



Department
for Education

Core maths qualifications: technical guidance

Government consultation response

July 2014

Contents

Introduction	3
Summary of responses received and the government's response	4
Qualification purpose	4
Size	4
Recognition	4
Content	5
Linear and synoptic assessment	6
Process for approving accredited qualifications in the 2017 performance tables	6
GCSE reform	6
Next steps	8
Annex A: List of organisations that responded to the consultation	9

Introduction

From September 2014, awarding organisations will be introducing new Core Maths qualifications aimed at 16-19 year olds. General teaching is expected to begin from September 2015 but a number of schools and colleges will begin teaching Core Maths from autumn 2014. A policy statement setting out an initial position on the characteristics of qualifications that would count in performance tables was published 6 January 2014. Following that, the Department for Education (DfE) has consulted widely on an informal basis with a large number of organisations. These included awarding bodies, maths organisations and 16-19 and higher education representative groups to inform the technical guidance for Core Maths qualifications.

This consultation invited comment on the resulting technical guidance, which set out the requirements that Level 3 qualifications should meet for approval as Core Maths qualifications in 2017 school and college performance tables. The consultation closed on 26 May 2014. We received 15 responses in total, mainly from awarding bodies and professional and representative bodies.

Summary of responses received and the government's response

A public consultation on the technical guidance was completed on 26 April 2014. Respondents reaffirmed their commitment to the policy and broadly agreed with the requirements presented. In particular, there was support for the practical and contextualised content of the qualification and the focus on broad employer and HEI support. A number of concerns were raised regarding implementation issues and timescales and there were requests for further clarity regarding some aspects of the guidance.

A summary of the main issues raised, and the Department's response to those points, is set out below.

Qualification purpose

1. Many organisations wanted to see a greater reference to contextual mathematics and the practical use of maths by students. We will amend wording on the qualification purpose to include references to contextual mathematics such as financial modelling and analysis of data trends.
2. Respondents requested that there be a stronger distinction between AS Maths and Core Maths. The Technical Guidance sets out the differences between the two qualifications, including the distinct purpose, content and target student group for each one. Therefore, we do not think there is any need to distinguish further between the two.

Size

3. A majority of respondents expressed concern about the size of the qualification, outlined in the Guidance as 180 guided learning hours (glh). We acknowledge the issues raised in relation to greater teaching requirement, but this size, not only indicates a required depth of study, but will better support recognition by HEIs and employers. The qualifications should fit alongside a student's main 16-18 programme taken over two years, given this timeframe we consider that 180 glh is appropriate.

Recognition

4. Some respondents suggested that the requirement for letters of support for specifications from stakeholders should be the same as Ofqual's requirement for accreditation. We accept that our requirements are different from Ofqual's standard requirement but we consider this is essential for ensuring that Core Maths qualifications

meet the demands of higher education and employment. Therefore we propose no amendments to this requirement.

5. There was a request for clarification on the spread of stakeholders providing letters of support and we will change the wording to reflect that letters of support are required from different types of stakeholders (e.g. HEIs, employers, professional bodies).

Content

6. Respondents suggested specifications could focus on different contexts to meet the needs of a diverse range of students. For example, optional content could meet the needs of subsets of students. Whilst we accept the rationale for this, we have not changed the wording of the guidance as awarding organisations have the freedom to design optional content if they wish. Beyond what has been set out on qualification purpose and objectives, we have not restricted the focus on content. Additionally, we consider that some of the differing needs of students may be met through tailored teaching and support.

7. There were some views that the minimum 20 per cent of content beyond GCSE may not be challenging enough and requests for further clarification of what 'beyond GCSE' means. We do not intend to change the requirement at this stage – we have set content at a minimum of 20 per cent. The level of demand however, will reflect both the maths content and how this is used. 'Beyond GCSE' refers to more challenging mathematical content which could include AS/A Level content.

8. Respondents felt the description of the weighting between objectives 2 & 3 (focussed on problem-solving and reasoning) and Objective 1 (focussed on consolidation by applying maths) was unclear. Our intention is that both objective 2 and 3 should have greater weighting in content than objective 1 (for example, objective 1- 30%, objective 2 – 35% and objective 3 – 35% - please note the distribution of weighting in this example is for illustrative purposes only). We will clarify the wording in the guidance document.

9. A number of respondents suggested that the Panel of Experts that will assess qualifications for the performance tables should include non-mathematics experts to better reflect end users of the qualifications. There was also a request for clarity of the role of the experts. We will amend the guidance to make clear that the Panel of Experts will assess specifications against the requirements set out in the 'Content' section of the Technical Guidance. We will consider potential members of the Panel carefully to ensure they reflect a skillset which is appropriate to Core Maths.

Linear and synoptic assessment

10. There was some opposition to linear assessment, however, in line with other qualifications, linear assessments allow students the opportunity to develop and consolidate their understanding of a subject over time. We therefore do not propose any changes to that aspect.

11. There were differing views on the balance of internal/external assessment and whether that balance should be the same for all qualifications. We are clear that we want qualifications to be 100% externally assessed with a minimum of 80% examination. We have not seen any strong evidence to change this balance, or fix it for all qualifications.

12. Respondents asked for clarity on what constituted 'repeat submission of coursework'. A clarification will be added to confirm that if a coursework assessment has been made, students will not be allowed to re-submit any further coursework to improve that mark.

Process for approving accredited qualifications in the 2017 performance tables

13. There was some concern that there were two separate processes for Ofqual accreditation and the DfE inclusion in the 2017 performance tables and a suggestion that a common approach might be agreed. We do not propose to change to the processes set out in the guidance as we are unable to consider an unaccredited qualification for the performance tables. We have however, discussed the processes in detail with Ofqual and streamlined the requirements as much as possible. We have agreed that awarding organisations can provide one submission to Ofqual, who will pass advice and information to DfE as appropriate.

14. There were concerns expressed about the ambitious timeframe for the introduction of the qualifications, awarding organisations in particular were keen to consider a period of review within the process. Although we do not propose to amend the timetable for introducing Core Maths qualifications, we will continue to explore this issue with awarding organisations and Ofqual, handling any issues that may arise and offering further advice where appropriate.

GCSE reform

15. There was a concern raised that the Core Maths qualifications will be built on progression from the new GCSE content (first teaching in September 2015). It was felt that this may disadvantage young people progressing to Core Maths who are studying the current GCSEs. We accept that in the short-term there will be cohorts which may require additional support when beginning Core Maths. The Core Maths Support

Programme and those schools and colleges that are early adopters will provide support and advice to schools and colleges on this matter. However, with regard to the overall stability of content and need to build and embed the reputation of the qualifications, we consider that the new GCSE should be the benchmark for progression to Core Maths.

Next steps

Where indicated in the summary above, changes have been made to the Technical Guidance as a response to comments from respondents.

The revised Technical Guidance has been published alongside this document and will now form the basis for assessing whether Core Maths qualifications will meet the requirements for the 2017 performance tables.

Annex A: List of organisations that responded to the consultation

Fifteen organisations responded to the consultation

AQA

ASCL

City & Guilds

IBO

IFS University College

CBI

ETF

MEI

NAHT

OCR

Pearson

RSS

The Money Charity

Voice: the union for education professionals

WJEC



Department
for Education

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