

REGULATORY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Changes to our rules for GCSEs, AS
and A levels in music and dance
– regulatory impact assessment

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Introduction

We have considered the regulatory impact of our proposals in light of responses received to the consultation. We set out our view of the potential impacts below.

Minimum assessment times in performance assessments

We propose to revise our rules for the performance assessment in GCSE and GCE music and GCSE and GCE dance.

Currently, our rules mean that students who do not perform for the minimum required time must receive no marks for their performance. Our proposed change will allow exam boards to decide upon the most appropriate and proportionate approach to marking a student whose performance falls short of the minimum required time.

Four exam boards would be affected by this revision – AQA, OCR, Pearson Edexcel and WJEC Eduqas.

Each exam board will be required to establish an approach for marking performances which run short, and ensure that examiners¹ are adequately briefed and trained to apply the approach consistently and accurately. However, as this would be a minor amendment to an existing assessment, we anticipate that the work required of exam boards to update assessment strategies, specifications and any additional guidance or authentication material would impose only a small additional burden.

Currently, the number of examiners recruited by exam boards should presuppose that all performances will be marked. The exam boards did not disagree with this in their consultation responses. Additionally, examiners already assess performances which run short, insofar as they establish or check whether a performance is of the required length. Therefore, we do not anticipate that our proposal would impose any extra burden or incremental ongoing cost in terms of recruitment of examiners.

Some teachers responding to the consultation felt that the proposed change would result in a reduced time and cost burden, as schools would no longer have cause to appeal against performances being awarded zero marks purely for running short. While the change to our rules might reduce the number of appeals, in fact the current arrangements do not allow for any discretion – no marks can be awarded where the performance was short, leaving no scope for appeal. We feel that any net impact would be small.

One teacher suggested that there would be a time saving for schools as they would feel less compelled to rerecord performances which run short. Other teachers felt that the rule change would reduce stress for schools, as short performances would not automatically be given zero marks. While we understand both outcomes would be welcomed by schools, we would continue to expect that teachers support their candidates in meeting the requirements of the qualifications and recognise that students who fall short will be penalised.

¹ Teacher markers, exam-board markers and moderators.

Teachers and the Incorporated Society of Musicians stressed that any changes should be communicated to schools effectively. This would impose a small burden on exam boards in terms of cost and time spent preparing and disseminating communications, and on teachers in familiarising themselves with the new rules. However, we believe this one-off burden to be small, and note that no exam board raised any particular concerns.

Several teachers stressed that the change should be implemented as soon as possible. AQA noted that there would be a challenge for exam boards to coordinate a joined-up approach in time for summer 2019 awarding. However, while we do not propose to compel exam boards to take a joined-up approach this is something they may decide to do.

There were no other concerns from exam boards regarding any potential burden from this proposal.

Score or lead sheet

In GCSE and GCE music, we propose to permit exam boards to allow alternative evidence to be submitted where a written score or lead sheet is not available, should they wish to do so. Four exam boards offer these qualifications – AQA, OCR, Pearson Edexcel and WJEC Eduqas.

While our proposal may broaden the range of music genres available in the performance assessment, it would not constitute a broadening of the qualification's subject content. Therefore, we consider that there would be no additional teaching or marking burden in terms of expanded content.

Our proposal would only permit alternative evidence where a written score or lead sheet does not exist. If an exam board currently permits alternative evidence even where a written score or lead sheet is available, it would have to update its assessment strategy, specification and any additional guidance or authentication material and ensure that schools and colleges and examiners are briefed accordingly. However, we anticipate that this would be a minor amendment to an existing assessment, and so anticipate any such one-off burden to be small.

If an exam board chooses to modify its approach and permit reference recordings (where a written score or lead sheet is unavailable) where it currently does not, the board would be required to modify its specification and ensure that schools and colleges and examiners are briefed accordingly. Again, we anticipate that this would be a minor amendment to an existing assessment, and so anticipate this one-off burden to be small. If an exam board chooses not to modify its current approach, it would bear no additional burden.

Some consultation respondents claimed that it may be more time-consuming for an examiner to mark a performance with reference to a recording than with reference to a written score, with the examiner potentially needing to listen to the whole reference recording more than once. Of the four exam boards, only WJEC Eduqas had concerns in this area. WJEC Eduqas felt that teachers and moderators would be required to memorise the recording, which would take additional time, and that it would be burdensome for examiners, since they would not be given sufficient notice of the pieces that they are due to assess and it would be logistically challenging for them to listen to the pieces immediately before the exam.

WJEC Eduqas do not currently allow reference recordings, and the proposed change would not compel them to do so if they do not wish to. If they were to choose to allow alternative reference material (where a written score or lead sheet is unavailable), they may decide to amend their approach to facilitate this (e.g. by requiring schools and colleges to make reference recordings available in advance of the day of assessment). Were they to choose to do so, we envisage this to be a small, one-off amendment to an existing assessment, and the burden to therefore be small.

Across the whole suite of GCSE, AS and A level music specifications, since reference recordings would only be permitted where a written score or lead sheet is unavailable, we anticipate that only a small proportion of performance assessments would use a reference recording. This, coupled with the fact that some exam boards already allow reference recordings, means that, overall, the additional burden to examiners should be small.

One teacher suggested that there may be a further impact for examiners when presented with alternative evidence, as they may have to satisfy themselves that a written score or lead sheet is not available. We acknowledge that the proposal may also constitute an additional burden for teachers, as they would need to spend the time to establish that a written score or lead sheet is unavailable before sourcing alternative evidence. However, we feel that the genre of the performance should give teachers and examiners a good indication of whether a written score or lead sheet would be available. Therefore, we envisage the additional incremental burden to be small.

Some teachers stated that the rule change would mean that, where no written score is available, teachers would no longer have to create one themselves, which would constitute a time saving. Our view is that this would be welcomed by schools.

Some respondents noted that schools may incur a cost in acquiring reference recordings. One teacher also questioned whether submitting reference recordings would have copyright implications for the school to consider. However, since reference recordings will only be permitted where a written score or lead sheet is unavailable, we anticipate that only a small proportion of performance assessments will use a reference recording. Teachers could instruct their students only to perform pieces where a written score or lead sheet exists. This means that the additional burden to schools should be minimal.

There were no other concerns from exam boards regarding any potential burden from this proposal.

We believe that the overall additional burden imposed by this proposal would be small. Some teachers noted that any additional burden would be worth incurring, for the sake of the subject. We agree that the small additional burden is proportionate to the benefits of broadening the range of styles and genres available in the performance assessment (in keeping with DfE's subject content) and provide clarity and consistency around the permissibility of alternative reference material.

“One or more dances”

We propose to revise the Performance Assessment section of our conditions for GCSE dance, to make our rules fully consistent with the DfE subject content.

GCSE dance is currently offered by one exam board – AQA.

RSL Awards responded to the consultation although it does not offer GCSE dance. We note their response, which indicates that a student choosing to perform multiple dances might create a greater administrative burden than with a single dance. However, we do not envisage that our proposal would cause any additional burden, as we do not believe that AQA would have to change any of its current practices or documentation. AQA did not make any comment in this regard.

Innovation and growth

We have a duty under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act to have regard to the desirability of facilitating innovation in connection with the provision of regulated qualifications. We have committed in our Corporate Plan to survey exam boards' views of the impact of our regulatory requirements on innovation and consider any revisions required in response. We do not believe that there is anything in our proposals that would prevent innovation by exam boards offering these proposals.

Two exam boards shared comments in this area – OCR and Pearson, who agreed that our proposals would allow for greater flexibility. Regarding our proposal to permit alternative reference material where a score or lead sheet is unavailable, OCR noted that this would facilitate the assessment of non-traditional music genres. Pearson, however, stated that it will provide greater flexibility “providing that any changes do not prevent candidates from submitting other forms of reference material [...] if it is deemed more appropriate”. However, our proposal would only permit alternative evidence where a written score or lead sheet is not available. This delivers the clarity and consistency sought by respondents to our consultation.

Consultation responses from teachers were overwhelmingly of the opinion that the proposals would allow for greater flexibility and innovation, as the qualifications would be broader, more accessible and more conducive to creativity.



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