

# **Analysis of Responses to our Consultation on Conditions and Guidance for AS and A Level Geography**



June 2015

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## **Executive summary**

Our consultation about the Conditions and guidance for AS and A level geography took place between 11th February 2015 and 10th March 2015.

The consultation questions were available to either complete online or to download. A copy of the consultation is available at [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/as-and-a-level-reform-regulations-for-geography](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/as-and-a-level-reform-regulations-for-geography).

There were 19 responses to the consultation – 7 from individuals and 12 from organisations. All responses were in a form that matched or broadly followed the layout of the online consultation.

Respondents largely supported our proposed approach, but did raise concerns about the marking of non-exam assessment at A level. They felt that it would be better for non-exam assessment to be marked by teachers within schools (and moderated by exam boards) rather than marked by the exam boards.

Some respondents also commented on issues outside the scope of this consultation – in particular, the Department for Education’s subject content requirements in relation to fieldwork (at AS and A level) and the independent investigation (at A level).

## **1. Introduction**

This report is a summary of the views expressed by those who responded to our consultation on the Conditions and guidance for AS and A level geography which took place between 11th February 2015 and 10th March 2015.

Following earlier consultations, we have already taken decisions on:

- the general design of reformed AS and A level qualifications;
- our policy and technical arrangements relating to those subjects that are due to be introduced for first teaching in 2015;<sup>1</sup> and
- the design of the reformed AS and A level qualifications in geography that are due to be introduced for first teaching in 2016.<sup>2</sup>

This consultation focused on more technical matters – that is, on the regulatory arrangements that we must put in place to make sure that exam boards design, deliver and award reformed AS and A level qualifications in geography in line with our policy decisions.

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<sup>1</sup> Reformed AS and A level qualifications in art and design, biology, business, chemistry, computer science, economics, English language, English language and literature, English literature, history, physics, psychology and sociology will be taught from September 2015.

<sup>2</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016)

## **2. Who responded?**

We received a total of 19 responses to our consultation.<sup>3</sup> Seven responses were from individuals and 12 were from organisations (see Table 1 for a more detailed breakdown). All of the responses were from individuals or organisations based in England or Wales.

**Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses**

<b>Individual / Organisation response</b>	<b>Respondent type</b>	<b>Number</b>
Individual	Teacher	5
Individual	Educational specialist	2
Organisation response	Exam board	4
Organisation response	Learned society	2
Organisation response	School / College	2
Organisation response	Union	2
Organisation response	Government department, agency or organisation	1
Organisation response	Private training provider	1

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<sup>3</sup> Where responses were received in hard copy we entered them into the online platform.

### **3. 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. The consultation included six questions.

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

#### **Data presentation**

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

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

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

## **4. 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 and provide analysis of the data broken down by stakeholder.

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

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

<b>Question 1 – Do you have any comments on the draft Conditions for new A levels and AS qualifications in geography?</b>
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Our draft Conditions stated that exam boards must ensure the following:

- They comply with the Department for Education’s subject content requirements for new AS and A level qualifications in geography,<sup>4</sup> and with our published assessment objectives.
- They allocate 20 per cent of the marks for all new A levels in geography to non-exam assessment, and comply with any rules and guidance we put in place around non-exam assessments. (We asked a separate question about our proposed assessment rules.)
- They require schools to provide a statement confirming that each student entered for AS and A level geography has completed the fieldwork required by the subject content. They must treat any failure to do so – or the provision of a false statement – as malpractice and/or maladministration.

Six respondents (three individuals, three organisations) did not comment on our proposals.

Of the respondents who did comment, only four (one individual, three organisations) commented directly on our draft Conditions. All those who expressed a view supported the Conditions as drafted.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-art-and-design](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-art-and-design)

The remaining responses to this question focused on other issues.

Six respondents (four individuals, two organisations) also commented on the amount of fieldwork that students must do, and the requirement for individual projects at A level. Both of these are requirements in the Department for Education's subject content, and were outside the scope of this consultation. The Department for Education has consulted separately on its subject content requirements.

Four respondents commented on our proposed approach to marking non-exam assessments in A level geography. We have analysed these comments under question 2 below.

<b>Question 2 – Do you have any comments on the draft assessment requirements for new A levels in geography?</b>
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This question referred to our draft assessment rules which specified the nature, structure and conduct of non-exam assessments for reformed A levels in geography.

Two respondents (both organisations) did not comment on our proposals.

Twelve respondents (three individuals, nine organisations) commented on our proposal that the non-exam assessment for A level geography should be marked by the exam board. One respondent (an individual) agreed with this proposal, stating that it would be more reliable than internal marking. The remaining 11 respondents (two individuals, nine organisations) all expressed concerns with this proposal, and suggested that internal marking by teachers (moderated by exam boards) would be more valid and reliable.

Aside from our approach to marking, respondents generally supported our approach to non-exam assessment, with four respondents welcoming the use of an independent, student-led investigation. However, one respondent (an individual) expressed concerns about the burden that this could place on schools, particularly schools with a large number of pupils.

One respondent (an organisation) suggested that we should specify a minimum weighting for mathematical skills in AS and A level geography.

Although this was not an issue that we consulted on, three respondents (one individual, two organisations) also expressed support for the weighting of non-exam assessment at A level.



**Question 3 – Do you have any comments on the draft guidance on assessment objectives for new A levels and AS qualifications in geography?**

This question referred to the draft guidance on assessment objectives which outlines how we expect exam boards to interpret the assessment objectives in terms of discrete 'elements' within each assessment objective, coverage expectations and key areas of emphasis in each assessment objective.

Fourteen respondents (six individuals, eight organisations) did not comment on our proposals.

In their responses to this question, the remaining five respondents all commented on issues that were outside the scope of the consultation, rather than on our draft guidance on assessment objectives.

Four of these respondents commented on the assessment objectives themselves, with two (one individual, one organisation) supporting them, one (an organisation) noting that there was a degree of overlap between some of the assessment objectives, and one (an organisation) suggesting a change to the weighting of the assessment objectives.

One respondent (an organisation) commented that grade descriptors would help ensure consistency of grading judgements, and suggested that we work towards publishing such descriptors for both GCSE and A level geography.

**Question 4 – We have not identified any ways in which the proposed requirements for reformed A levels and AS qualifications in geography would impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any potential impacts we have not identified? If so, what are they?**

Fourteen respondents (six individuals, eight organisations) did not comment on our proposals.

Five respondents did comment.

Four (one individual, three organisations) commented that it may be difficult for students with disabilities to complete the required fieldwork, with one organisation suggesting that this could be mitigated by appropriate choice of fieldwork experiences.

One (an organisation) provided further comments on our proposed approach to the marking of non-exam assessment at A level, which we have analysed under question 2 above.

**Question 5 – Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impact resulting from these proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic? If so, please comment on the additional steps we could take to mitigate negative impacts.**

Sixteen respondents (seven individuals, nine organisations) did not comment on our proposals.

Three respondents did comment.

One (an organisation) provided further comments on our proposed approach to the marking of non-exam assessment at A level, which we have analysed under question 2 above.

One (an organisation) suggested that there should be an alternative to the four days of fieldwork.

One (an organisation) noted that there was a need to consider how to ensure that students who could not take part in fieldwork (as a result of protected characteristics) were not disadvantaged.

**Question 6 – Have you any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?**

No respondents commented on our proposals.

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

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

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

AQA

ASCL

Cheney School, Oxford

Field Studies Council

Geographical Association

OCR

Ordnance Survey

Pearson

Queen Mary's Grammar School, Walsall

Royal Geographical Society

Voice

WJEC-CBAC

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