

Further Decisions for Completing GCSE, AS and A Level Reform in 2017

May 2015 (updated November 2015)



In March 2015 we announced our decisions on those subjects for which exam boards could begin to develop content for first teaching in September 2017¹.

Following a review of 39 proposals submitted by exam boards, we identified eight subjects in which we did not have confidence that content could be developed to meet our principles for reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels (see table).

GCSE	AS and A level
Environmental and land-based science	Creative writing
Geology	Health and social care
Health and social care	International development
Home economics: child development	Music technology

We invited exam boards to provide additional information on how content requirements in these subjects could be developed to meet our principles.

We reviewed the additional information provided for each proposed subject and considered whether content could be developed to meet our principles for reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels. Our principles state that we will only support the development of reformed GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in subjects that:

- are consistent with the primary purpose of a GCSE, AS or A level as defined in our *General Conditions of Recognition*;
- are capable of securing a comparable level of demand² to other reformed subjects;

¹ www.gov.uk/government/news/decisions-for-completing-gcse-as-and-a-level-reform

² Level of demand is defined in our *General Conditions of Recognition* as: “The degree of challenge that an assessment presents for the Learner.” www.gov.uk/government/publications/general-conditions-of-recognition

- can secure valid assessment, including reliability and manageability;
- can be assessed in a way that differentiates reliably across the full grade range; and
- are based on content that is sufficiently distinct from other reformed subjects.

Decisions

Following our review, we have decided that we are sufficiently confident that content could be developed to meet our principles in:

- GCSE geology
- AS and A level creative writing (content development has subsequently ceased)
- AS and A level health and social care (content development has subsequently ceased)
- AS and A level music technology.

For these subjects, exam boards will start developing core content requirements, overseen by the Department for Education. It is important to be clear that there is no certainty that it will prove possible to develop content that meets our principles. This means there is a possibility that some of the subjects being taken forward at this stage may not be reformed for 2017.

Based on the additional information provided, we do not have sufficient confidence that content could be developed to meet our principles in:

- GCSE environmental and land-based science
- GCSE health and social care
- GCSE home economics: child development
- AS and A level international development.

At this stage, reformed content will not be developed for these subjects. We have already decided that current GCSEs, AS and A levels will be withdrawn from September 2017 for subjects that are not being reformed for first teaching in 2015, 2016 or 2017. This means the current qualifications in the four subjects listed above will not be available to teach from September 2017, and with final exams in summer 2018. We are not ruling out the possibility that reformed GCSE, AS and A levels may be offered in these subjects at some point in the future.

Subjects that will not be reformed in 2017

The table below gives a list of GCSE, AS and A level subjects that will be discontinued because they have no replacement reformed qualifications, or because they are too similar to reformed qualifications in other subjects.

In most of these subjects, students will not be able to start new courses from September 2017 onwards. Some subjects will be withdrawn sooner because they are being replaced by reformed qualifications in 2015 or 2016.

The table has been updated from the one published in March to reflect the decisions set out above. It also reflects exam boards' decisions that reformed content for AS and A level critical thinking and AS quantitative methods could not be developed to meet our principles, and subsequent decisions to discontinue content development for GCSE ICT, and AS and A level creative writing, general studies, health and social care and ICT.

Qualifications that will <u>not</u> be reformed for first teaching in 2017	
GCSE subjects	AS and A level subjects
Additional and further additional science [†]	Anthropology
Additional applied science [†]	Applied art and design*
Applications of mathematics*	Applied business*
Applied business	Applied information and communication technology
Applied information and communication technology	Applied science
Business and communication systems	Citizenship studies
Business communications	Communication and culture
Business studies and economics	Creative writing [⌘]
Catering [†]	Critical thinking
Computing [†]	Economics and business*
Design and technology: food technology [†]	Engineering
Digital communication*	General studies [⌘]
Environmental and land-based science	Global development (AS)
Environmental science	Health and social care [⌘]
Expressive arts [†]	Home economics: Food, nutrition and health
General studies	Human biology*
Health and social care	Humanities
Home economics: child development	Information and communication technology [⌘]

Home economics: food and nutrition [†]	Leisure studies
Home economics: textiles	Media: communication and production
Hospitality	Moving image arts
Hospitality and catering [†]	Performance studies [†]
Human health and physiology [†]	Performing arts [†]
Humanities [†]	Pure mathematics
Information and communication technology ^α	Quantitative methods (AS)
Law	Science (AS)
Leisure and tourism	Science in society
Manufacturing	Travel and tourism
Methods in mathematics*	Use of mathematics (AS)
Performing arts [†]	World development
Science [†]	

* Not available for first teaching from September 2015 onwards.³

[†] Not available for first teaching from September 2016 onwards.

^α Since this document was first published, content development for this subject has ceased. We updated this document in November 2015 to include this new information.

Subjects that are being reformed for 2017

Below is an updated list of GCSE, AS and A level subjects for which the Department for Education and exam boards are currently developing proposals for content requirements. It has been updated from the list published in March to reflect the decisions set out earlier, and subsequent decisions to cease content development in a number of subjects.⁴

Until the subject content requirements for each subject are drafted, it will not be possible to say for certain whether they meet our principles in full. This means that at this stage there is still the possibility that some of the subjects listed below may not be reformed for 2017.

The table below does not include any reference to GCSEs, AS and A levels in modern foreign languages. We have already consulted on and published subject

³ Exam boards may continue to make GCSE digital communication, as well as AS and levels in applied art and design, applied business, economics and business and human biology, available to schools and colleges that already offer it for an additional year. That is, to students that will start new two year courses in September 2015. Schools and colleges should contact their exam board to find out if they still plan to offer the specific qualification they want to teach.

⁴ Content development has ceased for GCSEs in ICT, as well as AS and A levels in creative writing, general studies, health and social care, and ICT.

specific requirements for modern foreign languages. It is now for exam boards to decide for which languages to develop reformed qualifications.

List of GCSE, AS and A level subjects being reformed for 2017	
GCSE subjects	AS and A level subjects
Ancient history	Accounting
Astronomy	Ancient history
Business	Archaeology
Classical civilisation	Classical civilisation
Design and technology*	Design and technology*
Economics	Electronics
Electronics	Environmental science
Engineering	Film studies
Film studies	Further mathematics*
Geology	Geology
Media studies	Government and politics
Psychology	History of art
Sociology	Law
Statistics	Mathematics*
	Media studies
	Music technology
	Philosophy
	Statistics

* Reform of these subjects has been deferred to 2017

Timelines for the programme of GCSE, AS and A level reform

You can view and download a timeline of changes to GCSE, AS and A level qualifications from our website. We will shortly update this to reflect the decisions set out in this document.

Timeline of GCSE reform				
Specification available to schools	New GCSE taught from	First exams	Subjects	Notes
Autumn 2014	September 2015	Summer 2017	English language English literature Mathematics	
Autumn 2015	September 2016	Summer 2018	Ancient languages (Classical Greek and Latin) Art and design Biology Chemistry Citizenship studies Computer science Dance Double science Drama Food preparation and nutrition Geography History Modern foreign languages (French, German and Spanish)	

			<p>Music Physical education Physics Religious studies</p>	
Autumn 2016	September 2017	Summer 2019	<p>Ancient history Astronomy Business Classical civilisation Design and technology Economics Electronics Engineering Film studies Geology Media studies Psychology Sociology Statistics</p>	<p>Reformed qualifications will only be available in these subjects if the content requirements for them meet our principles for reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels.</p> <p>This list does not include any reformed language qualifications that exam boards may choose to develop for first teaching in 2017.</p>

Timeline of AS and A level reform				
Specification available to schools	New AS/A level taught from	First exams	Subjects*	Notes
Autumn 2014	September 2015	Summer 2016 – AS Summer 2017 – A level	Art and design Biology Business Chemistry Computer science Economics English language English language and literature English literature History Physics Psychology Sociology	
Autumn 2015	September 2016	Summer 2017 – AS Summer 2018 – A level	Ancient languages (Classical Greek and Latin) Dance Drama and theatre Geography Modern foreign languages (French, German and Spanish) Music Physical education Religious studies	

Autumn 2016	September 2017	Summer 2018 – AS Summer 2019 – A level	Accounting Ancient history Archaeology Classical civilisation Design and technology Electronics Environmental science Film studies Further mathematics Geology Government and politics History of art Law Mathematics Media studies Music technology Philosophy Statistics	Reformed qualifications will only be available in these subjects if the content requirements for them meet our principles for reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels. This list does not include any reformed language qualifications that exam boards may choose to develop for first teaching in 2017.
-------------	----------------	---	---	--

* All subjects are applicable to both AS and A level