



Department  
for Education

# **Reformed GCSE and A level subject content consultation**

**Government response**

**January 2015**

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## Introduction

On 16 July 2014 the Department for Education published a consultation on proposed subject content for qualifications which will be introduced from September 2016. This included:

- proposed content developed by awarding organisations for GCSEs in **art and design, dance, computer science, music, and physical education**
- proposed content developed by awarding organisations for AS and A levels in **dance, music, and physical education**
- proposed content based on the A Level Content Advisory Board's (ALCAB) recommendations for AS and A levels in **modern foreign languages, ancient languages, mathematics, further mathematics, and geography**

In September 2014, the Department ran a separate consultation on proposed content for GCSEs in citizenship, cooking and nutrition, design and technology and drama, as well as for A level drama and theatre studies.

The proposed GCSE subject content aims to provide students with more fulfilling and demanding courses of study; new A level content aims to encourage development of the skills and knowledge needed for progression to undergraduate study and employment. The consultation sought views on the following questions:

- whether the revised GCSE content in each subject is appropriate:
  - whether there is a suitable level of challenge
  - whether the content reflects what students need to know in order to progress to further academic and vocational education
- whether the revised A level content in each subject is appropriate:
  - whether the content reflects what students need to know in order to progress to undergraduate study
- whether the revised AS qualification content in each subject is appropriate
- whether the revised modern foreign languages content, covering assessment of all four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening), is applicable to all languages currently available for study at AS and A level.

The consultation ran for 9 and a half weeks until 22 September 2014 and received 967 responses from schools, further and higher education institutions, employers, subject associations, curriculum and assessment experts, and the general public. We also met regularly with subject associations to help us understand expert views in more depth.

Ofqual, the independent regulator, consulted in parallel on GCSE, AS and A level assessment arrangements for these subjects. Ofqual's response to its consultation is available at: [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/).

The Department has considered the evidence gathered and has worked with awarding organisations to publish final subject content for GCSEs in art and design, dance, computer science, music, and physical education and AS and A levels in dance, music, and physical education. The Department and ALCAB also considered the evidence for A and AS levels in modern foreign languages, ancient languages, mathematics, further mathematics, and geography. The Department has worked with ALCAB to finalise content for these subjects, and ALCAB has explained its recommendations in a [letter to the Secretary of State](#).

Of the responses we received:

- 211 were submitted directly from teachers
- 35 were submitted on behalf of subject associations
- 28 were submitted on behalf of higher education institutions
- 17 responses submitted on behalf of schools
- 14 responses submitted on behalf of further education institutions
- 12 responses from parents
- 9 responses submitted on behalf of academies
- 8 responses submitted on behalf of colleges
- 8 responses submitted on behalf of organisations representing school teachers and lecturers
- 4 responses submitted on behalf of awarding organisations
- 5 responses submitted on behalf of local authorities
- 4 responses from employers/business sector
- 4 responses from young people
- 2 responses from head teachers
- 580 were submitted as part of a campaign

A full list of the organisations that have responded can be found at Annex A.

## Overview of reforms

The government is reforming GCSEs and A levels to make sure that they prepare students better for further and higher education, and employment. We want reformed GCSEs to set expectations which match those of the highest performing countries, with rigorous assessment that provides a reliable measure of students' achievement. The new A levels will be linear qualifications that encourage development of the skills and knowledge students need for progression to undergraduate study. The content provides for awarding organisations to develop new stand-alone AS qualifications taught over one or two years that can be co-taught with the A level. Students may want to benefit from this change and only take an AS qualification to add breadth to their A level study. However, it will continue to be possible for students to take an AS in some subjects before deciding which to continue onto A level.

Reforms to these qualifications are already underway. [GCSE subject content](#) in English literature, language and mathematics was published in November 2013, and the new qualifications will be taught from September 2015. [GCSE subject content](#) in ancient languages, geography, history, modern foreign languages and science, which will be taught from September 2016, was published in April 2014.

At AS and A level, [subject content](#) in art and design, biology, business, chemistry, computer science, economics, English language, English literature, English language and literature, history, physics, psychology, and sociology was published in April 2014. These new qualifications will be taught from September 2015.

Responsibility for reviewing subject content for the remaining facilitating subjects, which are to be taught from September 2016, was remitted to a new independent body, the A level Content Advisory Board (ALCAB).<sup>1</sup> We consulted on proposals based on ALCAB's [recommendations](#).

In April 2014 the Secretary of State announced that a further set of GCSEs and A levels would be reformed and introduced for first teaching from 2016. This includes the GCSEs in art and design, computer science, dance, music, and physical education, and AS and A levels in dance, music, and physical education. Our consultation on GCSEs in citizenship studies, cooking and nutrition, drama, design and technology and, AS and A levels in drama and theatre closed on 20 November and we are considering the responses received. Our consultation on GCSEs, AS and A levels in Religious studies closes on 29 December and can be accessed at: [www.gov.uk/government/consultations](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations).

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<sup>1</sup> It was decided that A levels in modern foreign languages, mathematics, further mathematics and geography required more significant change and development time and that these subjects would be reformed for first teaching in 2016. Following a request from the Department, the Russell Group of universities set up ALCAB to review subject content in these subjects, together with ancient and classical languages.

Ofqual has [consulted](#) on proposals for the final phase of reform and will decide on the process for the final phase of reform soon. Reformed GCSEs and A levels in remaining subjects will then be introduced for first teaching from 2017.

## Summary of responses received and the government's response

This section sets out the views that we have heard in response to the consultation on 2016 GCSEs and A levels. It also sets out the decisions that have been taken to finalise the content in these subjects

The written responses and the views expressed by subject experts during the consultation period and throughout the development process have been important in shaping and strengthening the content. Awarding organisations and the Department have also worked closely with Ofqual to ensure that the subject content can be regulated.

Some respondents who provided written responses to the consultation chose only to answer a subset of the questions that were posed. Therefore, response figures for each subject differ depending on which questions people answered, for example there were 32 responses to our question on Art and Design whereas there were 88 for A level Maths. Throughout the report, percentages are expressed as a measure of those answering each question, not as a measure of all responses.

Some issues which arose fell outside the scope of the GCSE and A level subject content consultation. Some were relevant to Ofqual's parallel consultation on GCSE and A level regulatory requirements and assessment arrangements. These issues will be addressed by Ofqual in its [consultation response](#) and are therefore not reported here.

This analysis does not include issues mentioned by respondents which were outside the scope of the review – for example, issues raised on the decoupling of the AS and A level qualification, upon which a decision was taken in March 2013.

## Arts, physical education and computer science subjects

This section sets out the responses we received on the proposals for GCSEs in art and design, computer sciences, dance, music and PE, as well as AS and A levels in dance, music and PE. It also sets out the government's response to the consultation on each of these subjects.

### Art and design GCSE

**We received 32 responses on the suitability of the art and design GCSE subject content, of which 13 agreed the draft content was appropriate.**

Is the revised GCSE content in art and design appropriate?	Total	Percent
Yes:	13	41%
Not Sure:	11	34%
No:	8	25%

The key suggestions put forward in the consultation on art and design were:

- Title specific content should be added to the qualification (18% of respondents)
- The aims and learning outcomes should be further specified to provide clarity on how they could be measured (12% of respondents)
- Product design should be included as an area of study under three-dimensional design (9% of respondents)

In expanding on these views respondents noted that the content could do more to draw out the differences and distinctiveness between the specialist titles so that they better reflect what students need to know. Title specific content would also help ensure comparability and rigour across Awarding organisations. Respondents suggested that redrafted, more specific aims would make the qualification easier to assess.

Various individual respondents requested a number of specific drafting amendments to content to improve the clarity, rigour or inclusiveness of content.

### Government response to art and design GCSE

Awarding organisations added further detail for each title (e.g. fine art, three dimensional design etc.), which outlines more clearly the coverage of each and defines their parameters. This was done to improve comparability and rigour whilst retaining some



flexibility within the titles as a way of future proofing the qualification. In addition, drafters agreed that product design would be added as an additional area of study under the three dimensional design titles.

Awarding organisations agreed that, while it was important that aims and learning outcomes should be clear and unambiguous, it was not necessary that they be directly assessable. Aims and outcomes are intended to be aspirational and so do not require the same level of specificity as assessment criteria. Drafters agreed that the penultimate bullet in subject aims and learning outcomes should be removed as it was highlighted in the consultation as superfluous.

Following full consideration of the consultation responses and discussion between Awarding organisations and Ofqual, it was decided that title specific content was not required as it was the process of design rather than knowledge that was being assessed. Furthermore, the sort of detail suggested for inclusion by consultation respondents would be included in awarding organisations' final specifications.

Drafting changes were made where the consultation highlighted ambiguities in the draft content. Drafters clarified the use of visual language from an equalities perspective and to clarify the requirement for drawing.

## Computer science GCSE

**We received 21 responses on the suitability of the computer science GCSE subject content, of which 6 agreed the draft content was appropriate.**

Is the revised GCSE content in computer science appropriate?	Total	Percent
No:	8	38%
Not Sure:	7	33%
Yes:	6	29%

Respondents suggested drafting changes to the content to improve clarity, widen scope of content or ensure an appropriate level of demand. Respondents further recommended that greater emphasis should be placed on the interdisciplinary nature of computer science (15% of respondents). In particular, respondents recommended that the aims and objectives could be linked to aspects of business analysis or similar business studies.

9% of respondents thought that cybersecurity skills should be added to the skills sections of the content. Respondents also thought that system and networking skills should be added to the content to improve understanding of IT processes.

## Government response to computer science GCSE

Awarding organisations carefully considered specific amendments to content and made a number of minor changes to improve clarity, ensure the right level of breadth, depth and demand and to attempt to “future proof” content. Cybersecurity was also given greater emphasis in the content with the addition of a new bullet on cybersecurity in the knowledge and understanding section. However, requiring students to display cyber security skills in a programming context was judged to be too demanding at GCSE level.

Awarding organisations agreed that system and networking skills were not appropriate to a computer science GCSE and would be more appropriately located in the ICT GCSE or more vocational computing qualifications.

While awarding organisations considered interdisciplinary dialogue to be important to the teaching of computer science, they did not consider the subject content under consideration to be the right place to emphasise this point. Instead, they agreed to look at emphasising the interdisciplinary nature of computer science in the aims of their specifications and in the accompanying additional information, advice and guidance produced by examining bodies.

## Dance GCSE

**We received 53 responses on the suitability of the dance GCSE subject content, of which 27 agreed the draft content was appropriate.**

Is the revised GCSE content in dance appropriate?	Total	Percent
Yes:	27	51%
No:	15	28%
Not Sure:	11	21%

20 respondents (38%) observed that the content provided a suitable level of challenge for students at a GCSE level and 15 respondents (28%) believed the content provided for suitable progression from key stage 3. 26% of respondents noted that the length of time for dances was appropriate and 8% welcomed the requirements to study a range of styles and professional choreographers.

19% of respondents were concerned that the content did not make clear how many choreographers' works should be studied and it was clear in a number of responses that this had not been fully understood.

Beyond this drafting suggestion, proposed additions to content included:

- Students should engage with industry and professional practitioners, and experience live performances
- Students should experience learning methods and/or dance coaching to prepare them for teaching or coaching careers
- ICT and digital media should be incorporated in the qualification

## **Government response to dance GCSE**

Drafting amendments were made to improve the clarity of the subject content, including around the number of choreographers works to be studied. After discussion with stakeholders and Ofqual following the consultation, further detail was added to explain the extent of the requirement to demonstrate appreciation of a student's own performance and that of others.

Awarding organisations carefully considered additions suggested at consultation. They concluded that the substantive additions proposed would not be appropriate additions to the content as they would be more appropriately determined by schools and colleges based on the needs of students. For example, introducing a compulsory requirement to incorporate digital media in dance teaching could disadvantage pupils in schools with limited resources. Similarly an obligation to engage with professional practitioners could disadvantage students in schools without strong links with industry.

## Dance AS and A level

### Dance A level

We received 44 responses on the suitability of the dance A level subject content, of which 30 agreed the draft content was appropriate.

Is the revised A level content in dance appropriate?	Total	Percent
Yes:	30	68%
Not Sure:	8	18%
No:	6	14%

A number of the responses submitted in support of the draft subject content offered drafting suggestions. 31% of respondents commented that the content provided a suitably broad knowledge of the discipline and 30% thought it provided a good grounding for undergraduate study.

A small minority of respondents (5%) were concerned that the content was too focused on the theory of dance at the expense of practical performance. In addition to the suggested additions put forward at GCSE, respondents suggested that it was important to include teaching concerning injury prevention and recovery for students at A level.

### Dance AS level

We received 40 responses on the suitability of the dance AS level subject content, of which 21 agreed the draft content was appropriate.

Is the revised AS level content in dance appropriate?	Total	Percent
Yes:	21	53%
No:	12	30%
Not Sure:	7	18%

In addition to the comments made at A level, 28% of respondents thought the content of the AS level showed good progression from GCSE and would allow for adequate development to progress to the new A level.

## Government response to dance AS and A level

Following careful consideration of the responses to the consultation further detail was added around critical engagement, along with some minor wording amendments to the

content to improve clarity including around the number of choreographers works to be studied.

Awarding Organisations carefully considered suggested additions and amendments but concluded that these would not be appropriate for the content for the same reasons listed at GCSE. Although teaching of injury prevention and recovery was an important part of a physical course, it was decided that this should not be included as a separate heading in the subject content as the current content refers to understanding, applying and developing safe practice and awarding organisations agreed that injury and recovery were likely to be included under this heading.

## Music GCSE

**We received 643 responses on the suitability of the Music GCSE subject content, of which 17 agreed the draft content was appropriate.**

Is the revised GCSE content in Music appropriate?	Total	Percent
No:	606	94%
Not Sure:	20	3%
Yes:	17	3%

The main suggestions put forward in the consultation on music GCSE were that:

- It should be made clearer that students should engage with a range of music and their studies should not be overly focussed on western classical music (83% of respondents)<sup>2</sup>
- The content should put more emphasis on students adopting an integrated approach to performing, composing and appraising (81% of respondents)

Many respondents mistakenly interpreted the subject content as limiting music teaching in the GCSE to western classical music (WCM) and were concerned that students would not be exposed to a diverse range of music. Where respondents acknowledged other traditions would be available for teaching they suggested that the date range set out in the area of study on WCM should be extended so that music written before 1700 and after 1900 could be included.

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<sup>2</sup> The majority of these responses were received as part of a campaign on behalf of the Incorporated Society of Musicians and the National Association for Music in Higher Education. The campaign suggested that the draft content would restrict music education to the period 1700-1900 and would preclude the study of music outside these dates. The draft subject content published in advance of the consultation provided for the inclusion of diverse areas of study beyond these dates to be included in specifications developed by awarding organisations and included an explicit requirement for students to study music from at least one period outside the European western classical tradition.

Respondents and stakeholders also felt the criteria at GCSE should require or encourage a more integrated approach to performing, composing and appraising.

They also objected to the introduction of minimum time periods for performing and composing. Respondents felt that minimum time periods could simply lead to students creating and performing works at a very slow pace.

A number of respondents made drafting suggestions to improve clarity or widen the scope of the content. Through further consultation with organisations representing musicians and music teachers we were able to further establish the extent and purpose of these suggested changes.

## **Government response to music GCSE**

Following careful consideration of the responses to the consultation we asked awarding organisations to work with subject experts and Ofqual to improve and strengthen the requirements of the new music subject content in the following ways:

- The content has been amended to clarify the requirement for students to study a broad range of music
- a new definition of western classical music has been set out. The date range has been extended to 1650-1910, and awarding bodies have been given the flexibility to include a small amount of WCM written outside these dates if they wish
- there is a new requirement for students to analyse unfamiliar music
- the aims and learning outcomes have been strengthened to emphasise the links between performing, appraising and composing
- The suggested minimum lengths for performing and composing have been removed and these will now form part of the statutory guidance

Awarding organisations also made a number of amendments to improve the clarity of content following suggestions from respondents

Awarding organisations considered whether another compulsory area of study should be specified in the subject content e.g. world music, but felt this would be too restrictive as it would allow less scope for awarding organisations and the content already ensures that students will study music other than just western classical. They also noted that the examples given under musical elements, contexts and language applied to WCM because that it is the only compulsory area of study. Relevant terminology for other areas of study would be included in AO specifications.

Awarding organisations gave careful consideration to adding further content to cover the process of music making, however after discussing the issue with Ofqual it was decided that assessing process in addition to a student's final performance and

composition would create challenges around validity and reliability of assessment. We recognise that this will disappoint some stakeholders, but it is important that the qualification provides a valid and dependable indication of a student's ability. Ofqual, the independent regulator with responsibility for assessment, will publish its response to the consultation.

## Music AS and A level

### Music A level

**We received 641 responses on the suitability of the Music A level subject content, of which 15 agreed the draft content was appropriate.**

Is the revised A level content in Music appropriate?	Total	Percent
No:	608	95%
Not Sure:	18	3%
Yes:	15	2%

As with Music GCSE respondents were eager that AS and A level students should be exposed to a diverse range of music. Respondents and stakeholders also felt the criteria at GCSE should emphasise a more integrated approach to performing, composing and appraising and that processes (communication, development, critical refinement, etc.) should be assessed.

Many respondents submitted a joint response to all three reformed music qualifications and the majority of respondents submitted responses to the consultation as part a single campaign.

Respondents and stakeholders we spoke to also made a number of suggestions to improve clarity or widen scope of content. Through consultation with organisations representing musicians and music teachers we were able to further establish the extent and purpose of these suggested changes.

## Music AS level

We received 631 responses on the suitability of the Music AS level subject content, of which 11 agreed the draft content was appropriate.

Is the revised AS level content in Music appropriate?	Total	Percent
No:	603	96%
Not Sure:	17	3%
Yes:	11	2%

Responses to the AS level subject content raised the same concerns as listed above for A level.

## Government response to Music AS and A level

Awarding organisations worked with subject experts and Ofqual to agree similar changes to those agreed at music GCSE. In particular:

- a new definition of western classical music has been set out. The date range has been extended to 1650-1910, and awarding bodies have been given the flexibility to include a small amount of WCM written outside these dates if they wish.
- The suggested minimum lengths for performing and composing have been removed and these will now form part of the statutory guidance.

Awarding organisations also made amendments to improve the clarity of content following suggestions from respondents.

## PE GCSE

We received 85 responses on the suitability of the PE GCSE subject content, of which 16 agreed the draft content was appropriate.

Is the revised GCSE content in PE appropriate?	Total	Percent
No:	8	38%
Not Sure:	7	33%
Yes:	6	29%

22% of respondents welcomed the increase in theoretical and scientific content on the grounds that it would increase the standing and reputation of the subject and provide for better progression to AS and A level or other courses for further study.



The main suggestions put forward in the consultation on PE were that:

- the list of activities could be expanded to include selected activities which had been missed from the first published draft (28% of respondents)
- a greater emphasis on practical skills would improve the accessibility of the qualification (21% of respondents)
- the proposals should be amended to avoid a decline in student numbers (17% of respondents)
- students should be assessed on more than two activities (12% of respondents)
- the government should consider reintroducing alternative roles to player and performer, i.e. coach/ official (6% of respondents)

In expanding on these points respondents argued that assessing students on more than two activities would allow for a greater depth and range for students to be able to properly demonstrate practical skills. This would give students the opportunity to select combinations that demonstrate a range of skills. Respondents and stakeholders we spoke to suggested that students should be assessed in at least three activities, potentially in the role of official or coach as well as player/performer in order to demonstrate a range of skills. They also noted that it would be helpful if certain skills could be given more emphasis in the content such as teamwork and communication.

Respondents also asked us to broaden the range of activities in which students could be assessed and suggested certain activities which had been left off the list, including:

- Rounders – 12 respondents
- Further dance options – 6 respondents
- Baseball – 2 respondents
- Rugby Sevens – 1 respondent
- Life Saving – 1 respondent
- Indoor climbing – 1 respondent
- Parkour – 1 respondent
- Sailing and yachting – 1 respondent

A number of respondents commented on the level of non-examination assessment proposed. This was considered by Ofqual in its parallel consultation on assessment. Some respondents were concerned that increasing the amount of theoretical content at GCSE would discourage students from taking the subject, particularly where they struggled in other academic subjects.

## Government response to PE GCSE

After careful consideration of the responses to the consultation we asked awarding organisations to work with subject experts, and Ofqual to improve and strengthen the requirements of the new PE subject content in the following ways:

- Students will now be assessed in three activities rather than two, including at least one team sport and at least one individual sport. We have also clarified that students may only be assessed once in any activity and that variants of that activity e.g. singles and doubles tennis, will not be classed as separate activities except where they are included as separate entries on the activities list. This means that students will study a wide range of activities and will have the opportunity to demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding across a wider range of activities.
- Further detail has been added on the skills expected of students in team sports, including a clearer emphasis on teamwork and communicating effectively with other players

The activity list has also been amended to reflect changes to the content and rugby sevens has been added to the list; rock climbing has been amended to include indoor as well as outdoor climbing and the title of the activity listed as contemporary dance has been changed to dance to allow for a wider range of dance to be included. Awarding organisations considered proposals for the inclusion of other sports and activities submitted to the consultation for consideration, along with evidence gathered from sports associations and physical education stakeholders by the Department. After careful consideration of the cases put forward and of all of the available evidence, awarding organisations agreed that these sports and activities did not meet some or all of the criteria for inclusion set out in the PE activity list rationale. The Department will formally review this list again at a later stage.

Awarding organisations gave careful consideration to concerns that the content was overly focussed on theoretical content. It was felt the additional theoretical content, which is directly relatable to sport science topics, will increase the academic rigour of the qualification and enable better progression to further study and higher education in PE where there is an increased emphasis on theoretical understanding. It will also provide a more solid grounding for further study in other subjects. The revised subject content addresses comments from across the sector that the current GCSE and A level are not of comparable rigour to other subjects and do not provide suitable progression - most HEIs do not currently value the GCSE PE even for progression to sports science degrees.

In response to specific concerns about take up and engagement in physical activity as a result of these changes, awarding organisations noted that the focus of Physical Education in the National Curriculum is on participation and improving access to physical

activity. It is therefore appropriate that the GCSE offer a rigorous qualification that will meaningfully add value to a student's course of study.

## PE AS and A level

### PE A level

**We received 49 responses on the suitability of the PE A level subject content, of which 18 agreed the draft content was appropriate.**

Is the revised A level content in PE appropriate?	Total	Percent
Not Sure:	19	39%
Yes:	18	37%
No:	12	24%

Where applicants submitted responses to AS and A level PE they often submitted a joint response. Suggestions and concerns raised at AS and A level are therefore similar to those raised at GCSE.

11% of respondents expressly approved of the increased theoretical and scientific focus, though 4% of respondents reported that too much theoretical content had been included and that the proposed subject content would make the qualification too challenging for students at this level. The most consistent response to the consultation on PE at A level was that the list of activities should be expanded (16% of respondents).

As at GCSE, a number of respondents commented on the level of non-examination assessment proposed. This was considered by Ofqual in [their parallel consultation on assessment](#).

### PE AS level

**We received 46 responses on the suitability of the PE AS subject content, of which 17 agreed the draft content was appropriate.**

Is the revised AS level content in PE appropriate?	Total	Percent
Not Sure:	17	37%
Yes:	17	37%
No:	12	26%

Responses at AS level echoed suggestions at A level. 11% of respondents urged that the list of activities should be expanded.

### **Government response to PE AS and A level**

As with the GCSE, the activity list has been amended: rugby sevens has been added to the list; rock climbing amended to include indoor as well as outdoor climbing and contemporary dance has been changed to dance to allow for a wider range of dance to be assessed. Awarding organisations considered proposals for the inclusion of other additional sports and activities, along with evidence gathered by the Department from sports associations and stakeholders. After deliberation Awarding organisations agreed that these sports and activities did not meet some or all of the criteria for inclusion set out in the PE activity list rationale.

Awarding organisations were confident that the theoretical content of the reformed qualification was appropriate for students at this level of study. They considered further amendments suggested by individual respondents and, where appropriate, drafting changes were made to avoid ambiguity.

## ALCAB Subjects

This section sets out the responses we received on the proposals for AS and A levels in the remaining facilitating subjects. It also summarises the recommendations that ALCAB made on subject content for these subjects. Further information is available in [ALCAB's panel reports](#).

### Modern foreign languages AS and A level

#### Modern foreign languages A level

We received 74 responses on the suitability of the modern foreign languages A level subject content, of which 18 agreed the draft content was appropriate.

Is the revised A level content in Modern Foreign Languages appropriate in view of the issues raised in ALCAB's reports?	Total	Percent
No:	40	54%
Yes:	18	24%
Not Sure:	16	22%

Respondents referred the need to increase participation in the study of modern foreign languages. 19% of respondents were concerned that the proposed changes to the A level could reduce interest in the subject and depress student numbers. Recurring suggestions from the consultation were:

- The amount of assessment in English should be reduced to allow for a greater focus on teaching foreign language skills (39% of respondents)
- The themes suggested by ALCAB should be amended to make them more engaging and appealing for students at this level (24% of respondents)
- ALCAB should reconsider the compulsory study of literary works to broaden the appeal of the qualification (15% of respondents)

In expanding on these views, respondents stressed the amount of time taken away from language study by taking and preparing for an exam task in English. Respondents also highlighted the potential for unfair bias towards students with good English skills that could arise from assessment in English.

Where respondents expressed concern that some themes and topics were not appropriate for students at this age or level of study they often had regard to the list of

exemplar topics published in ALCAB’s report in July. Respondents and stakeholders also expressed concern that the subject content was too large could not be taught effectively in the time available.

Teachers responding to the consultation reported that many students considering studying modern foreign languages at A level were clear that they did not wish to study literature and that a focus on literature might decrease uptake. Respondents suggested that students whose interests lay in science subjects could more appropriately study non-literary works.

## Modern foreign languages AS level

**We received 67 responses on the suitability of the modern foreign languages AS level subject content, of which 13 agreed the draft content was appropriate.**

Is the revised AS level content in Modern Foreign Languages appropriate in view of the issues raised in ALCAB’s reports?	Total	Percent
No:	40	60%
Not Sure:	14	21%
Yes:	13	19%

Respondents to the consultation on AS level modern foreign languages echoed the suggestions made for the subject at A level. In addition, 18% of respondents suggested that ALCAB should consider reducing the size and scope of the AS level to ensure effective progression from GCSE to further study.

## Government response to modern foreign languages AS and A level

The ALCAB panel considered the consultation responses regarding teaching and assessment in English and has recommended replacing the proposed analytical essay in English with a requirement to give a critical and analytical response in the language of study to two works presented in that language.

ALCAB carefully considered concerns that the content was too large or too ambitious. The panel recommended reducing the number of themes to be studied at AS level from three to two, and at A level from six to four.

Some respondents wanted more emphasis on communicative language skills rather than intercultural understanding. In the view of the ALCAB panel this is a false dichotomy. Their recommendations are based on the development of independent communicators in the target language whose linguistic ability is integrated with an understanding of aspects

of the society and culture of countries where the language is spoken. . Employer surveys demonstrate the importance of intercultural understanding for language users.

In response to suggested alternative topics or works to be studied, ALCAB recommends extending the range of works eligible for study to include biography, as well as journals, diaries and letters, to offer a greater choice to students. It also agreed to publish revised indicative lists of themes, works and research topics. The revised lists can be found at [alcab.org.uk/](http://alcab.org.uk/).

ALCAB advises that, with these changes, the qualifications fulfil the intended aims set out by ALCAB and reflect what students need to know in order to progress to undergraduate study. The board's full response to the consultation can be found at: [alcab.org.uk/correspondence](http://alcab.org.uk/correspondence)

## Ancient languages AS and A level

### Ancient languages A level

**We received 24 responses on the suitability of the ancient languages A level subject content, of which 9 agreed the draft content was appropriate**

<b>Is the revised A level content in Ancient Languages appropriate in view of the issues raised in ALCAB's reports?</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not Sure:	10	42%
Yes:	9	38%
No:	5	21%

Ancient languages received the fewest responses of any A level subject in the consultation. Respondents made a number of recommendations on points of detail in the subject content, which have been taken on board by ALCAB. The main suggestions put forward in the consultation on Ancient language were:

13% of respondents felt that the length and difficulty of the proposed texts would be too demanding for students and put too much pressure on classroom time for translation and analysis. Respondents suggested that longer texts would lead to an emphasis on the literature over language, and lead to duplication of content between the A level languages qualification and qualifications in classical civilisation.

13% of respondents were concerned that the qualification should be drafted so as to be applicable to ancient languages which are taught less often than Latin and Greek. Other

languages which respondents thought should be specifically included in the content included Biblical Hebrew, New Testament Greek and Sanskrit.

## Ancient languages AS level

**We received 20 responses on the suitability of the ancient languages AS level subject content, of which 10 agreed the draft content was appropriate.**

Is the revised AS level content in Ancient Languages appropriate in view of the issues raised in ALCAB's reports?	Total	Percent
Yes:	10	50%
Not Sure:	6	30%
No:	4	20%

Respondents to the consultation on AS level modern foreign languages echoed the suggestions made for the subject at A level.

## Government response to ancient languages AS and A level

The ALCAB panel thoroughly deliberated suggestions that the study of shorter or partial texts, with less focus on their historical and cultural content, would allow for more language learning. The panel considered that, while it was important that the qualification was manageable and fit for purpose, the proposed subject content is not overly focussed on the context surrounding set texts and it would not duplicate classical civilisation or classical history qualifications in this regard. It restated the position of language skills within the qualification and said that translation from the language of study to English should remain at both AS and A level.

The ALCAB panel was not equipped to give detailed consideration to other ancient languages. The panel confined its advice to classical languages which are recognised as facilitating subjects by the Russell Group of universities, i.e. Ancient Greek and Latin. However, content set out by the panel can be adapted for A level specifications in other ancient languages.

ALCAB advises that, with these changes, the qualifications fulfil the intended aims set out by ALCAB and reflect what students need to know in order to progress to undergraduate study. The board's full response to the consultation can be found at:

[alcab.org.uk/correspondence](http://alcab.org.uk/correspondence)



## Mathematics AS and A level

### Mathematics A level

We received 88 responses on the suitability of the mathematics A level subject content, of which 21 agreed the draft content was appropriate.

Is the revised A level content in mathematics appropriate in view of the issues raised in ALCAB's reports?	Total	Percent
No:	46	52%
Not Sure:	21	24%
Yes:	21	24%

11% of respondents expressed concern that the reformed subject content would depress take up of A level mathematics. Respondents were also concerned that the new mathematics AS and A levels, which contain 100% prescribed content, would be inflexible. Specific suggestions raised in the consultation were:

- Optional mechanics and statistics should be reintroduced to allow schools to tailor the course their students follow to better prepare them for further study in certain specialist degrees (11% of respondents)
- Allowing students to opt out of statistics and mechanics would prevent a fall in student numbers (10% of respondents)
- Reducing the level of demand in the subject would increase its appeal and accessibility (3% of respondents)

In expanding on these views, some respondents expressed the view that schools required the opportunity to tailor their course to include more mechanics or statistics where students intend to progress to further study in specialised undergraduate programmes e.g. more mechanics for engineering and physics students; more statistics for students of psychology and social sciences. Similarly, some respondents believed that students would be deterred from studying mathematics if they could not pursue a course through the qualification that avoided areas of study which did not appeal to them.

15% of respondents felt that decision mathematics should not have been removed from the subject content, although some teachers responding individually welcomed the removal of decision mathematics as they believed it offered an inadequate level of challenge and allowed for easy routes through the qualification.

## Mathematics AS level

We received 77 responses on the suitability of the mathematics AS level subject content, of which 21 agreed the draft content was appropriate.

Is the revised AS level content in mathematics appropriate in view of the issues raised in ALCAB's reports?	Total	Percent
No:	38	49%
Yes:	21	27%
Not Sure:	18	23%

Respondents echoed concerns expressed at A level about the effect of introducing 100% prescribed content on the study of mechanics and statistics. There were also concerns that the proposed reforms included too much content to be taught effectively at AS level (14% of respondents) and that the content which was chosen for inclusion at AS mathematics was too difficult for study at this level and did not provide for effective progression from GCSE (8% of respondents).

## Government response to mathematics AS and A level

ALCAB has clarified the wording of the subject content to avoid ambiguities that were highlighted in responses to the consultation. Where drafting suggestions on points of detail were made they were gratefully received and taken into account.

After careful consideration of the responses to the consultation the ALCAB panel reaffirmed its support for 100% prescribed content in the new AS and A level mathematics to better prepare students for undergraduate study. ALCAB also decided that the amount of content for the compulsory statistics and mechanics units of the course was well balanced and suited to the size of the qualification. ALCAB pointed out that, under the unreformed qualification, A level modules were often selected based on a teacher's familiarity with subject content and not on students' plans for further study. University tutors had reported that students who had studied the current mathematics A level aware often inadequately prepared for their chosen areas of study.

In response to concerns that the qualifications were too large, some content has been moved from the AS level to the A level and some has been removed from the qualification entirely. Mathematical problem solving remains at the heart of the new A level and will involve applying mathematical knowledge and understanding.

After careful deliberation the panel decided that further mathematics was the right place for a revised version of decision mathematics, and that it should therefore not be retained in A level mathematics.

ALCAB advises that, with these changes, the qualifications fulfil the panel’s intended aims and reflect what students need to know in order to progress to undergraduate study. ALCAB recommends that mathematics and further mathematics AS and A level should be first taught in 2017, so that the first cohort to study the reformed A level will have studied the reformed GCSE. The board’s full response to the consultation can be found at: [alcab.org.uk/correspondence](http://alcab.org.uk/correspondence)

## Further mathematics AS and A level

### Further mathematics A level

**We received 80 responses on the suitability of the further mathematics A level subject content, of which 27 agreed the draft content was appropriate.**

Is the revised A level content in further mathematics appropriate in view of the issues raised in ALCAB’s reports?	Total	Percent
Not Sure:	28	35%
Yes:	27	34%
No:	25	31%

As with responses to mathematics, respondents were concerned that the changes to the qualification would depress student numbers (16%), suggesting that increased focus on pure mathematics in the prescribed subject content would deter students. A number of respondents suggested clarifications to the wording of the subject content, which have been taken on board by the panel.

Respondents were divided about the balance of prescribed and optional content: 13% objected to prescription of modules or wanted greater modularity; 13% thought that more prescription was needed in further mathematics to ensure universities could rely on consistency of knowledge in students with the qualification; 15% thought the right balance had been struck between prescribed and optional content. 5% of respondents believed the core content should include a greater focus on mechanics and statistics.

13% of respondents felt that the content or accompanying guidance should make it clear how mathematics AS and A level and further mathematics AS and A level would align for effective co-teaching. Respondents were particularly concerned that the lower level of prescribed content in the further mathematics AS level could lead to conflicts with the fully prescribed mathematics AS level. Respondents suggested that the content of the further mathematics AS level could be further prescribed to more closely align it with the mathematics AS level and thereby avoid the possibility of such tensions.

## Further mathematics AS level

We received 68 responses on the suitability of the further mathematics AS level subject content, of which 23 agreed the draft content was appropriate.

Is the revised AS level content in further mathematics appropriate in view of the issues raised in ALCAB's reports?	Total	Percent
Not Sure:	23	34%
Yes:	23	34%
No:	22	32%

Responses on AS level further mathematics echoed concerns about the impact of the reformed qualification on student numbers. 4% of respondents wanted more prescribed content at AS level. These respondents had largely accepted ALCAB's reasoning and suggested that, for the credibility of further mathematics, options such as decision maths should be removed. Respondents expressed the view that many further mathematics students would pursue similar routes at higher education, i.e. engineering and sciences, meaning that further mathematics lends itself to a greater level of prescription.

## Government response to further mathematics AS and A level

ALCAB has clarified the wording of the subject content in places to avoid ambiguities that were highlighted in responses to the consultation. In particular, ALCAB has reviewed the text to ensure that the overarching themes are clearly expressed.

After carefully considering all responses to the consultation on the correct balance of optionality and prescription at both AS and A level, the panel restates its view that flexibility is needed in further mathematics. This can accommodate the need to allow for more applied mathematics than pure mathematics. However, it agrees that the sections on proof in AS and A level can be strengthened and has acted accordingly.

After careful deliberation the panel decided that further mathematics was the right place for a revised version of decision mathematics.

ALCAB advises that, with these changes, the qualifications fulfil the panel's intended aims and reflect what students need to know in order to progress to undergraduate study. ALCAB recommends that mathematics and further mathematics AS and A level should be first taught in 2017, so that the first cohort to study the reformed A level will have studied the reformed GCSE. The board's full response to the consultation can be found at: [alcab.org.uk/correspondence](http://alcab.org.uk/correspondence)

## Geography AS and A level

### Geography A level

**We received 49 responses on the suitability of the geography A level subject content, of which 18 agreed the draft content was appropriate.**

<b>Is the revised A level content in geography appropriate in view of the issues raised in ALCAB's reports?</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No:	19	39%
Yes:	18	37%
Not Sure:	12	24%

20% of respondents welcomed the approach to fieldwork in the reformed qualification and the balance of human and physical geography. 10% of respondents felt that the qualification demonstrated adequate progression from geography GCSE. 20% of respondents welcomed a perceived increase in the demand of the qualification and 31% of respondents approved of the core content.

Some respondents were concerned that a requirement for all students within a cohort would each be required to undertake distinct practical fieldwork exercises to satisfy the requirement for independent study would strain teaching resources. Ofqual confirmed that the draft subject content does not require separate fieldwork practical trips to be organised for each individual in a cohort. The individual project should reflect a focus identified by the student individually which may be informed by data collected as a group.

Some further suggestions put forward in the consultation were:

- Removing some content from the qualification would make it more practical to teach (8% of respondents)
- Certain specific topics should be added to the prescribed core content or moved from elsewhere in the content (12% of respondents)
- Reducing the amount of complex theoretical concepts would make the qualification more engaging and accessible (10% of respondents)

### Geography AS level

**We received 38 responses on the suitability of the geography A level subject content, of which 12 agreed the draft content was appropriate.**

Is the revised AS level content in geography appropriate in view of the issues raised in ALCAB's reports?	Total	Percent
No:	13	34%
Not Sure:	13	34%
Yes:	12	32%

Respondents at AS level echoed the suggestions of respondents at A level.

## Government response to geography AS and A level

After careful consideration of the size of the qualification and the practical requirements of teachers, the ALCAB panel decided to remove some content from the core. ALCAB also recognised that certain topics might be new to some teachers and have therefore included additional explanatory text in the revised content to assist teaching in these areas.

ALCAB reaffirmed that fieldwork was essential to the study of geography at this level. The panel decided that the allocation of at least two days' fieldwork at AS level and at least four days at A level should be required, and that the fieldwork should cover practical study of both human and physical geography. The panel has amended the wording of the content in several places to avoid ambiguities highlighted in consultation responses. Ofqual has confirmed that awarding organisations will be required to obtain an assurance from schools and colleges that the required fieldwork has been done.

ALCAB advises that, with these changes, the qualifications fulfil the panel's intended aims and reflect what students need to know in order to progress to undergraduate study. The board's full response to the consultation can be found at:

[alcab.org.uk/correspondence](http://alcab.org.uk/correspondence)

## Conclusion

We are grateful to all those who responded to the consultation and to those individuals who have worked with awarding organisations, ALCAB and the Department to finalise subject content for these subjects. We believe that the changes made in response to the consultation appropriately address the issues raised and that the content we have published will provide young people with the high quality qualifications they deserve.

## Annex A: List of organisations that responded to the consultation

A R Distribution  
Abbeyfield School Mathematics  
Department  
Abraham Moss Community School  
ABRSM  
Acle Academy  
ACME  
Allegri Singers  
All Party Parliamentary Group on  
Languages  
Altrincham Grammar School for Girls  
Appleton Academy  
AQA  
Archery GB  
Arts Council England  
Arts Learning Consortium  
Ashby School maths department  
Association for Language Learning  
Association for Physical Education  
Association of British Orchestras  
Association of Teachers and Lecturers  
Association of Teachers of  
Mathematics  
Barrow Women's Rounders League  
BaseballSoftballUK  
Bassingbourn Village College  
Batley Business and Enterprise  
College  
Batley Girls' High School  
BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT /  
Computing At School  
Beaconsfield High School  
Benenden School  
Berkhamsted School  
BFI (British Film Institute)  
Birmingham City University  
Blatchington Mill School  
Board of Deputies of British Jews  
Bolton School Girls' Division  
Bosworth Academy  
Bradfield School  
Brass Bands England  
Breathing Space Therapies  
Brighton College  
Bristol Cathedral Choir School  
Bristol Plays Music  
Bristol Plays Music @ Colston Hall  
Brompton Academy  
BSI (British Standards Institution)  
Canbury School  
Canford School  
Carmel College  
Central Work Winning  
Chair of the Independent Schools  
Special Interest Group of Geographical  
Association  
Chesterton Community College  
Chetham's School of Music  
Chilwell School  
City of London School  
City Of Norwich School  
Clacton County High School  
Colchester Academy  
Colchester Institute  
College  
Colmers School & Sixth Form College  
CompTIA  
Computing At School  
Conservatoires UK  
Cranleigh School  
Creative United  
Crown Hills CC  
Cultural Learning Alliance  
Dancedesk  
De-tached Music  
Dinnington Comprehensive School  
Dominic Sewell Music  
Dover Grammar School for Girls  
Droitwich Spa High School  
Durham University  
Earth Science Education Forum  
Edgbarrow School  
Engage  
English Federation of Disability Sport  
English Folk Dance and Song Society  
English Outdoor Council  
EPCHS  
e-skills UK on behalf of The Tech  
Partnership  
Esri UK  
Eton College  
Felsted School  
Field Studies Council (FSC)  
FMSP/RHUL  
Formby high school



Further Mathematics Support Programme  
 Geography Department, the Sixth Form College Farnborough  
 George Abbot School  
 Glebelands school  
 Grantham Institute  
 Greenehad College  
 Greenfield Community College- A Specialist Arts & Science School  
 Guildford High School  
 Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London  
 Hagley Catholic High School  
 Hampshire Music Service  
 Hampton School  
 Handsworth Grange Community Sports College  
 Hanham Woods Academy  
 Harlington Upper School  
 Harrogate Grammar School  
 Havering Sixth Form College  
 Head of Art, Design and Technology, Stockport Grammar School  
 Head of Faculty of Physical Education  
 Headington School Oxford  
 Heart of England School  
 High School of Dundee  
 High Storrs School  
 Highfields School  
 Hills Road Sixth Form College  
 HMI National Lead for Mathematics (Ofsted)  
 Holy Trinity CofE School, Crawley  
 Homerton College and Magdalene College, University of Cambridge  
 Hull City Council  
 IIBA UK Chapter Limited  
 Imperial College London and University of Reading  
 Incorporated Society of Musicians  
 Inspire-works Ltd  
 Institute of Education  
 Institute of Mathematics and its Applications  
 Jazz Services  
 John Lyon School  
 John Spence Community High School  
 Kent College, Pembury  
 King Edward VI School, Stratford-upon-Avon

King's College London  
 Kingdown school, Warminster  
 King's College, Cambridge  
 King's College, Taunton.  
 King's Oak Academy, Bristol  
 Kingston upon Hull Music Service  
 Lancaster Institute of Contemporary Arts  
 Langley Park School for Boys  
 Learning about Healthy Active Lifestyles Ltd  
 Learning Development Centre  
 Leeds College  
 Leicestershire Schools' Rounders Association  
 Lewisham Music Service & Director of Lewisham Music Hub  
 Liverpool John Moores University  
 London Mathematical Society  
 London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)  
 London Sinfonietta  
 Loughborough High School  
 LSRA & LLRL  
 Maida Vale Singers  
 Malton School  
 Mana Education  
 Maple Group of Sixth Form Colleges  
 Marc Newton, Artist - Photographer  
 Mathematics in Education and Industry (MEI)  
 Met Office  
 MeteoGroup  
 MPW, South Kensington  
 Music Education (University of Sussex)  
 Music Education Council  
 Music Mark  
 Music Publishers Association  
 NASUWT  
 National Association for Music in Higher Education (NAMHE)  
 National Dance Centre's for Advanced Training (CATs)  
 National Dance Teachers Association  
 National Foundation for Youth Music  
 National Society for Education in Art and Design  
 National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain  
 Neale Wade Academy  
 New College Durham

Newark Music Lessons  
 Newcastle University  
 Newfield School  
 Ninestiles School  
 Northgate High School  
 Oaks Park High School  
 Oasis community learning  
 OCR Examinations  
 OpenExam  
 Operational Research Society  
 Ordnance Survey - Government  
 Department  
 Ormiston Academies Trust  
 Ormiston Maritime Academy  
 Ormskirk School  
 Our Lady & St Bede RC School  
 Ousedale School  
 Outstream Consulting  
 Parkour UK – The National Governing  
 Body for Parkour / Freerunning  
 Parkwood E-ACT Academy  
 Paston Sixth Form College  
 Pate's Grammar School  
 Pearson  
 Peter Symonds College  
 Phoenix collegiate  
 Physical Education, Sport & Active  
 Leisure, and Leisure GQ Assessment  
 Plymouth High School for Girls  
 Programme Board: Children and  
 Young People's Dance  
 Queen Elizabeth School  
 Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College  
 Queen Mary's College  
 Redland Green School  
 Redland High School for Girls  
 Richard Huish College  
 Rishworth School  
 Rounders England  
 Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)  
 Royal Holloway, University of London  
 Royal Latin School, Buckingham  
 Royal Lifesaving Society UK  
 Royal Masonic School for Girls  
 Royal Meteorological Society  
 Royal Statistical Society  
 Rugby Football Union  
 Ryburn Valley High School  
 School of Geography, Queen Mary,  
 University of London  
 sewaleseas.org  
 Sheldon School  
 Sibford School  
 Sidney Stringer Academy  
 Silcoates School  
 Simon Langton Grammar School for  
 Boys  
 Sir John Leman High School  
 Sir William Perkins's School  
 SOAS, University of London  
 Society for French Studies  
 Society of Italian Studies  
 Sonia Sabri Company  
 Southfield School for Girls  
 St Albans School  
 St Bartholomew's School  
 St Bede's College  
 St Francis' College  
 St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College  
 St Helen and St Katharine  
 St Helen's School  
 St Paul's Girls' School  
 St Paul's School  
 St Peter's Music Society  
 St. Bonaventure's Catholic  
 Comprehensive School  
 Stokesley School  
 Sustrust  
 Sutton High School  
 Swindon Dance  
 Sydenham High School  
 Tate Gallery  
 Teacher  
 The Abbey School, Reading  
 The All-Party Parliamentary Group on  
 Modern Languages  
 The Arnewood School  
 The Castle School  
 The Coleshill school  
 The Duke of York's Royal Military  
 School  
 The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust  
 The Elgar Birthplace Museum  
 The Folkestone Academy  
 The Geographical Association  
 The Heathland School  
 The Heathland School  
 The King's School in Macclesfield  
 The Manchester Grammar School  
 The Mathematical Association  
 The North School  
 The Open University

The Priory School  
The Ravensbourne School  
The Royal High School, Bath  
The Royal Society  
The Sixth College Farnborough  
The Swanage School  
The Voices Foundation  
The Willink School  
Trinity College London  
Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music  
and Dance.  
Truro and Penwith College  
Twyford Singers  
UCan Play  
UCL  
UK Forum for Computing Education  
Ulverston Victoria High School  
Unity College  
University Council of Modern  
Languages (UCML)  
University of Birmingham  
University of Cambridge  
University of Chester

University of Leeds  
University of London  
University of Michigan  
University of Surrey  
University of Sussex  
University of the Arts London  
Voice  
Waldegrave School  
Welling School  
West London Free School  
Whitecross High School  
Whitmore High School, Maths  
Department  
William de Ferrers School  
WJEC  
Woldingham School  
Wolverley ce secondary school  
Woodhouse Grove School  
Wyggeston & Queen Elizabeth I  
College, Leicester  
Youth Dance England  
Youth Sport Trust



Department  
for Education

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