

GCSE, AS and A Level Religious Studies: Decisions on Conditions and Guidance



In March 2015 we published a consultation about the rules and guidance we proposed to put in place for reformed GCSEs, AS qualifications and A levels in religious studies.

This consultation set out draft Subject Level Conditions and guidance that we proposed should apply to all reformed GCSEs, AS qualifications and A levels in religious studies.

We have reviewed the responses to the consultation and are now announcing our decisions. We are also publishing a more detailed analysis of the responses.¹

GCSE religious studies

Conditions and requirements

We proposed to require all reformed GCSEs in religious studies to:

- comply with the subject content requirements published by the Department for Education,² and with our assessment objectives; and
- allocate 5 per cent of the total marks for accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar, and the use of specialist terminology.

Most respondents did not comment on our proposals. Respondents who did comment supported our proposed Condition, and commented on the detail of our proposed requirement for accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.

We have reviewed our proposed Condition following consultation and are satisfied it is fit for purpose and consistent with our overall approach to reformed GCSEs, and that our proposed approach to spelling, punctuation and grammar is consistent with other humanities GCSEs. We have, therefore, decided to confirm our proposals.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-as-and-a-level-reform-regulations-for-religious-studies

² www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-religious-studies

Guidance

We proposed to introduce guidance on clarifying the approach exam boards should take to securing comparability between different optional routes through the qualifications, and the interpretation of our assessment objectives.

Respondents broadly supported our proposed guidance, although views were more mixed on our proposed guidance on rewarding recall, and some respondents suggested ways we could improve the wording.

In response to these comments, we have decided to make changes to the drafting of the guidance to clarify our expectations (and to ensure consistency with other GCSE subjects), but have not changed the substance of our proposals.

AS and A level religious studies

Conditions and requirements

We proposed to require all reformed AS and A level qualifications in religious studies to comply with the subject content requirements published by the Department for Education,³ and with our assessment objectives.

Most respondents did not comment on our proposals. Respondents who did comment supported our proposed Condition.

We have reviewed our proposed Condition following consultation and are satisfied it is fit for purpose and consistent with our overall approach to reformed AS and A level qualifications. We have, therefore, decided to confirm our proposals.

Guidance

We proposed to introduce guidance on clarifying the approach exam boards should take to securing comparability between different optional routes through the qualifications, and the interpretation of our assessment objectives.

Respondents broadly supported our proposed guidance, although views were more mixed on our proposed guidance on rewarding recall, and some respondents suggested ways we could improve the wording.

In response to these comments, we have decided to make changes to the drafting of the guidance to clarify our expectations (and to ensure consistency with other AS and A level subjects), but have not changed the substance of our proposals.

³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-religious-studies

Issues outside the scope of the consultation

A number of respondents also commented on issues outside the scope of the consultation, including:

- the subject content; and
- the wording of, and the balance between, the different assessment objectives – although most respondents commented favourably on the assessment objectives, some suggested changes to their wording or weighting.

The subject content is a matter for the Department for Education, which has carried out its own consultation⁴ prior to taking decisions on the subject content.

We have already taken decisions on the weighting of assessment objectives, following an earlier consultation.⁵ None of the responses to this consultation raised new issues that would cause us to reconsider our earlier decisions.

Next steps

We have published the following documents that set out our final rules and guidance for reformed GCSEs, AS qualifications and A levels in religious studies:

- *GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Religious Studies*⁶
- *GCSE Subject Level Guidance for Religious Studies*⁷
- *GCE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Religious Studies*⁸
- *GCE Subject Level Guidance for Religious Studies*⁹

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-religious-studies

⁵ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/religious-studies-gcse-as-and-a-levels-new-qualifications-for-2016

⁶ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-subject-level-conditions-and-requirements-for-religious-studies

⁷ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-subject-level-guidance-for-religious-studies

⁸ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-subject-level-conditions-and-requirements-for-religious-studies

⁹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-subject-level-guidance-for-religious-studies