

Ofqual Board

Paper 32/14

Date:

23 July 2014

Title:

Modern Foreign Language and Ancient Language GCSEs

Report by:

Head of Regulatory Development

Responsible Director:

Tim Leslie, Director of Strategic Reform

Paper for decision

open paper



Issue

1. We consulted during April and May on the proposed structure and assessment arrangements for new GCSEs in modern foreign and ancient languages. This paper reports on the responses to the consultation and invites the Board to consider recommendations for these qualifications in light of those responses.

Recommendation

2. The Board is invited to agree the following recommendations
3. **That for all reformed GCSEs in Modern foreign languages:**
 - a) the subject content for new GCSEs in modern foreign languages as set out in documents published by DfE should be adopted as regulatory requirements for new GCSEs in these subjects and incorporated, by reference, into Ofqual's regulatory framework;
 - b) The assessment objectives are evenly weighted so that 25 per cent of the marks are allocated to each of the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing;

- c) Reading, writing and listening skills must be assessed by exam;
- d) Speaking skills must be assessed by non-exam assessment, marked by exam boards.
- e) The method of assessment of speaking skills is to be decided following further analysis, including of the costs, risks and impact.
- f) each exam board should decide whether or not each of its modern foreign language GCSEs are tiered.
- g) where a qualification is tiered exam boards must ensure that all of the assessments taken by a specific student are at either the higher or foundation tier, and must not permit students to be assessed on a combination of tiers
- h) New GCSEs in French, German and Spanish are to be reformed for first teaching from September 2016.
- i) New GCSEs in all other modern foreign languages are to be reformed for first teaching from September 2017.
- j) Current qualifications in each language must be withdrawn to that timetable.

4. **That for all reformed GCSEs in ancient languages:**

- a) the subject content for new GCSEs in ancient language, as set out in documents published by DfE, should be adopted as regulatory requirements for new GCSEs in these subjects and incorporated, by reference, into Ofqual's regulatory framework;
- b) Each exam board should decide whether or not each of its ancient language GCSEs are tiered.
- c) All assessment for new ancient language GCSEs is by exam
- d) The assessment objectives for ancient languages must be weighted such so that 50% of the marks are allocated to demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the language, 25% to demonstrating knowledge and understanding of literature and/or other ancient sources and 25% to analysing, evaluating and responding to literature and/or other ancient sources

5. **Technical consultation**

- a) The Board agree that the decisions set out above should be implemented into our Regulatory Framework and:notes that the Chief Regulator will decide on the wording of proposed General Conditions, regulatory requirements and Statutory Guidance needed to give effect to the Board's decisions;
- b) Delegates to the Chief Regulator:

- the decision on a proposed method of assessment to be used for modern foreign language speaking assessments ; and
- decisions on the form and content of a consultation on the proposed regulatory requirements necessary to give effect to these decisions.

Background

6. The DfE has published, following consultation, new content for modern foreign language and ancient language GCSEs. These are attached at Annex 1. We have considered the content documents and consider we can use them as regulatory tools.
7. The new qualifications are due to be ready for first teaching from September 2016.
8. In our consultation we sought views on our proposals on tiering the new qualifications and on their assessment arrangements. Our proposals were in line with the design principles we have previously adopted for all GCSEs.

Modern foreign languages

9. We proposed that we should set regulatory requirements for new modern foreign language GCSEs such that:
 - All assessments are tiered, with students entering either for the higher or the foundation tier assessment, but not a combination
 - The marks should be evenly distributed between the four assessment objectives; 25 per cent of the marks would thereby be allocated to each of the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing
 - Reading, writing and listening should be assessed by exam and speaking by non-exam assessment
 - The speaking assessment should be marked by exam boards, rather than by teachers, as now. This would require either exam board assessors to conduct the speaking assessment in schools and colleges or teacher-conducted assessment to be digitally recorded and the recordings marked by the exam boards.
10. As can be seen from the summary of responses to the consultation (Annex 1), there was broad support for all but one of the proposals. The exception was our proposal that students should either enter for all higher or all foundation lower tier assessments - that they should not be able to enter for mixture of higher and foundation tier assessments.

11. Despite the broad support for our other proposals we have reviewed them all in the light of the feedback to the consultation, and we recommend some changes.

Mixed tier entries

12. We recognised in the consultation that students' language skills do not all necessarily develop at the same pace or to the same level. At the time of their assessments a student might, for example, have strong writing but weaker listening skills.
13. Currently only the listening and reading assessments are tiered. Students are permitted to enter for a mixture of higher and foundation tier assessments of these skills. In practice, most students enter for assessments in either one tier or the other. Speaking and writing are currently assessed using untiered tasks, set and marked by teachers.
14. Of those who enter for a combination of tiers, the great majority perform well enough in the foundation tier assessment to suggest they had the knowledge and skills expected of students taking the higher tier.
15. Some students enter for a GCSE in a language which they are not taught at school or college; they use the language in their homes and/or communities. Data suggests that some of these students are more confident using the language in spoken than written form. Some respondents to the consultation argued that such students could be disadvantaged if they were not permitted to take a combination of tiers.
16. As set out in the analysis of responses (Annex 2), most teachers who responded to the consultation were of the view that mixed tier entries should be permitted. Overall, 74% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with our proposed restriction on mixed tier entries.
17. Of those who explained their opposition, many argued that mixed tier entries accommodate students whose skills develop at different rates. Respondents believed that allowing learners to combine assessment at different tiers would enable them to achieve the result that reflected their real abilities. Others commented that the proposal may have a disproportionate effect on students with special education needs or learning disabilities.
18. Some were concerned that students might be put off studying a language because they found one or more of speaking, listening, reading or writing in the target language particularly difficult. There were suggestions that teachers would err on the side of caution when entering students, favouring foundation rather than higher tier papers (in the absence of a combined option) which could cap student achievement.

19. Although the number of students entering for mixed tiers is currently low, it was suggested by some that this may increase if, as proposed, speaking and writing assessments are tiered.
20. Two of the exam boards that responded did not favour mixed tier entry. One argued against allowing mixed tier entries, in part because it would necessitate the use of uniform marks for aggregation. This could result in distortion, as marks may have different values in different parts of the make range. This is an argument we advanced in the consultation in which we set out the problems uniform mark scales create.
21. A second exam board suggested that mixed entry routes would not be necessary if there was a sufficient grade overlap between the tiers. The third returned a 'don't know/no opinion' response, commenting that entries for the foundation tier have increased, that students often perform differently in the different skills and allowing mixed entry might increase take up of modern foreign languages.
22. It is worth noting that mixed tier entries are not to be allowed in other subjects. A maths student will not, for example, be allowed to enter the higher tier calculator paper and the foundation tier non-calculator paper.
23. We have considered the arguments for and against allowing mixed tier entries. The arguments in favour of mixed tier entries made in response to the consultation do not outweigh the disadvantages. In particular, the problems inherent with a unified mark scheme style approach to awarding that would be required if mixed tier entries were allowed. We are also concerned that a mixed tier entry approach could be favoured by students and teachers as an alternative to the efforts that would be required for students to develop to their full potential across the range of skills.
24. We recommend to the Board that, for the reasons set out in the consultation, and in line with other subjects, mixed tier entries should not be allowed in GCSE modern foreign languages.

Tiering of all modern language GCSEs

25. Although the current regulatory requirements state that all modern foreign language GCSEs should be tiered, exceptions have been allowed in the past to allow exam boards to provide untiered qualifications in languages for which there is low take-up.
26. We proposed in the consultation that *all* new modern foreign language GCSEs should be tiered. 64% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal. Two of the three exam boards that responded were among those who disagreed with this proposal. The breakdown of responses, together with a summary of the reasons given, can be found in Annex 2.

27. We also asked whether there should continue to be a wide range of languages for which GCSEs were available. 92% of responses agreed or strongly agreed that there should be a wide range of languages covered by GCSEs.
28. Exam boards are, of course, free to decide in which modern foreign languages they design and make GCSEs available. Two of the three exam boards that responded to the consultation argued that there is little demand for foundation tier entries for many low volume modern foreign language GCSEs. They argued that if all such qualifications had to be tiered the extra costs they would incur could make GCSEs in some languages unviable. GCSEs in those languages would cease to be provided.
29. One of the exam boards also argued that as students entering low entry language GCSEs are often not formally taught in schools, the school/college entering the candidate could make an ill-informed decision to enter a student for a foundation tier, thereby capping their potential to be awarded a higher grade. The exam board also referred to data indicating students currently taking foundation tier papers in low take-up languages typically perform well enough to have achieved a good grade on a higher tier paper.
30. One of the subject associations that responded commented that it would be preferable to have an untiered GCSE in a language than no GCSE in the language at all.
31. Some respondents argued that if, as a result of a requirement that all modern foreign language GCSEs were tiered, the range of languages available was reduced, students from particular racial groups who might otherwise wish to take a GCSE in a language could be prevented from doing so.
32. We have considered the range of arguments made in favour and against all modern foreign language GCSEs being tiered. We have considered the risk to the safe awarding of tiered, low take-up qualifications if entries to the foundation tier were extremely small. We are mindful that exam boards' costs of delivering the qualification could be increased by the proposed improvements to the conduct and marking of the speaking assessment. A requirement that all modern foreign language GCSEs must be tiered could increase the costs further and deter exam boards from developing a range of modern foreign language GCSEs.
33. In light of these factors we recommend to the Board that exam boards should be able to decide whether, if they offer a GCSE in a particular language, it should be tiered or untiered. Whichever approach an exam board favours it would need to demonstrate, when it was seeking accreditation, that the qualification and its assessments would be fit for purpose. It would have to demonstrate that the qualification would

comply with all of the regulatory requirements, including that the assessments would be valid, reliable and manageable.

34. Subject to an exam board being able to design a qualification that would comply with all of the applicable conditions of recognition, this recommended approach would allow an exam board to decide whether it provided each of its modern foreign languages GCSEs in tiered or untiered form.

Conduct and marking of the speaking assessment

35. There was strong support for our proposal that the speaking assessment should be set and marked by exam boards, rather than by teachers as now.
36. There are two ways by which this could be achieved: by exam board examiners visiting schools to conduct the assessment, or by schools recording the assessments and submitting to recordings to the exam boards for marking.
37. We are continuing to assess the impact and costs on schools and exam boards of the options. Schools already record one of the spoken language tasks on which students are currently assessed, to support teacher marking and exam board moderation, and so have access to recording equipment. Recording is likely to be the more manageable of these options. We estimate that the extra costs of exam boards marking all assessments using recordings, rather moderating a sample, would be in the region of £3 per entry. In return, teacher time will of course be saved. We estimate that the costs of using visiting examiners would be in the region of £15 - £20 per candidate. To set this in context the typical entry fee for MFL is currently in the region of £30.

Timetable

38. We intended when we consulted that all modern foreign language GCSEs should be reformed to the same timetable, ie for first teaching in 2016 and first award in 2018. The DfE's modern foreign language subject content applies to all modern foreign language GCSEs.
39. We have since been told by the exam boards that it would not be possible for them to reform the entire suite of modern foreign language GCSEs to this timetable, although they could reform the three high take-up languages, namely French, German and Spanish.
40. It is the Government's policy intention that a wide range of languages should continue to be available at GCSE. The responses to the consultation indicate support for this outcome too. There is already a risk that exam boards might decide that, in light of the low take-up for some languages, they will not continue to offer GCSEs in the current range. This risk could be heightened if we require all modern foreign language GCSEs to be ready for first teaching from September 2016.

41. In response to concerns that exam boards might use the reform programme as an opportunity to withdraw some low take-up subjects, we have taken advice on ways by which the provision of such subjects might be made more attractive to exam boards. Although there are some options that could be pursued we could not guarantee that, were they implemented, the exam boards could successfully defend themselves against action for anti-competitive practice. For this reason the exam boards do not wish to pursue any of these options.
42. We will need to consult on the technical regulatory arrangements that will give effect to the policy decisions on tiering and assessment. We recommend to the Board that we propose in this consultation that the introduction of new modern foreign language GCSEs is staggered such that French, German and Spanish GCSEs are reformed for first teaching in September 2016 with all other languages being introduced for first teaching the following year.

Ancient languages

43. We proposed that we should set regulatory requirements for new ancient language GCSEs such that:
 - The qualifications are not tiered; all students would therefore take the same assessments
 - The marks should be distributed between the assessment objectives such that 50% of the marks are allocated to demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the language, 25% to demonstrating knowledge and understanding of literature and/or other ancient sources and 25% to analysing, evaluating and responding to literature and/or other ancient sources
 - All assessment must be by exam
44. The consultation included detailed background to the proposals.
45. Of those who expressed an opinion, the majority agreed or strongly agreed that new ancient language GCSEs should be assessed wholly by exam.
46. Views on tiering were more mixed. We proposed in our consultation that ancient language GCSEs did not need to be tiered because one set of assessments could be accessible to the full ability range.
47. Of those who expressed a view, slightly more were in favour of new ancient language GCSEs being tiered than untiered, including the Joint Association of Classical teachers. This group argued tiering could promote accessibility and encourage take-up of ancient language GCSEs, especially in state schools.

48. OCR is the only exam board that currently offer GCSEs in ancient languages. It offers Classical Greek in untiered form, typically taken by about 1000 students. It offers Latin in tiered form – 9,000 students typically enter for the higher tier and 250 for the foundation tier. Biblical Hebrew is untiered and taken by about 400 students. OCR agreed with the proposal that the qualifications should not be tiered. It argued that the current entries for the foundation tiers are very small and that requiring all ancient language GCSEs to be tiered could make the qualifications prohibitively expensive.
49. We proposed that ancient languages should be untiered in part because, in contrast to modern foreign languages, all students are expected to study the same content. We argued that the skills required for ancient languages are more similar to those used in history and English literature than those used in modern foreign languages. Nevertheless, the assessment objectives give an equal weighting to knowledge and understanding of the ancient language, on the one hand, and of literature and ancient sources on the other.
50. In light of concerns about efforts to promote take-up of ancient language GCSEs, the Board is invited to consider whether a similar approach to that proposed for modern foreign languages should be adopted for ancient languages. This would allow an exam board to decide whether or not to offer an ancient language GCSE in tiered form, in response to demand and the ability profile of students. An exam board would have to demonstrate prior to accreditation that it could safely design and award a fit for purpose tiered or untiered ancient language GCSE, according to its preference, taking into account the numbers of students likely to take the assessments in each tier.

Finance and Resource

51. Our work on the regulatory requirements for these qualifications is part of our planned reformed programme.

Impact Assessments

Equality Analysis

52. We included a detailed, initial equality impact analysis in our consultation and we invited respondents to identify any potential impacts the proposals might have on students who share particular protected characteristics. We have reviewed our initial impact assessment in light of the responses.
53. We have not identified any aspects of the proposed arrangements for new GCSEs in modern foreign languages that may have a negative impact on students because of age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, sex or sexual orientation (beyond those that apply generally because of the timing of assessments and as considered in our November 2013 on the equality impact of the GCSE reforms generally).

54. Some languages provide access to religious scripts and practices. We have not identified any adverse impacts our proposals will have on students who share a particular religion.
55. We suggested in our consultation that if all GCSEs in modern foreign languages were tiered they would be more accessible and rewarding to students from across the ability range. This could provide greater access to GCSE qualifications in modern foreign languages for students who wish to learn those languages for religious purposes. On the other hand, a requirement on exam boards to tier all of the modern foreign language GCSEs they provide might reduce the range of languages in which GCSEs are available.
56. We acknowledged in our consultation that some disabled students, especially deaf and hearing impaired students may be at a disadvantage relative to others when they take speaking and listening assessments. This is the case now and will remain so in the future.
57. To remove or reduce this disadvantage disabled students may have adjustments made to the way their assessments are conducted.¹ The reasonable adjustments that are currently made to the conduct of speaking and listening assessments for deaf and hearing-impaired students include:
- Students who have sufficient hearing to complete the listening assessment using the recording provided by the exam board may need the recording to be played at a higher volume than other students. They may also find it more difficult to hear the recording among any background noise in the exam room. In these cases students may undertake the assessments in a private room, away from other students, and in the presence of an invigilator only.
 - Some students use speech reading to understand spoken language. In these cases, a teacher reads to the student the script of the recording to which other students listen. The student can read the teacher's lips and facial expressions, replicating the way the student would normally communicate in the language.
 - A student who is unable to attempt any part of an assessment can be given an exemption from that component. This is the reasonable adjustment 'of last resort'. The marks the student gains in the remaining assessments are scaled up and the student's certificate includes an indication to show that an exemption has been given.
58. The first of these two forms of reasonable adjustments should continue to be available to students taking the new GCSEs in modern foreign languages. A student will be able to apply for an exemption from any

¹ The Equality Act 2010 places duties on exam boards to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students, except where the regulator has lifted this duty in respect of certain reasonable adjustments.

one of the components (speaking, listening, reading or writing) if they cannot attempt any part of the assessment.

59. We have used our power under the Equality Act 2010 to limit the percentage of marks from which a student can be exempt in a given qualification. We have limited this to 40 per cent, on the basis that if a student is exempt from more than 40 per cent of the total marks available for a qualification, then the qualification cannot be said to give a reliable indication of a student's knowledge, skills and understanding.
60. The percentage of marks in new GCSEs in modern foreign languages allocated to speaking and listening will be set at 25 per cent each.
61. Currently a disabled student could in theory be exempted from both the speaking and listening assessments if an exam board had designed its modern foreign language GCSEs so that the total marks for speaking and listening were 40 per cent (at the bottom of the permissible range for both skills). Under the new arrangements a student could be exempt from speaking or listening but not both, as this would account for 50 per cent of the marks.
62. The exam boards have told us that although they occasionally exempt a student from either the listening or the speaking assessment (typically one or two students per exam board per year are given such an exemption) they do not receive requests to exempt students from both the speaking and listening assessments.
63. Some respondents to the consultation argued that we should reconsider the 40% limit on exemptions so that disabled students unable to demonstrate both speaking and listening skills could nevertheless be awarded the qualification.
64. We believe the current marks exemption limit of 40 per cent is appropriate and that we should not make provision for a student who has not demonstrated either speaking or listening skills in the language to have the marks they gain in the reading and writing assessments scaled up.
65. Some disabled students may be at a disadvantage relative to other students when their reading and writing skills are being assessed, for example visually-impaired and dyslexic students. The proposed equal allocation of marks between speaking, listening, reading and writing may help to reduce any disadvantage experienced by students whose speaking and listening skills may be stronger than their reading and writing skills.
66. We have considered whether the proposed reforms to modern foreign languages could have an impact on students because of their race.
67. We assume, on the basis of performance and data on entry patterns, that many students who take modern foreign language GCSEs in

languages for which there is a low level of demand are already speakers of the language. In turn they are likely to be of a race or national origin with which the language is associated. As explained in the paper, responses from the exam boards have made it clear that they might not offer new GCSEs in languages for which there is a low level of demand, particularly if the qualification in every language had to be tiered.

68. The recommendation that an exam board should decide whether or not a GCSE in a language should be tiered is intended to reduce the risk that qualifications in some languages might be withdrawn. Likewise, the proposal to stagger the timetable for the introduction of new GCSEs in the full range of subjects is intended to reduce the risk that the range of languages offered will be narrowed.
69. We have not identified any ways by which the proposed requirements for new GCSEs in ancient languages may impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic, over and above those impacts that apply to the changes to GCSEs generally.

Risk Assessment

70. The risks that are particular to modern foreign and ancient languages, and explained in the paper, are to the future availability of the current range of languages. Our proposals to stagger the timetable for the introduction of the new qualifications and to allow each exam board to decide whether or not to tier its qualifications are intended to mitigate these risks.

Regulatory Impact Assessment

71. We are finalising a regulatory impact assessment of the proposals. We have considered in particular the additional costs that would be incurred by exam boards if the speaking assessment was digitally recorded by schools and marked by exam boards. We estimate that the additional costs to exam boards would be approximately £3 per entry. As explained in the paper, the costs of assessment being undertaken by visiting examiners would be considerably greater.

Timescale

72. It is recommended that the introduction of the new qualifications is staggered, such that new GCSEs in French, German and Spanish (the high volume qualifications) are introduced for first teaching in September 2016 with the any new modern foreign language GCSEs being taught from September 2017. Current French, German and Spanish GCSEs would thereby be withdrawn for awarding a year before the GCSEs in the remaining languages.
73. It is recommended that new ancient language GCSEs should be taught from September 2016.

Communications

Internal Stakeholders

74. Staff who have contact with teachers, subjects associations and members of the public will be briefed. We will prepare to receive the new qualifications for accreditation.

External Stakeholders

75. We will announce our decisions and publish the summary of responses (draft in annex 2), our revised equality impact analysis and our regulatory impact assessment.

Paper to be published	YES (Annex 2 to be published separately)
Publication date (if relevant)	After the meeting

ANNEXES LIST:-

- ANNEX 1** DfE content for modern foreign languages and ancient languages and equality analysis
- ANNEX 2** Draft analysis of responses to the consultation – final version to be published separately



Department
for Education

Modern languages

**GCSE subject content and assessment
objectives**

March 2014

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Introduction

GCSE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives, common to all GCSE specifications in a given subject. They provide the framework within which the Awarding Organisations create the detail of their specifications, so ensuring progression from key stage 3 national curriculum requirements and the possibilities for development into A Level.

Subject aims and learning outcomes

Through studying a GCSE in a modern language, students should develop their ability and ambition to communicate with native speakers in speech and writing. The study of a modern language at GCSE should also broaden students' horizons and encourage them to step beyond familiar cultural boundaries and develop new ways of seeing the world.

GCSE specifications in a modern language should enable students to:

- develop their ability to communicate confidently and coherently with native speakers in speech and writing, conveying what they want to say with increasing accuracy
- express and develop thoughts and ideas spontaneously and fluently
- listen to and understand clearly articulated, standard speech at near normal speed
- deepen their knowledge about how language works and enrich their vocabulary in order for them to increase their independent use and understanding of extended language in a wide range of contexts
- acquire new knowledge, skills and ways of thinking through the ability to understand and respond to a rich range of authentic spoken and written material, adapted and abridged, as appropriate, including literary texts
- develop awareness and understanding of the culture and identity of the countries and communities where the language is spoken
- be encouraged to make appropriate links to other areas of the curriculum to enable bilingual and deeper learning, where the language may become a medium for constructing and applying knowledge
- develop language learning skills both for immediate use and to prepare them for further language study and use in school, higher education or in employment.
- develop language strategies, including repair strategies

Subject Content

This content sets out the full range of content for GCSE specifications in modern languages. Awarding organisations may however use any flexibility to increase depth, breadth or context within the specified topics or to consolidate teaching of the subject content.

The content of the GCSE specifications in modern languages must fully reflect the aims and learning outcomes.

Prior learning

GCSE specifications will be cumulative and progressive in content and language. They will take account of the matters, skills and processes specified in the national curriculum programmes of study for Key Stages 2 and 3. They will also build on the foundation of core grammar and vocabulary outlined in the programmes of study for Key Stages 2 and 3, increasing the level of linguistic and cognitive demand.

Contexts and purposes

- GCSE specifications will require students to understand and use language across a range of contexts, appropriate to their age, interests and maturity levels
- students will be expected to use language for a variety of purposes and with a variety of different audiences, including for personal, academic and employment-related use
- students will make use of appropriate social conventions, including informal and formal address and register, as relevant to the task and language studied
- students will be expected to understand different types of spoken language, including recorded input from one or more speakers in public and social settings and recorded material from authentic sources and the media, appropriate to this level
- students will be expected to understand different types of written language, including relevant personal communication, public information, factual and literary texts, appropriate to this level
- language contexts will be organised in a specified number of broad themes, addressing relevant matters relating to:
 - identity and culture
 - local, national, international and global areas of interest
 - current and future study and employment

- literary texts can include extracts and excerpts, adapted and abridged as appropriate, from poems, letters, short stories, essays, novels or plays from contemporary and historical sources, subject to copyright
- the content, contexts and purposes of a GCSE specification in a modern language will provide an appropriate foundation for A level study and a suitable preparation for higher education or employment.

Scope of study

GCSE specifications in modern languages must require students to:

Listening: understand and respond to spoken language

- demonstrate general and specific understanding of different types of spoken language
- follow and understand clear standard speech using familiar language across a range of specified contexts
- identify the overall message, key points, details and opinions in a variety of short and longer spoken passages, involving some more complex language, recognising the relationship between past, present and future events
- deduce meaning from a variety of short and longer spoken texts, involving some complex language and more abstract material, including short narratives and authentic material addressing a wide range of relevant contemporary and cultural themes
- recognise and respond to key information, important themes and ideas in more extended spoken text, including authentic sources, adapted and abridged, as appropriate, by being able to answer questions, extract information, evaluate and draw conclusions.

Speaking: Communicate and interact in speech

- communicate and interact effectively in speech for a variety of purposes across a range of specified contexts
- take part in a short conversation, asking and answering questions, and exchanging opinions
- convey information and narrate events coherently and confidently, using and adapting language for new purposes
- speak spontaneously, responding to unexpected questions, points of view or situations, sustaining communication by using rephrasing or repair strategies, as appropriate

- initiate and develop conversations and discussion, producing extended sequences of speech
- make appropriate and accurate use of a variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures, including some more complex forms, with reference to past, present and future events
- make creative and more complex use of the language, as appropriate, to express and justify their own thoughts and points of view
- use accurate pronunciation and intonation such as to be understood by a native speaker.

Reading: Understand and respond to written language

- understand and respond to different types of written language
- understand general and specific details within texts using high frequency familiar language across a range of contexts
- identify the overall message, key points, details and opinions in a variety of short and longer written passages, involving some more complex language, recognising the relationship between past, present and future events
- deduce meaning from a variety of short and longer written texts from a range of specified contexts, including authentic sources involving some complex language and unfamiliar material, as well as short narratives and authentic material addressing a wide range of relevant contemporary and cultural themes
- recognise and respond to key information, important themes and ideas in more extended written text and authentic sources, including some extracts from relevant abridged or adapted literary texts
- demonstrate understanding by being able to scan for particular information, organise and present relevant details, draw inferences in context and recognise implicit meaning where appropriate
- translate a short passage from the assessed language into English.

Writing: Communicate in writing

- communicate effectively in writing for a variety of purposes across a range of specified contexts
- write short texts, using simple sentences and familiar language accurately to convey meaning and exchange information
- produce clear and coherent text of extended length to present facts and express ideas and opinions appropriately for different purposes and in different settings

- make accurate use of a variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures, including some more complex forms, to describe and narrate with reference to past, present and future events
- manipulate the language, using and adapting a variety of structures and vocabulary with increasing accuracy and fluency for new purposes, including using appropriate style and register
- make independent, creative and more complex use of the language, as appropriate, to note down key points, express and justify individual thoughts and points of view, in order to interest, inform or convince
- translate sentences and short texts from English into the assessed language to convey key messages accurately and to apply grammatical knowledge of language and structures in context.

Assessment objectives

All specifications must require students to demonstrate their ability to:

	Assessment Objectives	Weighting
AO1	<i>Listening:</i> Understand and respond to different types of spoken language	25%
AO2	<i>Speaking:</i> Communicate and interact in speech	25%
AO3	<i>Reading:</i> Understand and respond to different types of written language	25%
AO4	<i>Writing:</i> Communicate in writing	25%

Assessment objectives will be fully assessed through external assessment. In each of AO2 and AO4 at least 10% of the marks available must be allocated to knowledge and accurate application of the grammar and structures of the language prescribed in the specification.

Use of the assessed language in questions and rubrics

The overall rubrics containing instructions to candidates may continue to be in English, as at present. Questions for the majority of modern languages may be set in the assessed language or English, as appropriate to the task. They should be set in the language in which the candidate is expected to respond.

In listening (AO1) 20 - 30% of the marks must be awarded for responses to questions set in the assessed language.

In speaking (AO2) candidates will be required to express themselves solely in the assessed language.

In reading (AO3) 30 - 40% of the marks must be awarded for responses to questions set in the assessed language.

In writing (AO4) candidates will be required to express themselves solely in the assessed language. Questions may be asked in English where translation into the assessed language is required or where the context of the questions is detailed or complex.

Languages using logographic systems such as Mandarin Chinese and Japanese must set all questions and task instructions in English, as the sole use of *hanzi* or *kanji* is deemed too challenging for this level.

Grammatical expectations for French, German and Spanish

Lists of grammar requirements will be drawn from the existing lists produced in the Ofqual GCSE Subject Criteria. There will be some relevant categorisation according to core and more complex language use. There will also be an indication of structures that students will be expected to recognise only and not produce independently.



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Department
for Education

Ancient languages

**GCSE subject content and assessment
objectives**

March 2014

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Introduction

GCSE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all GCSE specifications in a given subject. They provide the framework within which awarding organisations create the detail of their specifications, so ensuring possibilities for progression to A level.

Subject aims and learning outcomes

GCSE specifications in ancient languages should provide a strong foundation in linguistic and cultural competence, enabling students to break the boundaries of time and space and access knowledge and understanding of the ancient world directly through reading and responding to its language and literature. They should prepare students to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities in school and higher education and career choices.

GCSE specifications in an ancient language should enable students to:

- develop and deploy their knowledge of vocabulary, morphology and syntax in order to read, understand and interpret the ancient language
- develop their knowledge and understanding of ancient literature, values and society through the study of original texts, adapted and abridged, as appropriate
- select, analyse and evaluate evidence to draw informed conclusions from the literature studied to:
 - demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the historical, literary and cultural context of a text and
 - identify and appreciate its literary form and impact on the reader
- develop and apply their critical, analytical and reflective skills to evaluate evidence from a range of sources

A GCSE in an ancient language should also encourage students to:

- develop insights into the relevance of an ancient language and of ancient literature and civilisation to our understanding of our modern world of diverse cultures
- deploy their knowledge and understanding of the ancient language to deepen their understanding of English and other languages.

- relate their knowledge and understanding of the ancient world to other disciplines

- develop research and analytical skills which will empower them to become independent students and enquirers, equipping them for further study in arts, humanities and sciences.

Subject content

This content sets out the full range of content for GCSE specifications in ancient languages. Awarding organisations may, however, use any flexibility to increase depth, breadth or context within the specified topics or to consolidate teaching of the subject content.

The content of the GCSE specifications in ancient languages must fully reflect the aims and learning outcomes.

Prior learning

GCSE specifications in an ancient language should enable students without prior knowledge of its grammar and vocabulary to meet the requirements of the course.

Scope of study

1. Knowledge and understanding of the language

GCSE specifications in ancient languages should require students to:

- translate accurately into English an unseen passage of the ancient language either confected, or adapted from an original source

- demonstrate their understanding of a narrative passage or passages of unseen confected or adapted ancient language by answering a variety of comprehension questions in English

- EITHER:
recognise, analyse and explain syntax and accidence as prescribed in the specification within the context of a narrative passage or passages¹ of unseen confected or adapted ancient language;

OR

- translate short sentences from English into the ancient language

¹ These passages can be the same narrative passage or passages as used for comprehension or can be designed for the purpose.

2. Knowledge and understanding of literature, society and values through analysis, evaluation and response

GCSE specifications in ancient languages should require students to:

- read a range of ancient literature, including at least one selection of prose and/or verse texts in the original language, adapted and abridged, as appropriate, along with **either** a further selection of prose and/or verse texts in the original language **or** at least two different types of ancient sources; (these ancient sources can be in translation and can include non-literary sources)
- read original and adapted literature and answer questions in English on aspects of content, culture, social practices and values, translating and explaining key words and phrases.
- understand and evaluate verse and/or prose literature, deploying knowledge of the ancient language to focus on explaining their literary style and impact on the reader.
- identify, explain and respond to the use of common literary effects appropriate to the text
- demonstrate understanding of the cultural, historical and literary context in which the literature was composed, appropriate to the text
- select, analyse and evaluate evidence from ancient literature and/or other ancient sources, drawing informed conclusions to make a reasoned evidence-based response to the material studied, including, for ancient sources, comparing and contrasting ideas, values and social practices from the ancient and modern worlds.

Assessment objectives

	Assessment objectives	Weighting
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the language	50% (10-20% of this AO should be attributed to translation into the ancient language (or the permitted alternative))
AO2	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of literature and/or other ancient sources	25%
AO3	Analyse, evaluate and respond to literature and/or other ancient sources	25%

APPENDIX

Accidence, syntax and vocabulary

Awarding organisations must ensure that their specifications include details of the accidence, syntax and vocabulary for developing knowledge and understanding of the language in appendices for each of the ancient languages to ensure smooth transition to Advanced Level study.

These must include, as a minimum:

Vocabulary

- A defined vocabulary list of at least 400 words and in addition regular compounds of these words

Accidence

- Declension of all regular² nouns and adjectives, and of some common pronouns
- Conjugation of regular² and deponent verbs in all moods, tenses and voices, with appropriate exceptions³
- Formation of regular adverbs
- Comparison of adjectives and adverbs

Syntax

- Standard uses of all cases, including time expression and the use of particular cases after certain verbs and prepositions in the defined vocabulary list
- Sufficient common syntactical constructions, for example:
 - Direct and indirect statement
 - Direct and indirect question
 - Direct and indirect command
 - Relative clauses
 - Common uses of participles
 - Common types of conditional sentence
 - Common temporal, concessive and causal clauses
 - Purpose clauses
 - Result clauses

² Knowledge of some irregular forms for words prescribed in the defined vocabulary list would be expected, but forms to be known should be stipulated.

³ Examples of exceptions might be the gerund, the future perfect and the perfect subjunctive in Latin, and -mi verbs and omicron contraction verbs in Greek, and the equivalents in other languages.



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Department
for Education

Subject content of reformed GCSEs in languages, sciences, history and geography: equality analysis

March 2014

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1. Introduction

This document assesses the impact of new GCSE content in modern foreign and ancient languages, sciences, history and geography by reference to the protected characteristics of pupils. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Secretary of State, when exercising functions, to have due regard to the need:

- to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment. Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN), pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL), and looked after children are not groups covered specifically by the Equality Act (although pupils within those groups may otherwise share a protected characteristic), but have been included in this analysis wherever possible, although not as a proxy for groups with protected characteristics. Some of the evidence that has informed this equality analysis, for example that which relates to low attaining pupils, does not relate specifically either to groups covered by the Equality Act or to the defined groups of pupils identified above (e.g. SEN, EAL, FSM). However, we know that some of the groups considered in this analysis are disproportionately represented among low attaining pupils.

We have not identified any potential for a negative impact on students because of their age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity or sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment. Nor has any adverse impact on these groups been communicated to us either through our meetings with representative groups or by respondents to our consultation.

2. Engagement and involvement

The public consultation opened on 11 June 2013 and closed on 20 August 2013. We received 686 responses from a range of stakeholders, including schools, equalities groups and awarding organisations.

3. Description of the policy

Following a public consultation in 2012 on reforming key stage 4 qualifications, the Secretary of State wrote to Ofqual, setting out his intention to reform GCSEs so that they set expectations of rigour and challenge that match and exceed those in the highest performing jurisdictions. Reformed GCSEs will be respected qualifications in which students, employers and further and higher education institutions can have full confidence. They will provide students with more fulfilling and demanding courses of study. GCSEs will continue to be universal qualifications, entered by the same proportion of students as currently.

The government has also completed a further public consultation on the content that should be assessed as part of GCSEs in the subjects which make up the English Baccalaureate (English, mathematics, modern foreign and ancient languages, sciences, history and geography). We published final content for reformed GCSEs in English Language, English Literature and Mathematics in November 2013 and reformed GCSEs in these subjects will be introduced for first teaching from September 2015. GCSEs in the remaining English Baccalaureate subjects will be introduced for first teaching from September 2016.

These reforms are not being introduced in isolation. Reforms across the education system will benefit all pupils and lead to improvements in teaching and learning so that pupil performance will rise to meet the new higher standard. Many policies, for example the introduction of the Pupil Premium, SEN reforms, and the expansion of the academies programme, have a particular focus on those pupils left behind currently. A summary of DfE's programmes to support teaching for pupils with SEN is set out at Annex A.

4. Evidence base

Our analysis of the potential impact of the proposed GCSE content in modern and ancient languages, sciences, history and geography GCSEs has been informed by:

- i. meetings with employers, FE stakeholders, subject associations and awarding organisations.
- ii. the range of documents set out at Annex B.
- iii. responses to our GCSE subject content consultation, including from organisations representing the interests of groups with a protected characteristic (Annex C).

5. Evidence review

DfE asked the following question in its GCSE subject content consultation:

Do any of the proposals have potential to have a disproportionate impact, positive or negative, on specific pupil groups, in particular the 'protected characteristic' groups? If they have potential for an adverse impact, how can this be reduced?

The following summary of evidence draws on responses to the public consultation on the GCSE content, and also refers to views expressed by stakeholders in face-to-face meetings in developing subject content. The subject content consultation asked for views on the equality implications of the draft content and assessment objectives. 436 responded to this question (from 686 respondents to the overall consultation). 273 stated that it would have a negative impact on those students with one or more protected characteristics. 84 were not sure if it would have an impact. 70 said it would have no impact and 9 said it would have a positive impact. However, of the 273 who thought there would be a negative impact, the majority (165) made no further comment or explicit reference to which groups or how it would negatively impact.

5.1 Changes to content

The government consulted on reforming key stage 4 qualifications in 2012 and published its response and its equality impact assessment on decisions early in 2013. The response stated that: reformed GCSEs should remain universal qualifications, accessible, with good teaching, to the same proportion of students as currently sit GCSE exams at the end of key stage 4. At the level of what is widely considered to be a pass (currently indicated by a grade C) there must be an increase in demand to reflect that of high-performing jurisdictions. At the top end, the new qualification should prepare students properly to progress to A levels or other study. This should be achieved through more challenging subject content and more rigorous assessment structures.

GCSE subject content was developed in the context of these decisions.

Impact

51 respondents raised concerns that reformed GCSEs would impact on all but the students of higher ability. Specific references were made to EAL/ESL students, less able (lower ability) groups, dyslexic students, those with SEN, those with disabilities and FSM students. Respondents did not always draw the distinction on groups such as those with dyslexia, SEN and/or disabilities. We note that while the impact is very likely to be different on different individual students, these may be mitigated through existing access arrangements, and overall the impact is positive.

DfE also considered the evidence it had gathered during its earlier consultation on

reforming key stage 4 qualifications, which indicated that a culture of high expectations is one of several consistent factors essential to high student attainment and good progress. The evidence suggested that, with the right teaching and learning, all students will benefit from those higher expectations.

We published a discussion of the evidence we had gathered on the impact of raising expectations in the equalities analysis which followed our consultation.¹ A review of research literature, supplemented by discussions with schools and colleges, indicated that a culture of high expectations is one of several consistent factors essential to high student attainment and good progress. Whilst effective for all students, our review of research indicates that the following factors are shown to have the greatest impact on preventing and responding to low student attainment:

- effective teaching;
- a culture of high expectations;
- understanding and meeting the needs of all students;
- engaging and relevant curriculum;
- initial assessments and on-going monitoring;
- effective transition;
- appropriate infrastructure; and
- accountability at all levels.

Andreas Schleicher, Deputy Director for Education and Skills at the OECD, has said that a common factor in high-performing systems is “the belief in the possibilities for all children to achieve” and there is evidence that suggests that, with the right teaching and learning, students will benefit from those higher expectations². All pupils taking reformed GCSEs in these subjects will have studied a curriculum which draws on those of the highest performing jurisdictions and will be provided with an accurate assessment of their performance that has real value for their future progression to further education and/or employment.

Conclusion

A review of evidence indicates that a culture of high expectations is one of several consistent factors essential to high student attainment and good progress for all students,

¹ [GCSE Reform Equality Analysis, DfE, March 2013](#)

² Ofsted (2009) Twelve outstanding secondary schools: Excelling against the odds, OECD (2010) PISA 2009 Results: What Makes A School Successful

and particularly in responding to low student attainment. We conclude that the proposed content for reformed GCSEs will impact on all students both with and without protected characteristics and including higher ability students.

We consider that overall these reforms will promote greater equality of opportunity.

All students, including those with protected characteristics, will benefit from more demanding and fulfilling GCSE study courses which better equip them to progress towards further study and work opportunities. It is of no benefit to any student to pass a qualification that does not provide evidence – for employers or others – of their competence in key areas that are essential to progression.

5.2 Languages

Content proposals in languages

In modern languages, we proposed that the subject content will require students to understand and respond to different types of language, both spoken and written, and to communicate and interact effectively, both in speech and writing, across a range of familiar and fresh contexts, appropriate to their age, interests and maturity levels. The assessment objectives for the four skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing will be weighted equally.

In ancient languages, the subject content will require students to understand the cultural legacy of the ancient world through its language and literature; read, understand and interpret the ancient language; and develop knowledge and understanding of the ideas, values, culture and practices of the classical/biblical world through reading and responding to literature and other primary sources. The assessment objectives for linguistic and cultural competence will be weighted equally.

Impact

In terms of the scope of study, twelve respondents commented specifically on languages and how the proposals might have the potential to impact on specific pupil groups. Three respondents were concerned that the languages GCSE was too academic and there should be alternative qualifications available. Three were concerned that ancient languages were elitist with two specifically mentioning removal of manipulation of language. One thought that modern languages were too elitist and said that as a result numbers were falling. Another respondent thought that GCSE language qualifications should be broadened to include a wide variety of languages suitable for all EAL students e.g. Somali. One respondent said that MFL GCSE questions being written in English would disadvantage EAL students.

Taking these points in turn:

We do not believe the proposals for ancient languages will make the subject more elitist. We want to raise expectations across all reformed GCSEs so that they match those of the highest performing countries. This will affect all pupils taking the reformed GCSEs and will not impact disproportionately on groups with protected characteristics. All pupils will benefit from studying courses which are drawn from the best international curricula.

We want as many pupils as possible to study reformed GCSEs in languages, given that these are qualifications which we know are valued by employers and further and higher education. The numbers of pupils taking modern languages is increasing dramatically following the introduction of the English Baccalaureate measure which acknowledges

schools' achievements on behalf of their pupils in languages and other core academic subjects.

Entry numbers to modern languages, while falling for a number of years, increased dramatically in 2013 due to the EBacc. Almost half of the key stage 4 cohort in England entered for a language this year - 48%, up from 40% in 2013. This is the highest proportion of pupils taking languages for 7 years:

- French is up 19% from last year
- German is up 10% from last year
- Spanish is up 31% from last year

Turning to the coverage of languages - the content criteria are designed to be used across the full range of languages for which a GCSE might be developed, as they are not culture-specific, so there is scope for the development of a GCSE in any language where there is market demand and the specification meets accreditation requirements.

Finally, it is educationally justified to require some questions in language GCSEs to be written in English. The new content requires more questions to be set in the assessed language. In some cases questions will not be set in the assessed language (for example where pupils are being assessed on the quality of their response in the assessed language, not on comprehension of the assessed language in the question itself); in those instances it is self-evident that questions should be in English, given that the examinations are being accredited for teaching in English schools. The use of any language other than English in these circumstances would have a greater adverse impact on particular groups of pupils.

The assessment objectives for modern languages have been clarified, from a current range of 20-30% each, to 25% each. This has the potential to positively and adversely impact pupils with some disabilities, depending on whether specifications have increased or decreased the weighting of assessment relating to their disability. It is clearly justified to clarify weightings for listening, reading, speaking and writing and to continue to assign them equal importance. We received one comment on the assessment objectives. This was from one of the major associations representing the deaf/speech communities, which commented that the proposed balance of the assessment objectives was correct. The organisation stated that in, in order to access Assessment Objective 1 (listening), deaf students should have visual support through a live speaker.

There were some further comments on the support which pupils are given in GCSE examinations: a respondent suggested that if dyslexic pupils are to be given help, then extra time in the listening exercise was the least useful thing (he suggested individual MP3 players as a solution).

We have not identified any evidence or been presented with evidence that shows a negative impact on students because of age, gender, religion or belief, pregnancy or

maternity or sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.

Conclusion

The proposed changes to content are justified and necessary to the reformed GCSE to require students to understand and respond to different types of language, both spoken and written, and to communicate and interact effectively, both in speech and writing, across a range of familiar and fresh contexts, appropriate to their age, interests and maturity levels.

Ofqual will be consulting on the key characteristics of languages GCSEs shortly. The regulator monitors existing requirements on Awarding Organisations to provide access arrangements and reasonable adjustments. We will pass the evidence we have gathered to Ofqual, so that it can assess whether these arrangements continue to be suitable for candidates taking reformed languages GCSEs.

5.3 Sciences

Content proposals for sciences

The science suite includes subject content and assessment objectives for separate GCSEs in biology, chemistry and physics as well as a combined science double award. The combined science double award contains an appropriate spread of essential subject content across biology, chemistry and physics, and is consistent with proposed key stage 4 national curriculum requirements. It is intended to support progression to A levels in any of the three sciences. The sciences all contain explicit requirements for application of mathematical understanding and, in physics, new expectations for the recall and application of key formulae.

Impact

Nine respondents commented specifically on sciences and how the proposals might have the potential to impact on specific pupil groups.

Three respondents specifically mentioned that the level of demand of language used in the biology specification could be a barrier to students with SEN or, those with English as an additional language. Two respondents thought that physics content would discourage female participation and one thought that the increase in mathematical emphasis and the reduction in science in the real world opportunities will hinder female students' enthusiasm for the subject. One respondent thought that there was a lack of appropriate differentiation between combined science and the triple science criteria and that this might prevent SEN pupils from accessing combined science because it had too much content.

The DfE's literature review of found that there is little evidence on the impact of science examination content on particular pupil groups. Some of the evidence found indicates that EAL pupils perform less well in science at KS1 and KS2 than their non-EAL peers, but tend to perform only marginally less well in mathematics at the same levels. This differential attainment may be explained by difficulties experienced by EAL pupils in understanding the specific academic English vocabulary that is used in science instruction.

Feedback from teachers during consultation suggested that young people were not fully equipped to be able to explain scientific concepts and processes accurately. We have therefore raised the level of demand of scientific language as it is vital that students are able to communicate scientifically and build up a specialist vocabulary. Students should be able to describe scientific processes and key characteristics in common language as well as being familiar with, and use, technical terminology accurately and precisely.

Where this might impact on some students with EAL or SEN, the central importance of scientific language justifies the increased level of demand. The terminology used in science has been strengthened through all the key stages ensuring that all students should be better prepared for science GCSE and the appropriate terminology.

Raising the participation of female students in particular sciences post-16 is a priority for the Department and we are looking at how we widen participation of girls and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. We have in place a range of programmes to support this agenda such as The Stimulating Physics Network and The Triple Science Support Programme. Since the consultation, the Department has worked with subject experts and other stakeholders to ensure that the real world applications in the content criteria are gender neutral. However, the content criteria focus on the key science underpinning understanding. The awarding organisations will be responsible for developing their own specifications and examples of real world applications and context to maximise students' engagement. However, we will be clear in the content that Awarding Organisations are required to ensure gender neutral language and examples are used. In addition to ensuring more general neutral language we have worked on making science concepts in the content more fulfilling for all students including, for example, cutting edge technology such as nano-particles and use of gene technology. These changes will make the new content more fulfilling and exciting for all students.

We have strengthened the mathematics requirements for science as HE stakeholders were clear that science students must have stronger mathematical skills. Mathematical skills and requirements have been strengthened throughout all the key stages so students will be better prepared for this content in the future. We do not agree that increased emphasis on mathematical skills will adversely affect girls. In 2013, 73% of pupils (73% female and 72% male) achieved at least a C grade in mathematics. Female students outperformed males students by a small margin at the level of mathematical ability that these changes require.

The Department has continued to work with subject experts and other stakeholders to develop the content prior to publication including changes to ensure that the combined award is appropriately challenging. We have reviewed the combined award overall to reduce the amount of content whilst ensuring the demand is analogous with triple science in order that it remains an appropriate route to A Level. Whilst, overall, expectations will be raised for all pupils, the changes will not have a disproportionate impact on pupils with protected characteristics.

We have not identified any evidence or been presented with evidence that shows a negative impact on students because of religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity or sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.

Conclusion

We conclude that the proposed changes are justified to ensure that students are taught the essential core knowledge in the sciences and the appropriate increased emphasis on recall and understanding of essential knowledge such as formulae in physics. The proposed content is consistent with proposed key stage 4 national curriculum requirements and supports progression to A levels.

5.4 History

Content proposals for history

The content of the History GCSE is intended to support students in learning more about the history of Britain and the wider world. It should inspire students to deepen their historical understanding, think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, make informed decisions, and develop perspective and judgement.

Impact

Eight respondents directly commented that the proposed changes could have an impact on those with protected characteristics. Five of the respondents were concerned that the history content was not inclusive enough and risked alienating some groups (specific mention was made of race, disability, non-British). One respondent thought that it would only be made available to the most able. One respondent was concerned that those with dyslexia would be disadvantaged by the text based work of the proposed historical investigation.

The DfE review of evidence showed some limited evidence that pupils in the schools visited studied a considerable amount of British history and knew a great deal about the particular topics covered. However, the large majority of the time was spent on English history rather than wider British history. It also showed patterns of entry for GCSE history varied considerably between different types of school: only 30% of students in maintained schools took the subject in 2010 compared with 48% in independent schools.

We think that it is absolutely justified to require that GCSE history courses of study taught in England contain substantial and coherent elements of British history and/or the history of England, Scotland, Wales or Ireland. We have therefore raised the requirements for coverage in this area from 25% to 40%. We do not agree that groups of pupils will be alienated given that that content is directly relevant to the country they live in. It is also the case that the content requires students to spend a substantial part of the course studying history of the wider world.

The subject content for history aims to develop students' interest in the subject, as well as retaining a strong emphasis on the development of broad historical understanding. The new content on history of the wider world will provide opportunities to engage students from a range of different backgrounds in broader history and the history of more than one country.

Our policy in encouraging all pupils to enter the core EBacc subjects far from turning pupils away from history, has encouraged more pupils to enter this GCSE. For example, following the introduction of the EBacc in 2010 we have seen entries to history begin to rise substantially with history entrants rising 19% in 2013 compared to the year before and we expect this trend to continue. In 2013, percentage of pupils in state funded schools taking GCSE history rose to 38%.

A greater weighting on the selection, recall and application of historical knowledge and understanding is necessary to allow students to develop the skills need students for further study. It is possible that some pupils with disabilities may struggle more than their peers with recall. However, these skills are very important to the study of history and students should be required to demonstrate them as part of the assessment. Access arrangements such as additional time will provide mitigation in many cases. Whilst ensuring that the integrity of the qualification improves, we are committed to supporting schools with training and resources to help them identify barriers to learning, and to offer appropriate support (see a summary of this at Annex A).

We have not identified any evidence or been presented with evidence that shows a negative impact on students because of age, gender, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity or sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.

Conclusion

We conclude that the content proposals are justified. Students will no longer be able to follow GCSE courses that are narrowly focused on one period of history or a narrow focus on one historical theme.

We believe that the content supports students in learning more about the history of Britain and the wider world. It should inspire students to deepen their historical understanding, think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, make informed decisions, and develop perspective and judgement.

5.4 Geography

Content proposals for geography

The revised subject content and assessment objectives for geography focus on essential subject knowledge in: human and physical geography (including people and environment); location and place knowledge; and geographical skills and fieldwork. Students will need to apply their geographical knowledge, skills and understanding to real world contexts, including fieldwork, and to contemporary situations and issues; and develop well-evidenced geographical argument drawing on their deeper knowledge and understanding of geographical issues.

Students must carry out fieldwork studies in at least two contrasting environments beyond the classroom and school grounds.

Impact

The DfE evidence review identified no evidence relating to geography or proposed changes to the content that would impact on those with protected characteristics. Six respondents directly commented on geography proposals that the proposed changes would impact on those disabled students with disabilities or those with SEN (three of six respondents) due to mobility/access problems and those from disadvantaged/less affluent backgrounds (four of six respondents) due to lack of adequate funding to participate in field work.

Fieldwork is an essential aspect of geography which ensures that students are given the opportunity to consolidate and extend their achievement by relating learning to real experiences of the world. One leading geographical society recognises that for pupils with mobility or access requirements that geographical fieldwork may present some challenges. However, the proposals do not provide any significantly new requirements for fieldwork, other than the identification that fieldwork should take place in at least two contrasting environments. The society believes that teachers can plan engaging and accessible fieldwork that meets the needs of their pupils within this context.

We are reassured that there is a range of mitigation strategies that can and is currently employed by schools with some careful planning. These include: raising money to subsidise school trips to reduce the cost of the parental donation; to allow parents to pay by instalments; waiving costs as and when required and making more use of local/day opportunities.

One respondent suggested that the Department publishes an evidence note for schools, demonstrating the benefits and opportunities for pupil premium funding to be directed by schools towards providing learning outside the classroom in the natural environment.

Whilst it is for individual schools to decide what is the best use of pupil premium, schools are encouraged to make use of the evidence and resources such as the Sutton Trust/Education Endowment Foundation *Teaching and Learning Toolkit* when making decisions about how to make the best use of their pupil premium allocation. The toolkit includes a section on [outdoor-adventure learning](#).

We have not identified any evidence or been presented with evidence that shows a negative impact on students because of age, gender, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity or sexual orientation or as a result of gender reassignment.

Conclusion

We consider that requiring students to undertake fieldwork assignments is justified as the content will allow students to apply their geographical knowledge, skills and understanding to real world contexts, including fieldwork, and to contemporary situations and issues; and develop well-evidenced geographical argument drawing on their deeper knowledge and understanding of geographical issues.

6. Summary

We believe that overall the GCSE content will have a positive impact on equality of opportunity by providing respected qualifications in which pupils, employers and further and higher education institutions can have full confidence.

Looking at the evidence cited above, we believe these changes to be objectively justified as they will have the effect of improving standards. Where respondents have raised concerns about the potentially negative impact of content we have responded to the concerns as set out above.

In the sciences where this might impact on some students with EAL or SEN the central importance of scientific language justifies the increased level of demand and rigour of the qualifications. There is also a positive impact for all students (and specifically female students) where we have engaged more neutral gender language and examples and as we believe these changes will be engaging to a range of students.

Reformed GCSEs will be respected qualifications in which students, employers and further and higher education institutions can have full confidence. They will provide students with more fulfilling and demanding courses of study. GCSEs will continue to be universal qualifications, entered by the same proportion of students as currently. GCSEs in these core academic subjects are the building blocks of our education system. Improving the standards of these qualifications is ultimately beneficial to all students providing the best possible opportunities for progression into further and higher education.

The new GCSE content is being delivered in a wider context, which will raise the achievement of pupils with SEN. Many policies, for example the introduction of the Pupil Premium and the expansion of the academies programme have a particular focus on those pupils left behind currently. The quality of SEN teaching is central to ensuring that pupils with SEN are given the best possible opportunity to develop key English and mathematics knowledge, understanding and skills. A summary of DfE's programmes to support good teaching for pupils with SEN is set out below at Annex A.

Annex A: DfE programmes to support effective teaching for pupils with SEN

The quality of teaching is central to ensuring that pupils with SEN are given the best possible opportunity to develop key English and mathematics knowledge, understanding and skills. DfE is also ensuring that the quality of teaching is improved. 600 teachers have achieved or are working towards a qualification related to SEN through the National Scholarships Fund and a further 500 have applied for the current funding round. More than 500 support staff have trained or applied for funding to increase their skills in SEN. Following recommendations from the Rose review, 3,200 teachers obtained specialist qualifications in dyslexia approved by the British Dyslexia Association.

The quality of initial teacher training in SEN is increasing. Almost two thirds of newly qualified secondary school teachers in 2012 rated this aspect of their training as good or very good, compared to less than half of those surveyed in 2008. A DfE survey of 12,000 Newly Qualified Teachers in 2012 found that just 7% of them rated their training in SEN as poor. 59% of primary and 66% of secondary teachers rated their training as “good” or “very good” in helping them to teach pupils with SEN. This compares to as few as 45% in 2008.

The government’s Schools Direct programme is helping to improve the skills of new teachers in supporting SEN; and the National College for Teaching and Leadership has developed specialist resources for initial teacher training and new advanced level online modules on areas including dyslexia, autism and speech and language needs, to enhance teachers’ knowledge, understanding and skills.

DfE is also providing £5.5 million over two years through contracts with the Voluntary and Community Sector to provide free information, advice and training on key aspects of SEN. This includes:

- NASEN (the National Association of SEN) is being funded to provide an SEN Gateway – a one stop shop for schools and teachers looking for useful training resources and materials.
- The Dyslexia SpLD Trust is providing a free online professional development tool for teachers, allowing them to assess their knowledge of dyslexia, find and access suitable training. The Trust has also produced a web-based catalogue of the best-evidenced approaches to supporting dyslexic pupils.
- Other organisations such as the Autism Trust, Communication Trust and National Sensory Impairment Partnership are producing tools and information for schools on the specialist areas that they represent.

Annex B: Documents considered as part of the equality analysis

Becta (2010) *The Impact of Technology on Children's Attainment in English: A Review of the Literature*.

CBI (2011) *Building for growth: business priorities for education and skills. Education and skills survey 2011*.

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Myhill, D. and Fisher, R. (2005) *Informing practice in English: a review of recent research in literacy and the teaching of English*. Ofsted (reference no: HMI 2565).

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OECD (2004) *Learning for Tomorrow's World: First Results from PISA 2003*. Paris: OECD.

Watson, A., Jones, K. and Pratt, D. (2013), *Key Ideas in Teaching Mathematics: Research Based Guidance for ages 9-19*, OUP.

Younger, M. and Warrington, M. with Gray, J., Ruddock, J., McLellan, R., Bearne, E., Kershner, R. and Bricheno, P. (2005) *Raising boys' achievement*. DfES RR636.

Annex C: Respondents to GCSE consultation representing the interests of groups with a protected characteristic

- Dyslexia-SpLD Trust, the membership of which consists of:
 - British Dyslexia Association (BDA)
 - Dyslexia Action
 - Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre
 - Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (Patoss)
 - Springboard for Children
 - Xtraordinary people
 - Driver Youth Trust
- National Children's Bureau & the Council for Disabled Children
- British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD)
- National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)
- Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)
- Signature
- Association of Christian Teachers
- Board of Deputies of British Jews
- National Association of Orthodox Jewish Schools (NAJOS)



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