

Decisions on updating our rules and guidance for project qualifications



We consulted on changes to our rules and guidance for project qualifications from 21 March to 18 April 2017. This document explains our decisions following that consultation.

Summary of our decisions

In line with our consultation proposals, we have decided we will:

- withdraw all our existing qualification-specific rules for project qualifications, including the *GCSE*, *GCE*, *Principal Learning and Project Code of Practice* (the 'Code of Practice');
- replace some parts of the Code of Practice for project qualifications with new rules and guidance covering just reviews and appeals, awarding and grading. These new rules and guidance mirror the equivalent rules and guidance for GCSEs, AS and A levels;
- streamline our other existing rules covering content and assessment in project qualifications, consolidating them into a single document with our new rules on reviews and appeals, awarding and grading;
- introduce the new rules and guidance for reviews and appeals, awarding and grading for this summer's exams. This means awarding organisations will need to consider whether there has been a Marking Error or Moderation Error at review and appeal stages this summer; and
- phase in further changes to reviews and appeals in project qualifications (allowing students to request reviews of centre-marked scripts, making any exam-board marked scripts available to centres, and providing reasons for any review of marking decisions) alongside the equivalent changes for GCSEs, AS and A levels.

We have changed the detail of some of our proposals in response to consultation feedback. In particular, we have:

- altered the timing of some changes to address concerns about the possible impact on qualifications which will be awarded this summer;

- made clearer where rules only apply if the awarding organisation, rather than the student's teacher, marks the assessment (which is not the case in any current qualification);
- changed our proposed content and assessment requirements so that they better reflect the difference between project qualifications at different levels; and
- removed requirements for students to apply and develop mathematics, English and ICT skills, since project qualifications no longer form part of the 14-19 Diploma.

Withdrawing our existing qualification-specific rules for project qualifications

All respondents supported our proposal to remove existing rules for project qualifications (including the Code of Practice).

We have therefore decided to confirm we will withdraw all our current qualification-specific rules for project qualifications.

Rules for reviews and appeals

The majority of respondents felt that having the same rules for reviews and appeals across all GCSE, AS, A level and project qualifications would be clearer for schools and colleges. One respondent felt that our rules were not clear about the meaning of the term 'Moderation', or whether reviews of centre-marked assessments should take place before, or after, moderation. Their points related to how their understanding of our proposed requirements for project qualifications related to current practice in other qualifications.

Our proposed rules for project qualifications intentionally impose the same requirements as in GCSEs, AS and A levels. We believe these requirements are clear about our expectations for moderation and have not caused the difficulties suggested in these other qualifications. We have therefore decided to align our rules for project qualifications with the equivalent GCSE, AS and A level rules.

Respondents also commented that – although our proposed rules would no longer require it – awarding organisations will most likely continue to require centres to mark students' work. As a result, some of our proposed requirements will not be relevant.

In line with this comment, we have made changes to our requirements to make it clearer where rules only apply if the awarding organisation marks an assessment.

Rules for awarding and grading

On the whole, respondents supported our proposed approach to awarding and grading, but one respondent was concerned about our proposal to remove grade descriptors from our rules.

We have decided to adopt our proposed rules for awarding and grading unchanged, which means they no longer include grade descriptors. To be clear, this change does not mean awarding organisations cannot use grade descriptors where they help maintain standards, it simply means they are no longer **required** to use them.

Content and assessment rules

Respondents made a number of detailed comments on the wording of our proposed content and assessment rules. In particular, respondents felt that:

- the distinction that currently exists between the rules for selecting projects at different levels is important as it reflects the greater degree of freedom students have to select their own project at higher levels; and
- now project qualifications no longer form part of the 14-19 Diploma, requirements for students to apply and develop mathematics, English and ICT skills as part of their project are not needed.

We agree with these comments, and have made changes to our proposed requirements to reflect them. We have also made other minor changes to wording and ordering to make our requirements as clear as they can be.

Timing of changes

We proposed to implement most of our new rules for project qualifications, including those relating to reviews of marking, reviews of moderation and appeals, for summer 2017. Where we are phasing the introduction of changes for reviews and appeals for GCSEs, AS and A levels, we proposed to use the same dates for project qualifications.

Two respondents believed this to be the best way to avoid confusion in schools and colleges, by having all qualifications follow the same requirements as soon as possible. Respondents who disagreed felt that introducing requirements this summer would not allow sufficient time for awarding organisations to make necessary changes (especially for awarding organisations that do not offer GCSEs, AS and A levels), and could confuse schools and colleges.

We have changed some of our proposals in response to these concerns.

We will now only introduce our new rules for awarding and grading in project qualifications following this summer's awards. This ensures awarding bodies will have sufficient time to consider whether they need to change their marking, awarding and grading processes to comply with our new rules.

However, we will introduce our new rules for reviews and appeals for this summer, aligning them with the equivalent rules for other qualifications. This will minimise

confusion for schools and colleges, and allow schools, colleges and students to benefit from improvements to reviews and appeals as soon as possible.

The changes to reviews and appeals for summer 2017 will introduce an additional ground for schools and colleges to appeal and require that marks are only changed where there is a marking or moderation error. We do not believe there are sufficient grounds for us to delay making such changes, given the lower numbers of students (and therefore likely lower number of appeals) in project qualifications compared with GCSE, AS and A levels.

Where we are phasing in changes to reviews and appeals for GCSEs, AS and A levels, we have decided we will adopt the same timetable for project qualifications. This means that:

- requirements for key dates for the completion of reviews and appeals will come into effect immediately (and will apply to reviews and appeals in project qualifications for summer 2017);
- the requirement for awarding bodies to grant learners the ability to request results of centre-marked assessments will apply to project qualifications for the summer 2018 exam series onwards. We will also introduce some associated requirements about how reviews must be conducted at the same time; and
- requirements to make marked scripts available to centres, and to provide reasons for review of marking decisions automatically will apply to project qualifications from the summer 2020 exam series onwards. These requirements will only apply if an awarding body chooses to mark project assessments itself (which none currently do).

Equality impact

Respondents supported our view that our proposals will not impact (positively or negatively) on people that share a protected characteristic. We have not made any changes to our proposals as a result of our equality impact assessment.

Regulatory impact

Respondents generally agreed with our assessment of the regulatory impact of our proposals. One disagreed, claiming the number of proposed new Conditions, and the clarity of the language used within them, will increase the burden on awarding organisations. We have considered this but have decided not to make any changes to our proposals. We believe the burden imposed by these requirements is proportionate to the changes we are making and is consistent with similar requirements for other qualifications.

Next steps

We have published the following new documents which formally introduce our rules and guidance for project qualifications on 17 August 2017:

- Project Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements
- Project Qualification Level Guidance

The following documents will no longer apply to project qualifications from 17 August 2017, and we will remove them from our [Regulatory Document List](#) on that date:

- the GCSE, GCE, Principal Learning and Project Code of Practice
- Criteria for Foundation Higher and Advanced Diploma Qualifications