

**Analysis of Responses to our
Consultation on Conditions and
Guidance for GCSE, AS and A level
Ancient History, and GCSE, AS and A
level Classical Civilisation**



May 2016

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Executive Summary

Our consultation about the Conditions and guidance for GCSE, AS and A level Ancient History, and GCSE, AS and A level Classical Civilisation took place between 19 February 2016 and 18 March 2016. The consultation questions were available to complete online or to download. A copy of the consultation is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-as-and-a-level-reform-regulations-for-ancient-history-and-classical-civilisation>.

There were three responses to the consultation, all from organisations. One respondent did not comment directly on our proposals, but instead provided general comments on the process for reform of GCSEs, AS and A levels. Our analysis is therefore based on the other two responses.

The other two respondents largely supported our proposals. We received only a small number of comments relating to our proposed guidance on assessment objectives.

Respondents also commented on issues outside the scope of the consultation, in particular the Department for Education's subject content, and the wording and weighting of our assessment objectives.

We set out the responses in more detail below.

Introduction

The consultation on the Conditions and guidance for GCSE, AS and A level ancient history, and GCSE, AS and A level classical civilisation

This report is a summary of the views expressed by those who responded to our consultation on the Conditions and guidance for GCSE, AS and A Level ancient history, and GCSE, AS and A level classical civilisation, which took place between 19 February 2016 and 18 March 2016.

Background

New GCSE, AS and A level qualifications are being introduced in England. We have consulted on and announced our policy on the general design of these new qualifications. We have also set out our policy and technical arrangements for the subjects where first courses began in September 2015,¹ and for the subjects, which will be introduced for first teaching from September 2016.²

Following an earlier consultation, we took decisions on the design of the reformed GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in ancient history, and GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in classical civilisation that will be introduced for first teaching from September 2017.³

This consultation focused on the regulatory arrangements that we must put in place to make sure that awarding organisations design, deliver and award the new GCSE, AS and A Level qualifications in ancient history, and GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in classical civilisation in line with our policy decisions.

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

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

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/developing-new-gcse-as-and-a-levels-for-first-teaching-in-2017>

Who responded?

We received three responses to our consultation. All responses were from organisations based in England.

Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses

Personal / organisation response	Respondent type	Number
Organisation response	Awarding organisation	2
Organisation response	Union	1

Approach to analysis

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

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

Data presentation

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

The consultation asked 13 questions and each had a different focus. Respondents could choose to answer all or just some of the questions.

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

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

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

Views expressed – consultation response outcomes

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

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

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

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

Our approach to regulating GCSE, AS and A level ancient history, and GCSE, AS and A level classical civilisation

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

Two respondents strongly agreed with our proposal to introduce a Condition which would require exam boards to comply with the relevant subject content and assessment objectives.

The respondents commented that our approach would ensure that there was consistency across exam boards.

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

One respondent strongly agreed with our proposal to introduce guidance which clarifies how exam boards should interpret our assessment objectives. One respondent neither agreed nor disagreed with our proposal.

The respondent who strongly agreed with our proposal commented that such guidance would ensure a common understanding of the assessment objectives across exam boards, ensure that assessment is balanced and ensure that there is a

common understanding of the key elements and terms contained within the assessment objectives.

The respondent who neither agreed nor disagreed with our proposal commented that we should only issue guidance where there was potential for ambiguity, otherwise it could create more confusion.

Our proposed Conditions and guidance

Question 3: Do you have any comments on our proposed Conditions and requirements for GCSE Ancient History?

Question 4: Do you have any comments on our proposed guidance for GCSE Ancient History?

One respondent provided comments on our proposed guidance.

The respondent suggested that, for consistency, in our guidance on assessment objective AO2, we should adopt similar wording to that used in the subject content.

The respondent also suggested that we remove the wording 'within their historical context' from the main stem of assessment objective AO3, as they felt it repeated wording elsewhere in the assessment objective. This point is covered further in the 'other issues' section below.

Question 5: Do you have any comments on our proposed Conditions and requirements for AS and/or A level Ancient History?

Question 6: Do you have any comments on our proposed guidance for AS and/or A level Ancient History?

One respondent provided comments on both our Conditions and our guidance.

The respondent commented that the weighting for assessment objective AO4 was too high, which risked shifting the focus of the qualification from ancient history to modern historians' interpretations.

The respondent commented on our proposed guidance on assessment objective AO2, suggesting that we should adopt the same wording that is used in the subject content for consistency.

The same respondent also suggested that we remove the wording 'within their historical context' from the main stem of assessment objective AO3, as they felt it repeated wording elsewhere in the assessment objective. This point is covered further in the 'other issues' section below.

Question 7: Do you have any comments on our proposed Conditions and requirements for GCSE Classical Civilisation?

Question 8: Do you have any comments on our proposed guidance for GCSE Classical Civilisation?

One respondent commented on the presentation of our guidance on assessment objective AO2, suggesting that there should be greater consistency with other parts of the guidance.

The same respondent strongly supported our proposed guidance on rewarding coherent and reasoned arguments across the full range of candidate ability.

Question 9: Do you have any comments on our proposed Conditions and requirements for AS and/or A level Classical Civilisation?

Question 10: Do you have any comments on our proposed guidance for AS and/or A level Classical Civilisation?

One respondent commented on the wording of assessment objective AO1, noting that the use of the word 'perspectives' (rather than 'ideas') could prevent effective assessment of the 'classical thought' areas of subject content.

This point is covered further in the 'other issues' section below.

Two respondents commented on our proposed guidance for AS and/or A level classical civilisation.

One respondent disagreed with our proposed definition of 'interpretations', stating that the definition was too narrow, and excluded valid methods of interpretation such as literary interpretation.

The same respondent strongly supported our proposed guidance on rewarding critical analysis and substantiated judgement across the full range of candidate ability.

Equality Impact Assessment

Question 11: We have not identified any ways in which these proposals would impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any potential impacts we have not identified?

Question 12: Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impact resulting from these proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?

Question 13: Do you have any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on students who share a protected characteristic?

One respondent provided comments in response to these questions.

The respondent raised concerns around the accessibility of A level classical civilisation for students with visual impairments, as the A level includes compulsory visual and material culture–related aspects of subject content.

As this issue relates to subject content, which is out of scope for this consultation, it is covered in more detail in the ‘other issues’ section below.

Other issues

As set out above:

- one respondent suggested changes to the wording of assessment objective AO3 in GCSE history
- one respondent commented on the weighting of assessment objective AO4 in AS and A level Ancient History;
- one respondent also commented that the wording of assessment objective AO1 in AS and A level classical civilisation could prevent effective assessment of the ‘classical thought’ area of the subject content.

These comments are outside the scope of this consultation, as we had already taken decisions on the weighting and wording of our assessment objectives following an earlier consultation.⁴ However, we have considered carefully whether we need to make changes to our assessment objectives in the light of these comments.

One respondent also commented on the subject content for A level classical civilisation. Again, these comments are outside the scope of this consultation. This is because – following its own consultation – the Department for Education determined subject content for AS and A level Classical Civilisation in February 2016.⁵

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

⁴ We took decisions on the wording and weighting of the assessment objectives following our earlier consultation ‘[Developing new GCSEs, AS and A Levels for first teaching in 2017 - Part 2](#)’

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-classical-civilisation>

Appendix A: List of organisational consultation respondents

We asked respondents whether they were responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.

Below we list those organisations that submitted a response to the consultation.

AQA

Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)

OCR

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