

# **Analysis of Responses to our Consultation on Conditions and Guidance for GCSE Psychology**



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## **Executive Summary**

Our consultation about the Conditions and guidance for GCSE psychology took place between 19 January 2016 and 16 February 2016. The consultation questions were available to complete online or to download. A copy of the consultation is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-reform-regulations-for-psychology>.

There were seven responses to the consultation. Four of these were from organisations and three were personal responses. One respondent, who was an organisation, did not comment directly on our proposals, but instead provided general comments on the process for reform of GCSEs, AS and A levels.

Respondents largely supported our proposals. A small number of comments were made in relation to our proposed guidance on assessment objectives, covering the maximum percentage assigned to knowledge in isolation in assessment objective one and the definition of psychological processes and procedures in assessment objective two.

We set out the responses in more detail below.

## **Introduction**

### **The consultation on the Conditions and guidance for GCSE psychology**

This report is a summary of the views expressed by those who responded to our consultation on the Conditions and guidance for GCSE psychology, which took place between 19 January 2016 and 16 February 2016.

### **Background**

New GCSE, AS and A level qualifications are being introduced in England. We have consulted on and announced our policy on the general design of these new qualifications. We have also set out our policy and technical arrangements for the subjects where first courses began in September 2015,<sup>1</sup> and for the subjects, which will be introduced for first teaching from September 2016.<sup>2</sup>

Following an earlier consultation, we took decisions on the design of the reformed GCSE qualifications in psychology that are to be introduced for first teaching from September 2017.<sup>3</sup>

This consultation focused on the regulatory arrangements that we must put in place to make sure that awarding organisations design, deliver and award the new GCSEs in psychology in line with our policy decisions.

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<sup>1</sup> New GCSEs in English language, English literature and mathematics, as well as new AS and A levels in art and design, biology, business, chemistry, computer science, economics, English language, English language and literature, English Literature, history, physics, psychology and sociology.

<sup>2</sup> New GCSEs in art and design, biology, chemistry, citizenship studies, classical Greek, combined science, computer science, dance, drama, food preparation and nutrition, French, geography, German, history, Latin, music, physical education, physics, religious studies and Spanish. New AS and A levels in classical Greek, dance, drama and theatre, French, geography, German, Latin, music, physical education, religious studies and Spanish.

<sup>3</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/development-of-new-gcses-and-a-levels-for-teaching-from-2017](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/development-of-new-gcses-and-a-levels-for-teaching-from-2017)

## Who responded?

We received seven responses to our consultation. All of these were from individuals or organisations based in England.

**Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses**

Personal / organisation response	Respondent type	Number
Organisation response	Awarding organisation	3
Organisation response	Union	1
Personal response	Educational specialist	1
Personal response	Student	1
Personal response	Teacher	1

## **Approach to analysis**

We published the consultation on our website. Respondents could choose to respond using an online form, by email or by posting their answers to the consultation questions to us.

This was a consultation on the views of those who wished to participate and while we made every effort to ensure that as many respondents as possible had the opportunity to reply, it cannot be considered as a representative sample of the general public or any specific group.

## **Data presentation**

We present the responses to the consultation questions in the order in which they were asked.

The consultation asked 10 questions and each had a different focus. Respondents could choose to answer all or just some of the questions.

For some of the questions, respondents could indicate the extent to which they agreed with our proposals, using a 5-point scale (Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree and Strongly disagree), as well as providing comments on our proposals.

For these questions, we set out respondents' views using the 5-point scale. Where respondents provided further comments, we present these separately.

During the analysis phase we reviewed every response to each question.

## **Views expressed – consultation response outcomes**

In this section we report the views, in broad terms, of those who responded to the consultation document. We have structured this around the questions covered in the consultation document.

As noted above, one respondent chose not to answer our questions directly, and instead submitted more general comments. We set these out under ‘Other issues’ below.

A consultation is not the same as a survey and the responses only reflect the views of those who chose to respond. Typically these will be those with strong views and/or particular experience or interest in a topic. What follows is a fair reflection of the views expressed by respondents to the consultation.

A list of the organisations that responded to the consultation is included in Appendix A.

### **Our approach to regulating GCSE psychology**

**Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should introduce a Condition which requires exam boards to comply with the relevant subject content and assessment objectives?**

Four respondents (three organisations, one individual) strongly agreed with our proposals. One respondent (an individual) agreed and one respondent (an individual) neither agreed nor disagreed with our proposals.

Respondents commented that this approach would ensure that there was consistency across exam boards.

**Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should introduce guidance which clarifies how exam boards should interpret our assessment objectives?**

Four respondents (three organisations, one individual) strongly agreed with our proposals. One respondent (an individual) agreed and one (an individual) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Respondents to this question commented that the proposals would ensure a common understanding of the assessment objectives across exam boards and ensure that assessment is balanced and that there is a common understanding of the key elements and terms contained within the assessment objectives.

**Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should introduce rules for exam assessment to ensure exam boards take a consistent approach to assessing mathematical skills and research methods in GCSE psychology?**

Three respondents (all organisations) strongly agreed with our proposals and three respondents (all individuals) agreed with our proposals.

Respondents who commented on this question said that they believed students need to be assessed on a range of skills and that research methods and mathematical skills are fundamental to studying psychology. They commented that the proposed requirements would ensure comparability across exam boards.

**Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to assessing mathematical skills in exams for GCSE psychology?**

Two respondents (both organisations) strongly agreed with our proposals. Four respondents (one organisation, three individuals) agreed with our proposals.

Respondents commented that the mathematical skills requirement was at an appropriate level and that quantitative data is a key part of the study of psychology. They commented that the identified content, level of demand and percentage of assessment for these skills is appropriate for this level of study in this subject.

Respondents also commented these requirements provide a suitable preparation for the mathematical requirements in A Level psychology.

**Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to assessing research methods in exams for GCSE psychology?**

Three respondents (two organisations, one individual) strongly agreed with our proposals. Three respondents (one organisation, two individuals) agreed with our proposals.

Respondents commented that the research methods content is at an appropriate level of conceptual demand and is commensurate with the minimum of 20 per cent allocated to its assessment. Respondents felt that research methods is a fundamental part of the study of psychology and that the research methods content allows for consistency across exam boards and prepares students well for an A Level in the subject. Respondents said that the minimum of 20 per cent of the qualification allocated to research methods is appropriate for this subject and the requirement that research methods are covered across the assessment objectives will ensure consistency of approach across exam boards.



## **Our proposed Conditions and guidance**

**Question 6: Do you have any comments on our proposed Conditions and requirements for GCSE psychology?**

**Question 7: Do you have any comments on our proposed guidance for GCSE psychology?**

One respondent (an organisation) commented that they were happy with the conditions and requirements we were proposing.

Four respondents (three organisations, one individual) commented on our proposed guidance. One respondent commented that they believed there should be an element of non-exam assessment for this subject. We consulted previously on assessment requirements for GCSE psychology, so this was out of the scope of this consultation. One respondent commented that they agreed with the proposed guidance.

One respondent commented on the definitions of psychological 'processes and procedures' in the guidance for assessment objective AO2. They commented that they would like to see guidance on whether these terms are interchangeable and whether or not they must be assessed together or separately.

One respondent commented on the limit (10 per cent) on the number of marks to reward knowledge in isolation in assessment objective AO1. They proposed a limit of 15 per cent of the maximum marks for the qualification rewarding knowledge in isolation.

## **Equality Impact Assessment**

**Question 8: We have not identified any ways in which the proposals for GCSE psychology would impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any potential impacts we have not identified?**

**Question 9: Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impact resulting from these proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?**

**Question 10: Do you have any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on students who share a protected characteristic?**

One respondent (an individual) commented on these questions. This respondent commented that non-exam assessment should be included because some students are better at this than exams. We have consulted previously on our assessment requirements so this was out of the scope of this consultation.

## **Other issues**

As noted above, one respondent did not comment directly on our proposals. Instead, they noted that it was important that relevant subject associations are consulted in individual subjects, that qualification reforms needed to take account of the needs of all relevant stakeholders, and that reforms should be phased in gradually over time.

## **Appendix A: List of organisational consultation respondents**

When completing the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate whether they were responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.

Below we list those organisations that submitted a response to the consultation. We have not included a list of those responding as an individual; however all responses were given equal status in the analysis.

AQA

ASCL

OCR

Pearson

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