn 2016.

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-content-for-teaching-from-september-2017

- 1.6 The subject content for further subjects is being developed to a different timescale with a further consultation⁵ in September 2015, in time for first teaching of the new qualifications from September 2017.⁶
- 1.7 We have summarised below the key features of all new GCSEs, AS and A levels. We do not repeat here the reasons why GCSEs, AS and A levels are being reformed, the options about the general approach to the structure and assessments of GCSEs, AS and A levels we have considered, or the full range of decisions we have already taken. This information can be found on our website.⁷ We also set out in Appendix A some of the documents relating to the background to these important reforms and progress so far.

GCSEs – purpose and key features

- 1.8 The primary purpose of new GCSEs is to provide evidence of students' achievements against demanding and fulfilling content, and a strong foundation for further academic and vocational study and for employment. If required, they should also be able to provide a basis for schools and colleges to be held accountable for the performance of all their students. New GCSEs should be accessible, with good teaching, to the range of students who take current GCSEs.
- 1.9 GCSEs will be linear qualifications, with exams taken in one period at the end of the course. The qualifications will use new and more demanding subject content than is now the case. Students' performance will be reported with a grade from a new scale – 9 to 1, with 9 being the highest grade. As now, students' performance may be unclassified (U), in which case they will not receive a certificate.
- 1.10 GCSEs should be designed to enable all students to show what they know, understand and can do, and their grades awarded accordingly. The assessments should stretch students of all abilities. Students should not be faced with assessments that are unsuitable for them.
- 1.11 Most new GCSEs will be untiered, meaning that all students will study the same content, take the same assessments and have access to the full range of grades. GCSEs will be tiered only where, because of the nature of the subject, an untiered qualification cannot both stretch the most able students and be

⁵ For these subjects, the Department for Education will consult on the proposed content and we will consult on assessment arrangements and assessment objectives.

⁶ DfE sets out in its consultation those subjects for which further work is taking place to develop subject content: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-content-for-teaching-from-september-2017

⁷ www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual

accessible and rewarding for less able students, while also being manageable in terms of the length and costs of assessments. We are proposing that the GCSEs in the subjects on which we are now consulting should be untiered.

- 1.12 Where possible, subjects will be assessed wholly by exam. Other forms of assessment will be used when essential subject content cannot be validly assessed in this way.
- 1.13 Where non-exam assessment is used the approach adopted will be appropriate for each subject. In all cases non-exam assessment should be valid. In other words, the assessment must assess what it is intended to assess. It should also be manageable for schools and students and promote confidence in the qualification. Where non-exam assessment is used we will specify the weighting of exam and non-exam assessment and the aspects of the content to be assessed using non-exam assessment.
- 1.14 We have set out in this consultation whether we believe non-exam assessment is necessary for each subject and, where we believe it is, the appropriate balance of exam and non-exam assessment.

AS and A levels – purpose and key features

1.15 The objectives of A levels are to:

- define and assess achievement of the knowledge, skills and understanding that will be needed by students planning to progress to undergraduate study at a UK higher education establishment, particularly (although not only) in the same subject area, and to provide a strong foundation for further academic and vocational study and for employment;
- set out a robust and internationally comparable post-16 academic course of study to develop that knowledge, skills and understanding;
- permit UK universities to accurately identify the level of attainment of students;
- provide a basis for school and college accountability measures at age 18; and
- provide a benchmark of academic ability for employers.

1.16 The objectives of AS qualifications are to:

- provide evidence of students' achievements in a robust and internationally comparable post-16 course of study that is a subset of A level content; and

- enable students to broaden the range of subjects they study.

The structure of AS and A levels

- 1.17 AS and A levels will be linear. There will be less non-exam assessment than now in most subjects. A levels will continue to be graded A* to E and AS qualifications graded A to E. As now, students' performance may be unclassified (U), in which case they will not receive a certificate.
- 1.18 In line with government policy, the AS will be a stand-alone qualification. Students will not have to enter for an AS qualification in order to be awarded an A level. Students who do take an AS qualification and who progress to the A level will have to take all of the assessments for the A level. They will not be given credit towards the A level for any AS assessments they have taken.
- 1.19 The content for AS qualifications must be drawn from the content for the corresponding A level. Exam boards may design their AS and A level qualifications to facilitate co-teaching, although they must not compromise the quality of their A level qualifications in order to do so.

How to respond to this consultation

If you have an interest in GCSEs, AS and A levels we hope you will respond to this consultation.

This consultation covers a range of different subjects. You do not have to respond to all questions. You might prefer to answer those related to a specific subject only.

The closing date for responses is 24th September 2015.

You can respond to this consultation in one of three ways:

- Complete the online response at <http://surveys.ofqual.gov.uk/s3/gcse-as-and-a-levels-for-2017-part-one>.
- Email your response to consultations@ofqual.gov.uk Please include the consultation title (2017 GCSE, AS and A level subject requirements) in the subject line of the email and make clear who you are and in what capacity you are responding.
- Post your response to 2017 GCSE, AS and A level subject requirements, Ofqual, Spring Place, Coventry Business Park, Herald Avenue, Coventry, CV5 6UB, making clear who you are and in what capacity you are responding.

Evaluating the responses

1.20 To evaluate responses properly, we need to know who is responding to the consultation and in what capacity. We will therefore only consider your response if you complete the information page.

1.21 A third party will evaluate the responses on our behalf. Any personal data (such as your name, address and any other identifying information) will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and our standard terms and conditions.

1.22 We will publish the evaluation of responses. Please note that we may publish all or part of your response unless you tell us (in your answer to the confidentiality question) that you want us to treat your response as confidential. If you tell us that you wish your response to be treated as confidential, we will not include your details in any published list of respondents, although we may quote from your response anonymously.

2. Assessing new GCSEs, AS and A levels

- 2.1 Assessments can take many forms, but they can broadly be divided into exams – which are taken by all students at once, under formal supervision, and which are set and marked by exam boards – and other forms of assessment.
- 2.2 Exams are traditionally used to assess knowledge and understanding. Many practical skills, such as those used to create an artefact or to produce a mix using music technology, we propose should be assessed in other ways.
- 2.3 The term ‘non-exam assessment’ covers a range of different forms of assessment. Non-exam assessments are not necessarily marked by a teacher, nor undertaken over an extended period of time. A performance may, for example, be undertaken under timed conditions and marked by a visiting exam board assessor, but because not all students will be assessed simultaneously it does not fall within our definition of ‘assessment by exam’.

Assessment in current GCSEs, AS and A levels

- 2.4 GCSEs, AS and A levels are currently assessed in several ways:
 - Exams set and marked by the exam boards.
 - Written assessments completed under non-exam conditions in which students complete written assessment tasks, set either by the exam board or by the teacher. The tasks are usually marked by a teacher, with samples of marked work being checked by exam board moderators who can adjust the marks to bring them in line with national standards. For some subjects exam boards mark the tasks directly.
 - Practical assessments, such as the design and making of a product in design and technology, are usually marked by a teacher. In some cases, marks for these can be adjusted in a similar way to those for written non-exam assessment. In other cases, there is no evidence of each student’s performance available for moderators to check. Some exam boards visit schools and colleges to mark performances directly.

Assessment in new GCSEs, AS and A levels

- 2.5 When considering whether a qualification in a subject should include non-exam assessment, we have applied the principles that we have already adopted for other reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels. These are as follows:
 - Non-exam assessment must be used when it is the only valid way to assess essential elements of the subject.

- Non-exam assessment must strike a balance between valid assessment of essential knowledge and skills, sound assessment practice and manageability.
 - Any non-exam assessment arrangements must be designed to fit the requirements of the particular subject, including the relative weighting of exams and other components assigned to it.
 - Non-exam assessment must be designed so that the qualification is not easily distorted by external pressures from the wider system.
- 2.6 Where subject content can be validly assessed by exams that are set and marked by exam boards, this should be the default method of assessment. But we recognise that other forms of assessment have their place.
- 2.7 In making our proposals for GCSEs, AS and A levels, we have taken advice from experts in each subject and have considered the requirements of the new proposed subject content. We have also considered how well the current assessments are working – for example, the extent to which they are validly assessing the skills, knowledge and understanding that they are intended to assess and the effectiveness and fairness with which the assessments discriminate between students.
- 2.8 We do not in all cases propose the same assessment approach in a subject for GCSEs, AS and A levels. Subject requirements at different levels vary and, in line with our principles, the amount of non-exam assessment that we propose reflects that. In addition, in our experience, the use of GCSEs in accountability measures puts them under greater pressure than AS and A levels.
- 2.9 In general, we believe that non-exam assessment causes greater difficulty in GCSEs than in AS and A levels for the following reasons:
- The GCSE cohort is larger, which can create logistical difficulties in organising, moderating and standardising non-exam assessment and the cohort is younger so typically requires more support to carry out these assessments.
 - GCSEs are subject to greater pressures as a result of their use in accountability arrangements.
 - GCSEs are smaller qualifications for which there is less available teaching time in each subject, adding to the logistical pressures of any non-exam assessment.

- 2.10 For certain A levels, some practical or performance-based subject skills are required for progression to higher education, making it more important that these are assessed, where possible.
- 2.11 Some students will take both an AS and an A level in a subject. We do not want students who take both qualifications in a subject to duplicate non-exam assessments covering the same or similar skills. This would be both inefficient and disruptive to teaching and learning. This is why in a number of subjects where there is non-exam assessment at A level, we have not proposed any non-exam assessment in AS qualifications. However, practical skills and/or performance are so integral to some subjects that non-exam assessment will be needed for both AS and A levels.
- 2.12 There is a view that subject content and other requirements that will not be assessed will not be taught. There is no doubt that the assessment structure of a qualification can lead teachers to deliver the curriculum in a way that will help their students to get the best marks. However, it is not possible to design qualifications that will assess validly and reliably all the knowledge and skills needed for a broad and deep study of each subject, so if teaching is focused narrowly on the test, the quality of education is likely to suffer. The design of assessments should not be compromised in order to regulate the delivery of the curriculum.
- 2.13 In order to strike a better balance between exam and non-exam assessment we are proposing three main changes to the way in which qualifications in the subjects on which we are consulting are assessed. We propose, in summary, to:
- define the percentage of marks to be allocated to exam and non-exam assessment, removing or reducing any current flexibility and promoting comparability between exam boards;
 - reduce or maintain the proportion of non-exam assessment that we have in the past permitted in GCSEs, AS and A levels; and
 - remove non-exam assessment from subjects where the content can be assessed by exam.
- 2.14 Where non-exam assessments are used, we will work with the exam boards to make sure that appropriate and robust arrangements are put in place. These will include the introduction of external marking where practical, strengthening the moderation of teacher marking where that is used, and other measures aimed at reducing incidents of malpractice.

Our proposals

2.15 Table 1 summarises the current and proposed assessment arrangements for the subjects in this consultation. These are explained in more detail in the relevant subject sections.

2.16 The existing regulatory requirements for assessment in these subjects were not designed to our current definition of non-exam assessment. Instead they were determined by the amount of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ assessment permitted. Therefore, in this consultation, when we describe the current weighting of non-exam assessment, we include the amount of assessment that is seen or could be permitted in current qualifications and which falls under our definition of non-exam assessment.

Table 1

Subject	GCSE		A level		AS qualification	
	Current weighting of non-exam assessment	Proposed weighting of non-exam assessment	Current weighting of non-exam assessment	Proposed weighting of non-exam assessment	Current weighting of non-exam assessment	Proposed weighting of non-exam assessment
Astronomy	25%	0%				
Business	25%	0%				
Design and technology⁸			30–60%	50%	30–60%	50%
Economics	0%	0%				
Engineering	60%	40%				
Environmental science⁹			0–25%	0%	0–25%	0%
Geology	25%	0%				
History of art			0%	0%	0%	0%
Music technology			65%	40%	70%	40%
Philosophy			0%	0%	0%	0%
Psychology	0%	0%				
Sociology	0%	0%				

⁸ The current subject content document for A level design and technology allows for between 30 and 60 per cent of the marks for the qualification to be assessed through non-exam assessment tasks. However, in practice the exam boards have designed their specifications so that between 50 and 60 per cent of the marks are to be assessed through non-exam assessment.

⁹ The current subject criteria document for A level environmental science allows for 25 per cent of the marks for the qualification to be assessed through non-exam assessment tasks. However, in practice the only exam board offering the qualification assesses it through 100 per cent exam assessment.

Changes to assessment objectives

2.17 The assessment objectives for each subject describe the principal abilities that students taking that qualification must be given the opportunity to develop and demonstrate. The assessment objectives have a key regulatory role in ensuring that:

- students are assessed on the relevant abilities for the subject and on an appropriate balance of those abilities; and
- requirements are comparable between different exam boards' qualifications, and over time.

2.18 Assessment objectives are included within the current subject criteria for GCSEs, AS and A levels. Exam boards must design qualifications so that students are given opportunities to demonstrate that they have met the assessment objectives in the context of the subject content.

2.19 Exam boards use the assessment objectives when they are designing and setting their assessments to ensure that the key abilities for the subject are targeted consistently, appropriately and proportionately. We use assessment objectives when considering whether exam boards' proposed qualifications meet our expectations through our accreditation process and when we monitor the design and delivery of assessments throughout the life of the qualification.

2.20 We have worked with subject and assessment experts to develop and improve the current assessment objectives. In revising these, we have aimed to make sure that they are as clear as possible and that they:

- fulfil their core purpose of describing the abilities that a student taking the relevant qualification should be required to demonstrate;
- specify only the abilities that students should be required to demonstrate, not the content itself;
- relate to each qualification as a whole, and so address the full range and balance of abilities that are relevant;
- are sufficiently precise and detailed that they can be used consistently for setting and evaluating assessments; and
- provide a degree of flexibility in their application to enable alternative approaches where these are legitimate.

2.21 We have also developed the proposed assessment objectives so that they reflect and help promote progression between GCSEs, AS and A levels.

- 2.22 Following this consultation we will finalise the assessment objectives on which we are consulting. We will make it a regulatory requirement that exam boards design their qualifications and their assessments in accordance with these objectives.
- 2.23 The draft assessment objectives on which we are consulting are set out below. We have also included the current assessment objectives so that the proposed changes are clear. In each case, we have developed the proposed set of assessment objectives to be consistent with the content proposals on which the Department for Education is consulting. Changes to those content proposals may therefore require us to reconsider the draft assessment objectives.

Tiering of GCSEs

- 2.24 We have previously confirmed that new GCSEs should only be tiered where a single set of assessments cannot, in a valid and manageable way, assess students across the full ability range. We set out the technical issues and arguments for and against tiering in our June 2013 consultation on new GCSEs.¹⁰ In summary, in some subjects, students of all abilities can understand and answer the same exam questions or complete the same assessment tasks. The level of their answers will, of course, vary in accordance with their abilities. In other subjects, common questions can be too easy for some students and inaccessible to others. For this latter type of subject, common assessment must include a sufficient number and range of questions or tasks to allow both the most able and the least able students to demonstrate their abilities. Such assessment can be long and potentially demotivating for students at both ends of the ability range.
- 2.25 When a GCSE is tiered, a student enters for either the higher or the foundation tier assessments. This allows the assessment to be targeted to narrower ability ranges, with the higher tier stretching the most able and the foundation tier being accessible and rewarding for students who find the subject more difficult.
- 2.26 Students entered for the foundation tier cannot achieve the highest grades, however well they perform in their assessments. This creates a risk that some students who are entered for that tier will not have their full abilities recognised and rewarded.
- 2.27 We have decided that tiering should be used in new GCSEs only when essential.

¹⁰ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/gcse-reform-june-2013>

2.28 None of the GCSE subjects included in this consultation are currently tiered. We propose that the new GCSEs in these subjects should not be tiered either.

3. Subject-specific proposals

Astronomy

GCSE

3.1 The DfE is consulting on the content for GCSEs in astronomy.¹¹

Proposed assessment arrangements

- 3.2 Current GCSEs in astronomy are assessed through a mixture of exam assessment (75 per cent of the marks) and non-exam assessment (25 per cent of the marks). Having reviewed the proposed subject content, we are of the view that all of the content can be assessed through exams. We therefore propose that reformed GCSEs in astronomy should be assessed by exam only.
- 3.3 We set out above the principles that we have applied when determining whether each of the reformed qualifications should include assessment other than by exam. One of our principles is that non-exam assessment must be used where it is the only valid way to assess essential elements of the subject. In our view the subject content for GCSE astronomy is capable of being assessed by exam in its entirety. These principles were not in place when current GCSEs in astronomy were being developed, and so content that was capable of assessment by exam was assessed through non-exam assessment. The new principles have been applied across all reformed qualifications, and in a number of cases they have led to the amount of non-exam assessment being either reduced or removed from reformed qualifications.
- 3.4 We also propose that twenty per cent of the marks on the exam papers will be used for the indirect assessment of observational skills, drawing on the knowledge and understanding that students will have gained through observational work undertaken during the course.

Tiering

- 3.5 GCSEs in astronomy are not currently tiered. We propose that the new GCSEs in astronomy should not be tiered either.

¹¹ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-content-for-teaching-from-september-2017

Proposed assessment objectives

3.6 The proposed assessment objectives specify the core abilities for the subject more clearly than the current assessment objectives. We propose that the current permitted weighting ranges should be replaced with an absolute weighting to enhance comparability between different qualifications in this subject.

	Assessment objective	Weighting
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ scientific ideas ▪ scientific techniques and procedures. 	40%
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ scientific ideas ▪ scientific techniques and procedures. 	35%
AO3	Analyse information and ideas to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ interpret and evaluate astronomical observations, data and methods ▪ make judgements and draw conclusions ▪ develop and improve observational procedures. 	25%

Current assessment objectives

3.7 Since this is the first time that core content has been developed in this subject, we have not previously specified the use of a particular set of assessment objectives. The only exam board that currently awards this qualification uses its own set of assessment objectives. These are set out below.

	Assessment objective	Weighting
AO1	<p>Knowledge and understanding of science and how science works</p> <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the scientific facts, concepts, techniques and terminology in the specification ▪ show understanding of how scientific evidence is collected and its relationship with scientific explanations and theories ▪ show understanding of how scientific knowledge and ideas change over time and how these changes are validated. 	31–40%
AO2	<p>Application of skills, knowledge and understanding</p> <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ apply concepts, develop arguments or draw conclusions related to familiar and unfamiliar situations ▪ plan a scientific task, such as a practical procedure, testing an idea, answering a question, or solving a problem ▪ show understanding of how decisions about science and technology are made to different situations, including contemporary situations and those raising ethical issues ▪ evaluate the impact of scientific developments or processes on individuals, communities or the environment. 	31–40%
AO3	<p>Practical, enquiry and data-handling skills</p> <p>Students should be able to:</p>	21–30%

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ carry out practical tasks safely and skilfully▪ evaluate the methods they use when collecting first-hand and secondary data▪ analyse and interpret qualitative and quantitative data from different sources▪ consider the validity and reliability of data in presenting and justifying conclusions.	
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Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs in astronomy should be assessed entirely by exams?

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs in astronomy should not be tiered?

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in astronomy?

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in astronomy?

Question 5: Do you have any further comments relating to the assessment of this subject?¹²

AS and A level

3.8 We are not consulting on an AS or A level in astronomy at this time.

¹² Please note that any comments relating to the subject content should be directed to the Department for Education.

Business

GCSE

3.9 The DfE is consulting on the content for GCSEs in business.¹³

Proposed assessment arrangements

3.10 Current GCSEs in business are assessed through a mixture of exam assessment (75 per cent of the marks) and non-exam assessment (25 per cent of the marks). Having reviewed the proposed subject content, we are of the view that all of the content can be assessed through exams. We therefore propose that reformed GCSEs in business should be assessed by exam only.

3.11 We set out above the principles that we have applied when determining whether each of the reformed qualifications should include assessment other than by exam. One of our principles is that non-exam assessment must be used where it is the only valid way to assess essential elements of the subject. In our view the subject content for GCSE business is capable of being assessed by exam in its entirety. These principles were not in place when current GCSEs in business were being developed, and so content that was capable of assessment by exam was assessed through non-exam assessment. The new principles have been applied across all reformed qualifications, and in a number of cases they have led to the amount of non-exam assessment being either reduced or removed from reformed qualifications.

Tiering

3.12 GCSEs in business are not currently tiered. We propose that the new GCSEs in business should not be tiered either.

¹³ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-content-for-teaching-from-september-2017

Proposed assessment objectives

3.13 The proposed assessment objectives specify the core abilities for the subject more clearly than the current assessment objectives. We propose that the current permitted weighting ranges should be replaced with an absolute weighting to enhance comparability between different qualifications in this subject.

	Assessment objective	Weighting
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of business concepts, issues and terminology.	35%
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding of concepts and issues to business contexts and to interpret business information.	35%
AO3	Analyse and evaluate business information and issues to demonstrate understanding of the impact of these on business activity, to make reasoned judgements and justified business decisions.	30%
Specifications must ensure that at least 10% of the subject marks are allocated to the assessment of quantitative skills at a level appropriate to the qualification.		

Current assessment objectives

	Assessment objective	Weighting
AO1	Recall, select and communicate their knowledge and understanding of concepts, issues and terminology.	25–35%
AO2	Apply skills, knowledge and understanding in a variety of contexts and in planning and carrying out investigations and tasks.	35–45%
AO3	Analyse and evaluate evidence, make reasoned judgements and present appropriate conclusions.	25–35%

Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs in business should be assessed entirely by exams?

Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs in business should not be tiered?

Question 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in business?

Question 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in business?

Question 10: Do you have any further comments relating to the assessment of this subject?¹⁴

AS and A level

3.14 The content for AS and A levels in business has already been developed and published by the DfE.¹⁵ We have previously consulted on the assessment arrangements and assessment objectives for these qualifications, which are due to be taught from September 2015.

Design and technology

GCSE

3.15 Our consultation on the assessment arrangements for GCSE design and technology¹⁶ has already been published. The qualification is being reformed for first teaching from September 2017.

AS and A level

3.16 The DfE is consulting on the content for AS and A levels in design and technology.¹⁷

Proposed assessment arrangements

¹⁴ Please note that any comments relating to the subject content should be directed to the Department for Education.

¹⁵ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-for-business

¹⁶ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-reform-regulations-for-design-and-technology

¹⁷ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-content-for-teaching-from-september-2017

- 3.17 In current AS and A levels in design and technology, there is a permitted range of 30 to 60 per cent non-exam assessment. The majority of specifications have set the amount of non-exam assessment at 60 per cent, although one exam board's specification currently allows for 50 per cent non-exam assessment.
- 3.18 The new content, which requires students to design and make products and prototypes, could not, in our view, be validly assessed by exam alone. Non-exam assessment will allow for the direct assessment of the student's ability to undertake iterative problem-solving activities in response to realistic contexts, which result in products/prototypes that can be tested and evaluated in use.
- 3.19 AS specifications will require students to undertake at least three discrete practical activities that between them enable their skills, knowledge and understanding of design and technology to be demonstrated.
- 3.20 At A level, students must undertake a substantial 'design, make and evaluate' project that fully exemplifies their skills, knowledge and understanding of design and technology. The project should be of sufficient complexity and offer an appropriate degree of uncertainty of outcome to allow students to demonstrate their abilities in the iterative processes of designing, making, testing, refining, improving and evaluating.
- 3.21 In addition to the practical elements of the course, the draft content places a substantial emphasis on the knowledge and understanding requirements for this subject. We believe that a 50/50 split between exam and non-exam assessment will allow the subject content for both AS and A level qualifications to be assessed in a valid way, while reflecting the balance set out in the subject content.
- 3.22 We are also of the view that the different specifications offered by the different exam boards should contain the same amount of exam and non-exam assessment. This should act to enhance comparability between different qualifications in this subject.

Proposed assessment objectives

- 3.23 The proposed assessment objectives specify the core abilities for the subject more clearly than the current assessment objectives. The proposed weighting ranges are narrower and more specific, which should enhance comparability between different qualifications in this subject.

	Assessment objective	Weighting	
		A level	AS
AO1	Explore contexts for designing and making, investigating materials and processes to develop a commercial product.	15–20%	15–20%
AO2	Create solutions that meet user needs, employing an iterative design process and realising outcomes.	30–35%	30–35%
AO3	Analyse and evaluate design decisions and outcomes made by themselves and others.	20–25%	15–20%
AO4	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of materials and components, technical principles, manufacturing procedures and design practice.	30–35%	30–35%

Current assessment objectives

	Assessment objective	Weighting		
		AS level	A2 level	A level
AO1	Learners should demonstrate specific knowledge and understanding and be able to apply that knowledge and understanding in combination with appropriate skills in their designing, and should communicate ideas and outcomes and demonstrate strategies for evaluation.	40–60%	40–60%	40–60%
AO2	Learners should be able to demonstrate and apply skills, knowledge and understanding of relevant materials, processes and techniques, and use materials and equipment to produce suitable and appropriate outcomes, and should communicate ideas and outcomes and demonstrate strategies for evaluation.	40–60%	40–60%	40–60%

Question 11: To what extent do you agree or disagree that for AS qualifications in design and technology, 50 per cent of the available marks should be allocated to exams and 50 per cent to non-exam assessment?

Question 12: To what extent do you agree or disagree that for A levels in design and technology, 50 per cent of the available marks should be allocated to exams and 50 per cent to non-exam assessment?

Question 13: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for AS and A levels in design and technology?

Question 14: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for AS qualifications in design and technology?

Question 15: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for A levels in design and technology?

Question 16: Do you have any further comments relating to the assessment of this subject?¹⁸

Economics

GCSE

3.24 The DfE is consulting on the content for GCSEs in economics.¹⁹

Proposed assessment arrangements

3.25 GCSEs in economics are currently assessed wholly by exam. In our view, the draft content includes only knowledge, understanding and skills that could be validly assessed by exam. We therefore propose that reformed GCSEs in economics should also be assessed by exam only.

¹⁸ Please note that any comments relating to the subject content should be directed to the Department for Education.

¹⁹ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-content-for-teaching-from-september-2017

Tiering

3.26 GCSEs in economics are not currently tiered. We propose that the new GCSEs in economics should not be tiered either.

Proposed assessment objectives

3.27 The proposed assessment objectives specify the core abilities for the subject more clearly than the current assessment objectives. We propose that the current permitted weighting ranges should be replaced with an absolute weighting to enhance comparability between different qualifications in this subject.

	Assessment objective	Weighting
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of economic concepts, issues and terminology.	35%
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding of economic concepts, issues and terminology to a variety of contexts.	35%
AO3	Analyse and evaluate economic evidence to demonstrate understanding of economic behaviour, make reasoned judgements and present appropriate economic conclusions.	30%
GCSE specifications in economics must ensure that at least 10% of the subject marks are allocated to the assessment of quantitative skills at a level appropriate to the qualification.		

Current assessment objectives

	Assessment objective	Weighting
AO1	Recall, select and communicate their knowledge and understanding of concepts, issues and terminology.	25–35%
AO2	Apply skills, knowledge and understanding in a variety of contexts.	25–35%
AO3	Analyse and evaluate evidence, make reasoned judgements and present appropriate conclusions.	30–40%

Question 17: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs in economics should be assessed entirely by exams?

Question 18: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs in economics should not be tiered?

Question 19: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in economics?

Question 20: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in economics?

Question 21: Do you have any further comments relating to the assessment of this subject?²⁰

AS and A level

3.28 The content for AS and A levels in economics has already been developed and published by the DfE.²¹ We have previously consulted on the assessment arrangements and assessment objectives for these qualifications, which are due to be taught from September 2015.

Engineering

GCSE

3.29 The DfE is consulting on the content for GCSEs in engineering.²²

Proposed assessment arrangements

3.30 In current GCSEs in engineering, 60 per cent of the assessment is non-exam assessment.

3.31 The new content requires students to draw upon their knowledge and understanding of engineering in order to apply key practical skills to create engineering solutions to a given problem. They will be required to produce an engineered product from a given brief. These subject content requirements could not, in our view, be validly assessed through exams. We therefore

²⁰ Please note that any comments relating to the subject content should be directed to the Department for Education.

²¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-for-economics

²² www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-content-for-teaching-from-september-2017

propose that engineering should be assessed through a mixture of exam and non-exam assessment.

3.32 However, the new content reduces the emphasis upon the design element of the qualification, as compared with current GCSEs in engineering. The new content is split into six areas – five relate to the knowledge and understanding required for the course, and one relates to the application of practical engineering skills drawing on students’ knowledge and understanding. We therefore propose a reduction in the amount of non-exam assessment to 40 per cent as, in our view, this appropriately reflects the balance of the new content.

Tiering

3.33 GCSEs in engineering are not currently tiered. We propose that the new GCSEs in engineering should not be tiered either.

Proposed assessment objectives

3.34 The proposed assessment objectives specify the core abilities for the subject more clearly than the current assessment objectives. We propose that the current permitted weighting ranges should be replaced with an absolute weighting to enhance comparability between different qualifications in this subject.

	Assessment objective	Weighting
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of engineering principles.	35%
AO2	Apply skills, knowledge and understanding in a practical context through the use of a range of tools, equipment, materials, components and manufacturing processes.	40%
AO3	Analyse and evaluate evidence arising from a range of engineering contexts.	25%

Current assessment objectives

	Assessment objective	Weighting
AO1	Recall, select and communicate their knowledge and understanding of a range of contexts.	25–35%
AO2	Apply skills, knowledge and understanding, including quality standards, in a variety of contexts and to plan and carry out investigations and tasks, involving a range of tools, equipment, materials and components.	45–55%
AO3	Analyse and evaluate evidence, make reasoned judgements and present conclusions.	15–25%

Question 22: To what extent do you agree or disagree that for GCSEs in engineering, 60 per cent of the available marks should be allocated to exams and 40 per cent to non-exam assessment?

Question 23: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs in engineering should not be tiered?

Question 24: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in engineering?

Question 25: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in engineering?

Question 26: Do you have any further comments relating to the assessment of this subject?²³

AS and A level

3.35 We are not consulting on AS or A levels in engineering at this time.

²³ Please note that any comments relating to the subject content should be directed to the Department for Education.

Environmental science

GCSE

3.36 We are not consulting on a GCSE in environmental science at this time.

AS and A level

3.37 The DfE is consulting on the content for AS and A levels in environmental science.²⁴

Proposed assessment arrangements

3.38 The current subject criteria document allows for 25 per cent non-exam assessment in environmental science. However, the only qualification offered at present in this subject²⁵ is assessed wholly by exam. In our view, the draft content includes only knowledge, understanding and skills that could be validly assessed by exam. We therefore propose that reformed AS and A levels in environmental science should also be assessed by exam only.

Proposed assessment objectives

3.39 The proposed assessment objectives specify the core abilities for the subject more clearly than the current assessment objectives. The proposed weighting ranges are narrower and more specific, which should enhance comparability between different qualifications in this subject.

²⁴ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-content-for-teaching-from-september-2017

²⁵ This qualification is titled environmental studies.

	Assessment objective	Weighting	
		A level	AS
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, natural processes and systems, techniques, and issues.	30–35%	35–40%
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, natural processes and systems, techniques, and issues.	40–45%	40–45%
AO3	Analyse, interpret and evaluate scientific information, ideas and evidence including issues raised by scientific research procedures.	25–30%	20–25%
The ability to use mathematical skills at a level appropriate for GCE Qualifications in Environmental Science must be tested across the assessment objectives. The weighting of mathematical skills within this subject must be at least 10% for both AS and A level qualifications.			

Current assessment objectives

	Assessment objective	Weighting		
		AS level	A2 level	A level
AO1	<p>Knowledge and understanding</p> <p>(a) recognise, recall and show understanding of scientific knowledge;</p> <p>(b) select, organise and communicate relevant information in a variety of forms.</p>	30–40%	20–30%	25–35%
AO2	<p>Application of knowledge and understanding</p> <p>a) analyse and evaluate scientific knowledge and processes;</p> <p>b) apply scientific knowledge and processes to unfamiliar situations including those related to issues;</p> <p>c) assesses the validity, reliability and credibility of scientific information.</p>	30–40%	40–50%	35–45%

AO3	How Science Works	20–	20–	20–
	a) demonstrate ethical, safe and skilful practical techniques and processes, selecting appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods;	40%	40%	40%
	b) know how to make, record and communicate reliable and valid observations and measurements with appropriate precision and accuracy, through using primary and secondary sources;			
	c) explain how a range of experimental methods may be brought together and used to explore how various environmental systems interrelate;			
	d) analyse, interpret, explain and evaluate the methodology, results and impact of their own and others' experimental and investigative activities in a variety of ways.			

Question 27: To what extent do you agree or disagree that AS qualifications in environmental science should be assessed entirely by exams?

Question 28: To what extent do you agree or disagree that A levels in environmental science should be assessed entirely by exams?

Question 29: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for AS and A levels in environmental science?

Question 30: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for AS qualifications in environmental science?

Question 31: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for A levels in environmental science?

Question 32: Do you have any further comments relating to the assessment of this subject?²⁶

Geology

GCSE

3.40 The DfE is consulting on the content for GCSEs in geology.²⁷

Proposed assessment arrangements

3.41 Current GCSEs in geology are assessed through a mixture of exam assessment (75 per cent of the marks) and non-exam assessment (25 per cent of the marks).

3.42 Having reviewed the new content, we are of the view that all of the content can be assessed through exams. We therefore propose that new GCSEs in geology should be assessed by exam only.

3.43 We set out above the principles that we have applied when determining whether each of the reformed qualifications should include assessment other than by exam. One of our principles is that non-exam assessment must be used where it is the only valid way to assess essential elements of the subject. In our view, the subject content for GCSE geology is capable of being assessed by exam in its entirety. These principles were not in place when current GCSEs in geology were being developed, and so content that was capable of assessment by exam was assessed through non-exam assessment. The new principles have been applied across all reformed qualifications, and in a number of cases they have led to the amount of non-exam assessment being either reduced or removed from reformed qualifications.

3.44 There is a requirement in the new content document that students should undertake a minimum of two days of work in the field, and that exam boards should require evidence of this in the form a written statement from centres. We

²⁶ Please note that any comments relating to the subject content should be directed to the Department for Education.

²⁷ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-content-for-teaching-from-september-2017

are proposing to reflect this content requirement within our Conditions and requirements document. A similar requirement appears in our rules around new GCSE geography qualifications.²⁸

3.45 The subject content document sets out that 15 per cent of the marks on the exam papers will be used for the assessment of practical or field skills, drawing on the knowledge and understanding that students will have gained through fieldwork undertaken during the course.

Tiering

3.46 GCSEs in geology are not currently tiered. We propose that the new GCSEs in geology should not be tiered either.

Proposed assessment objectives

3.47 The proposed assessment objectives specify the core abilities for the subject more clearly than the current assessment objectives. We propose that the current permitted weighting ranges should be replaced with an absolute weighting to enhance comparability between different qualifications in this subject.

	Assessment objective	Weighting
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of key geological ideas, processes, techniques and procedures.	40%
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding of key ideas, processes, techniques and procedures in geology.	40%
AO3	Analyse, interpret and evaluate geological ideas, information and evidence to make judgements and draw conclusions.	20%

²⁸ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-subject-level-conditions-and-requirements-for-geography

Current assessment objectives

3.48 Since this is the first time that core content has been developed in this subject, we have not previously specified the use of a particular set of assessment objectives. The only exam board that currently awards this qualification uses its own set of assessment objectives. These are set out below.

	Assessment objective	Weighting
AO1	<p>Knowledge and understanding of geology and how the science works</p> <p>Candidates should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the geological facts, concepts techniques and terminology in the specification ▪ relate data collected, or given, to current geological explanations and theories ▪ show understanding of how geological knowledge and ideas change with time and how these changes are validated. 	40%
AO2	<p>Application of skills, knowledge and understanding</p> <p>Candidates should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ plan a geological task, such as a practical procedure, testing an idea, answering a question, or solving a problem ▪ apply concepts, develop arguments in familiar and unfamiliar situations including those related to geological applications in a range of domestic, industrial and environmental contexts ▪ show how an understanding of geology affects decisions made in different situations, including contemporary situations and those raising ethical issues ▪ evaluate the impact of geological processes on individuals, communities or the environment. 	35%
AO3	<p>Practical, enquiry and data-handling skills</p> <p>Candidates should be able to:</p>	25%

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ carry out practical and field-related tasks safely and skilfully, methodically recording suitable and accurate data▪ show an understanding of how geological data are collected▪ analyse and interpret qualitative and quantitative geological data and draw conclusions from different sources including the field▪ evaluate the methods used when collecting first-hand and/or secondary data.	
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Question 33: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs in geology should be assessed entirely by exams?

Question 34: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs in geology should not be tiered?

Question 35: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in geology?

Question 36: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in geology?

Question 37: Do you have any further comments relating to the assessment of this subject?²⁹

AS and A level

3.49 We will consult at a later date on AS and A levels in geology for first teaching in September 2017.

²⁹ Please note that any comments relating to the subject content should be directed to the Department for Education.

History of art

GCSE

3.50 We are not consulting on a GCSE in history of art at this time.

AS and A level

3.51 The DfE is consulting on the content for AS and A levels in history of art.³⁰

Proposed assessment arrangements

3.52 AS and A levels in history of art are currently assessed wholly by exam. In our view, the draft content includes only knowledge, understanding and skills that could be validly assessed by exam. We therefore propose that reformed AS and A levels in history of art should also be assessed by exam only.

Proposed assessment objectives

3.53 The proposed assessment objectives specify the core abilities for the subject more clearly than the current assessment objectives. We believe the proposed weighting ranges are appropriate for the subject, and permit a degree of legitimate variation to the approach that is taken to assessment in this subject.

	Assessment objective	Weighting	
		A level	AS
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the contexts of art.	30–40%	30–40%
AO2	Analyse and interpret artists' work demonstrating understanding of visual language.	30–40%	30–40%
AO3	Make substantiated critical judgements about art by producing coherent and reasoned argument.	30–40%	20–30%

³⁰ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-content-for-teaching-from-september-2017

Current assessment objectives

3.54 Since this is the first time that core content has been developed in this subject, we have not previously specified the use of a particular set of assessment objectives. The only exam board that currently awards this qualification uses its own set of assessment objectives. These are set out below.

	Assessment objective	Weighting	
		AS level	A2 level
AO1	Knowledge: source, select and recall material to demonstrate knowledge effectively.	33%	29%
AO2	Understanding: demonstrate understanding, through analysis and make substantiated judgements and sustained discussion and/or arguments.	33%	29%
AO3	Communication: present a clear and coherent response.	34%	30%
AO4	Synopsis: apply knowledge and understanding of the relationships between aspects of art historical study.	0%	12%

Question 38: To what extent do you agree or disagree that AS qualifications in history of art should be assessed entirely by exams?

Question 39: To what extent do you agree or disagree that A levels in history of art should be assessed entirely by exams?

Question 40: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for AS and A levels in history of art?

Question 41: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for AS qualifications in history of art?

Question 42: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for A levels in history of art?

Question 43: Do you have any further comments relating to the assessment of this subject?³¹

Music technology

GCSE

3.55 We are not consulting on a GCSE in music technology at this time.

AS and A level

3.56 The DfE is consulting on the content for AS and A levels in music technology.³²

Proposed assessment arrangements

3.57 In current A levels in music technology, 65 per cent of the assessment is non-exam assessment. At AS, 70 per cent of the assessment is non-exam assessment.

3.58 The new content requires students to create and refine ideas over time that are used in the act of composition, and to produce a finished mix using specialist technology. In our view, these subject content requirements could not be validly assessed through exams. We therefore propose that music technology should be assessed through a mixture of exam and non-exam assessment.

3.59 We are, however, proposing to reduce the amount of non-exam assessment to 40 per cent. This is because of changes to the subject content that increase the emphasis on the knowledge and understanding requirements in this subject, and also because in current AS and A levels in music technology, the non-exam assessment covered elements that, in our view, were capable of assessment through exams. We set out above the principles that we have applied when determining whether each of the reformed qualifications should include assessment other than by exam. One of our principles is that non-exam assessment must be used where it is the only valid way to assess essential elements of the subject. These principles were not in place when current AS and A levels in music technology were being developed, and so content that was capable of assessment by exam was assessed through non-exam assessment. The new principles have been applied across all reformed qualifications, and in a number of cases they have led to the amount of non-

³¹ Please note that any comments relating to the subject content should be directed to the Department for Education.

³² www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-content-for-teaching-from-september-2017

exam assessment being either reduced or removed from reformed qualifications.

3.60 We propose a 60/40 balance between exam and non-exam assessment for both AS and A level music technology as, in our view, this reflects the balance contained within the subject content.

Proposed assessment objectives

3.61 The proposed assessment objectives specify the core abilities for the subject more clearly than the current assessment objectives. The proposed weighting ranges are narrower and more specific, which should enhance comparability between different qualifications in this subject.

3.62 The current assessment objectives AO1 to AO3 have the same wording for AS and A levels in music technology and music. We propose that new AS and A level music technology should have separate assessment objectives to AS and A level music. We believe that the proposed assessment objectives would be more appropriate to the music technology and align better with the music technology subject content.

	Assessment objective	Weighting	
		A level	AS
AO1	Demonstrate use of music technology to capture, edit, process and produce recordings.	30–40%	30–40%
AO2	Create, manipulate and structure sounds with technical control using production techniques.	20–30%	20–30%
AO3	Demonstrate and apply knowledge and understanding of music technology.	20–30%	25–35%
AO4	Use analytical and appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements about the technical processes and principles that underpin the use of technology in music.	10–20%	10–20%

Current assessment objectives

	Assessment objective	Weighting	
		AS level	A2 level
AO1	Interpret musical ideas with technical and expressive control and a sense of style and awareness of occasion and/or ensemble (performing/realising).	15–35%	15–35%
AO2	Create and develop musical ideas with technical control and expressive understanding, making creative use of musical devices, conventions and resources (composing/arranging).	15–35%	15–35%
AO3	Demonstrate understanding of, and comment perceptively on, the structural, expressive and contextual aspects of music (appraising).	15–35%	15–35%
AO4	Demonstrate effective use of music technology to capture, edit and produce musical outcomes.	20–40%	20–40%
AO5	Demonstrate understanding of, and comment perceptively on, the technical processes and principles that underpin effective use of music technology.	15–25%	15–25%

Question 44: To what extent do you agree or disagree that for AS qualifications in music technology, 60 per cent of the available marks should be allocated to exams and 40 per cent to non-exam assessment?

Question 45: To what extent do you agree or disagree that for A levels in music technology, 60 per cent of the available marks should be allocated to exams and 40 per cent to non-exam assessment?

Question 46: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for AS and A levels in music technology?

Question 47: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for AS qualifications in music technology?

Question 48: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for A levels in music technology?

Question 49: Do you have any further comments relating to the assessment of this subject?³³

Philosophy

GCSE

3.63 We are not consulting on a GCSE in philosophy at this time.

AS and A level

3.64 The DfE is consulting on the content for AS and A levels in philosophy.³⁴

Proposed assessment arrangements

3.65 AS and A levels in philosophy are currently assessed wholly by exam. In our view, the draft content includes only knowledge, understanding and skills that could be validly assessed by exam. We therefore propose that reformed AS and A levels in philosophy should also be assessed by exam only.

Proposed assessment objectives

3.66 The proposed assessment objectives specify the core abilities for the subject more clearly than the current assessment objectives. We believe the proposed weighting ranges are appropriate for the subject, and permit a degree of legitimate variation to the approach that is taken to assessment in this subject.

	Assessment objective	Weighting	
		A level	AS
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the core concepts and methods of philosophy.	25–30%	30–35%
AO2	Apply conceptual analysis and argument analysis to reasoning.	40–45%	40–45%
AO3	Evaluate philosophical arguments to generate reasoned responses to philosophical questions.	25–30%	20–25%

³³ Please note that any comments relating to the subject content should be directed to the Department for Education.

³⁴ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-content-for-teaching-from-september-2017

Current assessment objectives

3.67 Since this is the first time that core content has been developed in this subject, we have not previously specified the use of a particular set of assessment objectives. The only exam board that currently awards this qualification uses its own set of assessment objectives. These are set out below.

	Assessment objective	Weighting	
		AS level	A2 level
AO1	Demonstrate understanding of the core concepts and methods of philosophy.	80%	60%
AO2	Analyse and evaluate philosophical argument to form reasoned judgements	20%	40%

Question 50: To what extent do you agree or disagree that AS qualifications in philosophy should be assessed entirely by exams?

Question 51: To what extent do you agree or disagree that A levels in philosophy should be assessed entirely by exams?

Question 52: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for AS and A levels in philosophy?

Question 53: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for AS qualifications in philosophy?

Question 54: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for A levels in philosophy?

Question 55: Do you have any further comments relating to the assessment of this subject?³⁵

³⁵ Please note that any comments relating to the subject content should be directed to the Department for Education.

Psychology

GCSE

3.68 The DfE is consulting on the content for GCSEs in psychology.³⁶

Proposed assessment arrangements

3.69 GCSEs in psychology are currently assessed wholly by exam. In our view, the draft content includes only knowledge, understanding and skills that could be validly assessed by exam. We therefore propose that reformed GCSEs in psychology should also be assessed by exam only.

Tiering

3.70 GCSEs in psychology are not currently tiered. We propose that the new GCSEs in psychology should not be tiered either.

Proposed assessment objectives

3.71 The proposed assessment objectives specify the core abilities for the subject more clearly than the current assessment objectives. We propose that the current permitted weighting ranges should be replaced with an absolute weighting to enhance comparability between different qualifications in this subject.

	Assessment objective	Weighting
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of psychological ideas, processes, techniques and procedures.	35%
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding of psychological ideas, processes, techniques and procedures including when handling data.	35%
AO3	Analyse and evaluate psychological information, evidence, ideas, processes, techniques and procedures to make judgements and reach conclusions.	30%
Minimum of 20% of the overall qualification is allocated to research methods, of which a 10% minimum of the overall qualification is allocated to mathematical skills.		

³⁶ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-content-for-teaching-from-september-2017

Current assessment objectives

	Assessment objective	Weighting
AO1	Recall, select and communicate their knowledge and understanding of psychology and how psychology works.	25–35%
AO2	Apply skills, knowledge and understanding of psychology and how psychology works.	30–40%
AO3	Interpret, evaluate and analyse psychological data and practice.	30–40%

Question 56: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs in psychology should be assessed entirely by exams?

Question 57: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs in psychology should not be tiered?

Question 58: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in psychology?

Question 59: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in psychology?

Question 60: Do you have any further comments relating to the assessment of this subject?³⁷

AS and A level

3.72 The content for AS and A levels in psychology has already been developed and published by the DfE.³⁸ We have previously consulted on the assessment arrangements and assessment objectives for these qualifications, which are due to be taught from September 2015.

³⁷ Please note that any comments relating to the subject content should be directed to the Department for Education.

³⁸ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-for-sociology

Sociology

GCSE

3.73 The DfE is consulting on the content for GCSEs in sociology.³⁹

Proposed assessment arrangements

3.74 GCSEs in sociology are currently assessed wholly by exam. In our view, the draft content includes only knowledge, understanding and skills that could be validly assessed by exam. We therefore propose that reformed GCSEs in sociology should also be assessed by exam only.

Tiering

3.75 GCSEs in sociology are not currently tiered. We propose that the new GCSEs in sociology should not be tiered either.

Proposed assessment objectives

3.76 The proposed assessment objectives specify the core abilities for the subject more clearly than the current assessment objectives. We propose that the current permitted weighting ranges should be replaced with an absolute weighting, to enhance comparability between different qualifications in this subject.

	Assessment objective	Weighting
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of sociological theories, concepts, evidence and methods.	50%
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding of sociological theories, concepts, evidence and methods to a range of issues.	30%
AO3	Analyse and evaluate sociological theories, concepts, evidence and methods in order to construct arguments and draw conclusions.	20%

³⁹ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-content-for-teaching-from-september-2017

Current assessment objectives

	Assessment objective	Weighting
AO1	Recall, select and communicate their knowledge and understanding of social structures, processes and issues.	30–40%
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding in a range of contexts both familiar and unfamiliar.	30–40%
AO3	Select, interpret, analyse and evaluate information from different sources.	20–30%

Question 61: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs in sociology should be assessed entirely by exams?

Question 62: To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs in sociology should not be tiered?

Question 63: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in sociology?

Question 64: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in sociology?

Question 65: Do you have any further comments relating to the assessment of this subject?⁴⁰

AS and A level

3.77 The content for AS and A levels in sociology has already been developed and published by the DfE.⁴¹ We have previously consulted on the assessment arrangements and assessment objectives for these qualifications, which are due to be taught from September 2015.

⁴⁰ Please note that any comments relating to the subject content should be directed to the Department for Education.

⁴¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-for-sociology

4. Equality analysis

Ofqual's role, objectives and duties

- 4.1 We are subject to the public sector equality duty. We have set out in Appendix B how this duty interacts with our statutory objectives and other duties.

Equality analysis relating to proposed changes to GCSEs, AS and A levels

- 4.2 We have considered in some detail the potential impact on students who share protected characteristics⁴² of the application of the principles and features that will apply to all new GCSEs, AS and A levels. We have also considered specific issues that have arisen for the subjects on which we have already consulted. Our equality impact analyses for our earlier consultations on GCSE, AS and A level reform are therefore of interest and we encourage you to read them.⁴³
- 4.3 We do not repeat here all of the evidence we have considered, as this can be found in our earlier reports. We focus instead on the specific issues that are relevant to the subjects on which we are now consulting.
- 4.4 During this consultation we will continue to seek and consider evidence and feedback to our proposals that might help us identify any potential subject-specific impacts on students who share a protected characteristic. We will also seek views from interested groups during the period of this consultation, including the Access Consultation Forum and our External Advisory Group for Equalities.

GCSE astronomy

- 4.5 GCSEs in astronomy are currently assessed by a combination of exam and non-exam assessment. We are proposing that new GCSEs in astronomy

⁴² For the purposes of the public sector equality duty, the protected characteristics are sex, disability, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

⁴³ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/gcse-reform-june-2013/>

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

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

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-new-subjects-to-be-taught-in-2016

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/religious-studies-gcses-as-and-a-levels-new-qualifications-for-2016

should be assessed entirely by exam assessments. This proposed removal of non-exam assessment is in line with our general principles for GCSE reform that we have considered in detail in our previous equality analyses.

- 4.6 We have not identified anything in addition to the impacts discussed in our earlier consultations about our proposal that all assessments in GCSE astronomy should be by exam that would have a negative impact on students because of their sex, disability, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.

GCSE business

- 4.7 GCSEs in business are currently assessed by a combination of exam and non-exam assessment. We are proposing that new GCSEs in business should be assessed entirely by exam assessments. This proposed removal of non-exam assessment is in line with our general principles for GCSE reform that we have considered in detail in our previous equality analyses.
- 4.8 We have not identified anything in addition to the impacts discussed in our earlier consultations about our proposal that all assessments in GCSE business should be by exam that would have a negative impact on students because of their sex, disability, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.

AS and A level design and technology

- 4.9 Design and technology is a subject that contains a practical element. We are proposing that the subject should be assessed by a combination of exam and non-exam assessment, with 50 per cent of the marks allocated to each.
- 4.10 Some disabled students might not be able to undertake elements of the non-exam assessment because of their disability. Using our powers under the Equality Act 2010, we have specified that a disabled student can be exempt from a maximum of 40 per cent of the marks available for a GCSE, AS or A level qualification and have their marks from the assessments that they are able to take scaled up. However, students can only be exempted from whole components, and then only when they cannot access any part of the component in question.
- 4.11 If, within a specification, there was a discrete component that assessed the student's practical skills in the subject, worth no more than 40 per cent of the marks, an exemption could be given for that assessment. The student would take the remaining components. This would allow a disabled student who was unable to undertake the practical assessment to be granted an exemption from

the assessment and to have their marks from the remaining aspects of the qualification scaled up.

- 4.12 Exam boards will decide how to design the qualifications they offer, within the rules we put in place. If the non-exam assessment formed one whole component comprising 50 per cent of the marks, a student could not be exempted from it because of the 40 per cent exemption limit. Exam boards could distribute the 50 per cent non-exam assessment marks between two components, allowing an exemption to be given for one component. For example, one component could focus on the design of the product and the other on the making of that product. However, a student who could not access, or therefore gain any marks from, either of the non-exam assessment components would be disadvantaged.
- 4.13 We have considered whether we should set the percentage of marks available for non-exam assessment in design and technology at 40 per cent or less to allow a student to be exempted from the whole non-exam assessment. We do not believe that this would be appropriate because the practical aspect of the qualification that is to be assessed by non-exam assessment is a fundamental part of the qualification. The proposed approach would not be more disadvantageous to disabled students unable to complete the non-exam assessment than the current model in which 60 per cent of the marks are allocated to non-exam assessment.
- 4.14 We have not identified anything about the proposed changes that would have an adverse impact on students because of their sex, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.

GCSE economics

- 4.15 GCSEs in economics are currently assessed wholly by exam. We are not proposing to change this position. We have not identified anything about our proposals that would have a negative impact on students because of their sex, disability, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.

GCSE engineering

- 4.16 Engineering is a subject that contains a practical element. We are proposing that the subject should be assessed by a combination of exam and non-exam assessment, with 60 per cent of the mark allocated to exam assessment and 40 per cent of the marks allocated to non-exam assessment.
- 4.17 Some disabled students might not be able to undertake elements of the non-exam assessment because of their disability. Using our powers under the

Equality Act 2010, we have specified that a disabled student can be exempt from a maximum of 40 per cent of the marks available for a GCSE, AS or A level qualification and have their marks from the assessments that they are able to take scaled up. However, students can only be exempted from whole components, and then only when they cannot access any part of the component in question.

- 4.18 We are proposing that the percentage of marks allocated to the practical elements in GCSE engineering will be 40 per cent. This would allow a disabled student who is unable to undertake the practical elements of the subject to be granted an exemption from those assessments, and to have their marks from the remaining aspects of the qualification scaled up. The proposed reduction in the amount of non-exam assessment in GCSE engineering could make it possible for a disabled student unable to undertake that assessment to be awarded the qualification nonetheless. The proposed reduction in the percentage of marks allocated to non-exam assessment may therefore make the qualification more accessible to some disabled students.
- 4.19 We have not identified anything about the proposed changes that would have an adverse impact on students because of their sex, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.

AS and A level environmental science

- 4.20 Current AS and A levels in environmental science may be assessed through a combination of exam and non-exam assessment. We are proposing that new AS and A levels in environmental science should be assessed entirely by exam assessments. This proposed removal of non-exam assessment is in line with our general principles for AS and A level reform that we have considered in detail in our previous equality analyses.
- 4.21 We have not identified anything in addition to the impacts discussed in our earlier consultations about our proposal that all assessments in AS and A level environmental science should be by exam that would have a negative impact on students because of their sex, disability, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.

GCSE geology

- 4.22 The new subject content for GCSE geology requires fieldwork skills to be tested using a limited series of exam questions. In current qualifications, this is done through non-exam assessment. There is also a requirement in the new subject content that students take part in two days of work in the field.

- 4.23 This proposed removal of non-exam assessment is in line with our general principles for GCSE reform that we have considered in detail in our previous equality analyses.
- 4.24 We have not identified anything in addition to the impacts discussed in our earlier consultations about our proposal that all assessments in GCSE geology should be by exam that would have a negative impact on students because of their sex, disability, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.
- 4.25 The proposed requirement for two days of fieldwork is contained within the draft content document on which the Department for Education is consulting. This requirement may have a negative impact on those who share a protected characteristic who cannot undertake fieldwork because of that characteristic, but this is a matter that should be considered within the Department for Education's consultation on subject content.⁴⁴

AS and A level history of art

- 4.26 AS and A levels in history of art are currently assessed wholly by exam. We are not proposing to change this position. We have not identified anything about our proposals that would have a negative impact on students because of their sex, disability, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.

AS and A level music technology

- 4.27 We are proposing to reduce the percentage of marks allocated to non-exam assessment in AS and A levels in music technology.
- 4.28 Some disabled students might not be able to undertake the tasks of producing a mix or composing using music technology because of their disability. Using our powers under the Equality Act 2010, we have specified that a disabled student can be exempt from a maximum of 40 per cent of the assessments for a GCSE, AS or A level qualification and have their marks from the assessments that they are able to take scaled up.
- 4.29 We are proposing that the percentage of marks allocated to the performance elements in AS and A level music technology will be 40 per cent. This would allow a disabled student who is unable to undertake the tasks of producing a mix or composing using music technology, which will be assessed within the non-exam assessment, to be granted an exemption from those assessments,

⁴⁴ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-content-for-teaching-from-september-2017

and to have their marks from the remaining aspects of the qualification scaled up. The proposed reduction in the amount of non-exam assessment in AS and A level music technology could make it possible for a disabled student unable to undertake that assessment to be awarded the qualification nonetheless. The proposed reduction in the percentage of marks allocated to non-exam assessment may therefore make the qualification more accessible to some disabled students.

- 4.30 We have not identified anything about the proposed changes that would have an adverse impact on students because of their sex, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.

AS and A level philosophy

- 4.31 AS and A levels in philosophy are currently assessed wholly by exam. We are not proposing to change this position. We have not identified anything about our proposals that would have a negative impact on students because of their sex, disability, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.

GCSE psychology

- 4.32 GCSEs in psychology are currently assessed wholly by exam. We are not proposing to change this position. We have not identified anything about our proposals that would have a negative impact on students because of their sex, disability, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.

GCSE sociology

- 4.33 GCSEs in sociology are currently assessed wholly by exam. We are not proposing to change this position. We have not identified anything about our proposals that would have a negative impact on students because of their sex, disability, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.

Question 66: We have identified a number of ways the proposed requirements for reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels may impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any other potential impacts we have not identified? If so, what are they?

Question 67: Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impact resulting from these proposals on persons who

share a protected characteristic? If so, please comment on the additional steps we could take to mitigate negative impacts.

Question 68: Have you any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?

Appendix A: Background to the reforms

GCSE

Government policy

On 6th February 2013, in a letter to Ofqual, the Secretary of State set out the government's policy intentions for new GCSEs.⁴⁵

In summary, the intention was that new GCSEs in England should remain accessible, with good teaching, to the same proportion of students who currently take them; there must be an increase in demand at the level of what is widely considered to be a pass (currently indicated by a grade C) to reflect that of high-performing jurisdictions; there was a strong case for the new GCSEs to have a new grading scale.

Controlled assessment

In June 2013 we published a report on the use of controlled assessments in GCSEs. The report was largely informed by feedback from teachers and highlighted a number of weaknesses with the current controlled assessment arrangements.⁴⁶

Consultation on new GCSEs

In June 2013 we published a consultation on the principles that should apply to all new GCSEs and on proposals for the new qualifications in English language, English literature, mathematics, geography, history and the sciences.⁴⁷

YouGov report on responses to the consultation

In November 2013 we published a summary of responses to the consultation.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141031163546/http://ofqual.gov.uk/news/gcse-reform-6th-february-2013/>

⁴⁶ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141031163546/http://ofqual.gov.uk/news/ofqual-launches-consultation-on-gcse-reform/>

⁴⁷ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/gcse-reform-june-2013/>

⁴⁸ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/gcse-reform-june-2013/>

Our equality impact assessment

In November 2013 we published our equality analysis of the impact of the reforms on students who share protected characteristics.⁴⁹

Subjects for first teaching 2015

On 1st November 2013 we published our decisions on the features of all GCSEs and on specific arrangements for English language, English literature and mathematics.⁵⁰ We have published our Conditions and Guidance documents.⁵¹

Grading consultation

On 2nd April 2014 we published a consultation on setting the grade standards for new GCSEs.⁵²

Consultation on subjects for first teaching 2016

In July, September and November 2014 we consulted and published our decisions on the design and assessment arrangements for those GCSE subjects to be taught first in 2016.⁵³ Subsequently we consulted on and then published our Conditions and Guidance documents for these subjects.⁵⁴

Subject content

The government has published the content for all GCSEs for first teaching in September 2015 and September 2016.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/gcse-reform-june-2013/>

⁵⁰ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141031163546/http://ofqual.gov.uk/news/design-details-of-new-gcses-in-england/>

⁵¹ www.gov.uk/government/collections/gcses-9-to-1-requirements-and-guidance

⁵² <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/setting-the-grade-standards-of-new-gcses-april-2014/>

⁵³ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-new-subjects-to-be-taught-in-2016

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/religious-studies-gcses-as-and-a-levels-new-qualifications-for-2016

⁵⁴ www.gov.uk/government/collections/gcses-9-to-1-requirements-and-guidance

⁵⁵ www.gov.uk/government/collections/gcse-subject-content

AS and A level

November 2010

In the White Paper *The Importance of Teaching*, the Department for Education said: “we are working with Ofqual... to ensure universities and learned bodies can be fully involved in the development [of A levels]” (paragraph 4.47).

Spring/summer 2012

We published our research on A levels.⁵⁶ For this research, we spoke to teachers, employers and other higher education representatives. We also looked at the standards and methods that other countries use to assess students at this point in their education.⁵⁷

June to September 2012

We ran an open consultation⁵⁸ where we asked education specialists and the general public for their opinions on possible changes to A levels, including removing exams in January. This consultation was supplemented with face-to-face events across the country with a wide range of stakeholders including higher education representatives, teachers and representatives of disability groups.

November 2012

We confirmed that we would remove January exams. There were no A level exams in January 2014.

March 2013

The Department for Education confirmed that AS qualifications would be ‘decoupled’ from the new A levels.

September 2013

We published a report by Professor Mark Smith, the independent chair of a group established by the government to review the current curriculum requirements for some A levels and confirm whether they are fit for purpose or need to change.

⁵⁶ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/377930/2012-04-03-fit-for-purpose-a-levels.pdf

⁵⁷

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141031163546/http://ofqual.gov.uk/documents/international-comparisons-in-senior-secondary-assessment-full-report/all-versions/>

⁵⁸ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/a-level-reform/>

We also confirmed the timetable for reform (which has since been updated):

- First teaching in 2015: English language, English literature, English language and literature, biology, chemistry, physics, psychology, art and design, business studies, computing, economics, history, sociology.
- First teaching in 2016: ancient languages, dance, design and technology, drama, geography, mathematics, further mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and religious studies.

October 2013

We launched a consultation on assessment arrangements for each subject to be introduced for first teaching in 2015. This consultation included geography but the government has since confirmed that this subject will be introduced in 2016. In the consultation we set out proposals for the role of non-exam assessment in each subject. The proposals are based on the principle that assessment should be by exam only, except where non-exam assessment is needed to test a skill essential to the subject (for example, art and design). This principle comes from our aims:

- to create a better balance between exam and non-exam assessment;
- to give clear reasons why non-exam assessment is needed; and
- to have greater consistency across the qualifications set by different exam boards.

Subjects for first teaching 2015

On 9th April we published our decisions on the features and specific arrangements for A levels to be taught first from September 2015.⁵⁹ We have published our Conditions and Guidance documents.⁶⁰

Consultation on subjects for first teaching 2016

In July, September and November 2014 we consulted and published our decisions on the design and assessment arrangements for those AS and A level subjects to be

⁵⁹ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://ofqual.gov.uk/news/gcse-a-level-as-qualification-updates-ofqual/>

⁶⁰ www.gov.uk/government/collections/new-a-level-and-as-level-qualifications-requirements-and-guidance

taught first in 2016.⁶¹ Subsequently we consulted on and then published our Conditions and Guidance documents for these subjects.⁶²

Subject content

The government has published the content for all AS and A levels for first teaching in September 2015 and September 2016.⁶³

⁶¹ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-new-subjects-to-be-taught-in-2016

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/religious-studies-gcses-as-and-a-levels-new-qualifications-for-2016

⁶² www.gov.uk/government/collections/new-a-level-and-as-level-qualifications-requirements-and-guidance

⁶³ www.gov.uk/government/collections/gce-as-and-a-level-subject-content

Appendix B: Ofqual's role, objectives and duties

Our statutory objectives include the qualifications standards objective, which is to secure that the qualifications we regulate:

- (a) give a reliable indication of knowledge, skills and understanding; and
- (b) indicate:
 - (i) a consistent level of attainment (including over time) between comparable regulated qualifications; and
 - (ii) a consistent level of attainment (but not over time) between qualifications that we regulate and comparable qualifications (including those awarded outside of the UK) that we do not regulate.

We must therefore regulate so that qualifications properly differentiate between students who have demonstrated that they have the knowledge, skills and understanding required to attain the qualification and those who have not.

We also have a duty under the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 to have regard to the reasonable requirements of relevant students, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, of employers and of the higher education sector, and to aspects of government policy when so directed by the Secretary of State.

As a public body, we are subject to the public sector equality duty.⁶⁴ This duty requires us to have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The exam boards that design, deliver and award GCSEs, AS and A levels are required by the Equality Act, among other things, to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people taking their qualifications, except where we have specified that such adjustments should not be made.

⁶⁴ Equality Act 2010, section 149.

When we decide whether such adjustments should not be made, we must have regard to:

- (a) the need to minimise the extent to which disabled persons are disadvantaged in attaining the qualification because of their disabilities;
- (b) the need to secure that the qualification gives a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and understanding of a person upon whom it is conferred; and
- (c) the need to maintain public confidence in the qualification.

Legislation therefore sets out a framework within which we must operate. We are subject to a number of duties and we must aim to achieve a number of objectives. These different duties and objectives can, from time to time, conflict with each other. For example, if we regulate to secure that a qualification gives a reliable indication of a student's knowledge, skills and understanding, a student who has not been able to demonstrate the required knowledge, skills and/or understanding will not be awarded the qualification. A person may find it more difficult, or impossible, to demonstrate the required knowledge, skills and/or understanding because they have a protected characteristic. This could put them at a disadvantage relative to others who have been awarded the qualification. It is not always possible for us to regulate so that we can both secure that qualifications give a reliable indication of knowledge, skills and understanding, and advance equality between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. We must review all the available evidence and actively consider all the available options before coming to a final, rational decision.

Qualifications cannot be used to mitigate inequalities or unfairness in the education system or in society more widely than might affect, for example, students' preparedness to take the qualification and the assessments within it. While a wide range of factors can have an impact on a student's ability to achieve a particular mark in an assessment, our influence is limited to the way that the qualification is designed and assessed.

We require the exam boards to design qualifications to give a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and understanding of those on whom they are conferred. We also require the exam boards to avoid, where possible, features of a qualification that could, without justification, make a qualification more difficult for a student to achieve because they have a particular protected characteristic. We require exam boards to monitor whether any features of their qualifications have this effect.

In setting the overall framework within which exam boards will design, assess and award the reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels, we want to understand the possible impacts of the proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic.

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnerships
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

It should be noted that with respect to the public sector equality duty under section 149 of the 2010 Act, we are not required to have due regard to impacts on those who are married or in a civil partnership.

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