

**Analysis of responses to our
consultation on developing new AS
and A levels in modern foreign
languages for first teaching in 2018**



March 2017

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Executive summary

Our consultation “Developing new A and AS levels in modern foreign languages (alternative content for languages with smaller cohorts) for first teaching in 2018” ran from 1 December 2016 to 18 January 2017.

The questions were available to either complete online or to download.

A copy is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/developing-new-mfl-as-and-a-levels-for-first-teaching-in-2018>

There were fifteen responses; 6 from organisations, 6 from individuals, 1 from a school, and 2 from awarding organisations.

Respondents who did comment on our proposals broadly supported them. We set out the responses in more detail below.

Introduction

Developing new MFL AS and A levels for first teaching in 2018.

This report is a summary of respondents views to the consultation.

Background

New GCSE, AS and A level qualifications are being introduced in England. We consulted on and announced our policy on the general design of these new qualifications.

This consultation focused on the assessment arrangements and assessment objectives for new qualifications in modern foreign languages (alternative content for languages with smaller cohorts)¹ for first teaching in 2018. The qualifications covered by this content are AS and A levels in Arabic, Bengali, Gujarati, modern Greek, modern Hebrew, Japanese, Panjabi, Persian, Portuguese, Polish, Turkish and Urdu.

We proposed that all new A level and AS qualifications in these modern foreign languages should be assessed entirely through examinations. This reflected the requirements of the draft subject content which we judged did not include any content which could not be assessed in an exam. We also proposed a set of assessment objectives that would apply to all qualifications in these languages that we developed to align with the proposed content. In addition, we set out our assessment of the equality impact of our proposals.

The purpose of this consultation therefore, was to gather public views on the proposed approach to assessment, the proposed assessment objectives, and the proposed weighting of those assessment objectives, for AS and A levels in this group of languages.

¹ DfE have since decided to remove the word “alternative” from this title of the subject content.

Who responded?

We received a total of fifteen responses from organisations and individuals based in England or Wales.

Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses

Personal / Organisation response	Respondent type	Number
Organisation	Professional body	6
Personal	Individual	6
Organisation	Awarding organisation	2
Organisation	School	1

Approach to analysis

We published the consultation on our website and respondents could use an online form, email or post their answers to us. There were nine questions.

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 nine questions and each had a different focus. Respondents could choose to answer all or just some of the questions.

For some 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.

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

Views expressed – consultation response outcomes

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. We have structured this around the questions covered in the consultation and present the responses in bar charts which note the number of respondents that provided each response.

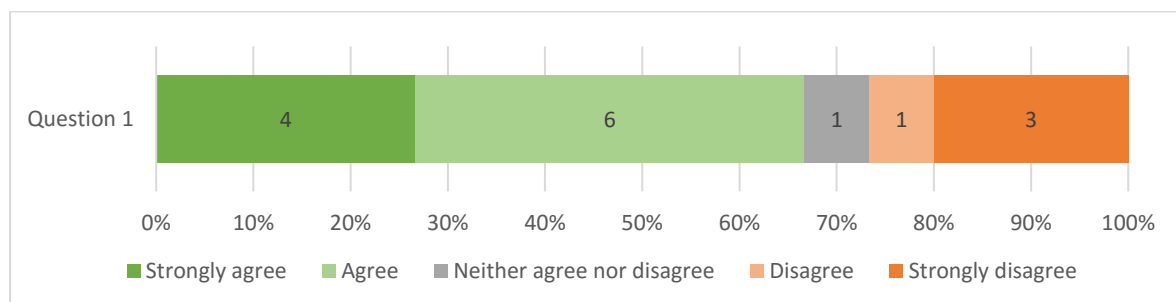
A list of the organisations that responded to the consultation is included in Appendix A.

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that AS qualifications in modern foreign languages (alternative content for languages with smaller cohorts) should be assessed entirely by exam?

As illustrated in Figure 1, the majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with our proposal. One organisation commented “a terminal examination (or a suite of examinations to cover the assessment objectives) is appropriate for languages in general in relation to reading, listening and writing.”

Those who disagreed expressed concerns about the importance of speaking skills in the assessment of languages and that not to have this element would devalue the qualification.

Figure 1 – overview of responses to Question 1.

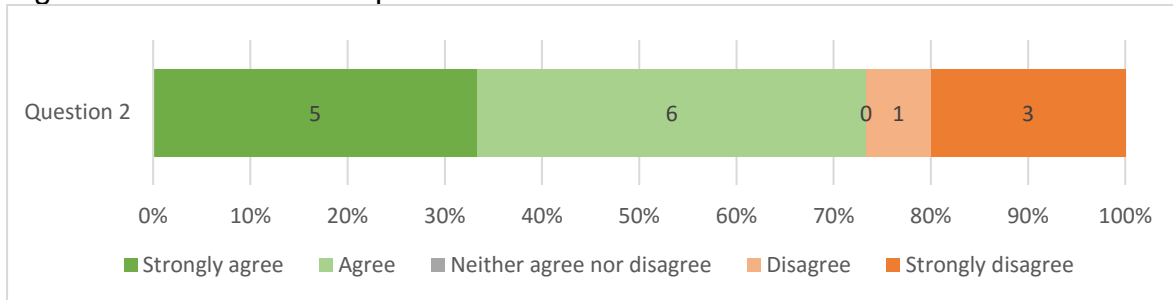


Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that A levels in modern foreign languages (alternative content for languages with smaller cohorts) should be assessed entirely by exam?

Similarly, most of the respondents who answered this question either agreed or strongly agreed with our proposal. Those who commented made points very similar to those made in response to Question 1. One exam board commented; “Since the assessment of speaking is not a requirement for these qualifications, it is appropriate for the A level to be assessed entirely by examination.”

Again, those who disagreed commented on the importance of retaining speaking skills in the assessment of languages and that to lose this element would devalue the qualification.

Figure 2 – overview of responses to Question 2.

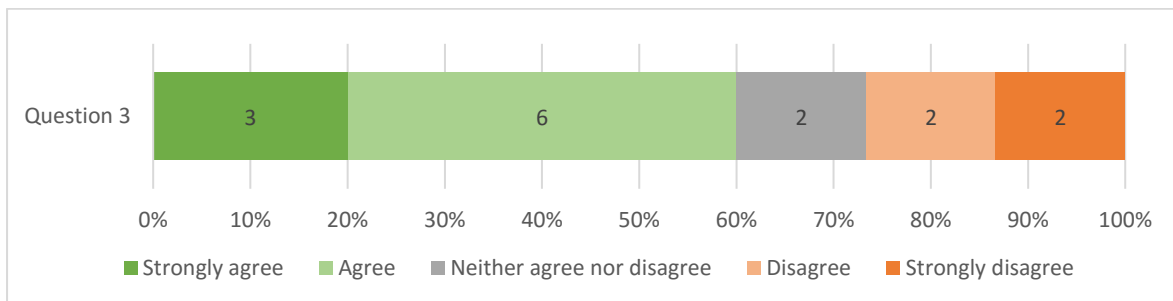


Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for AS and A levels in modern foreign languages (alternative content for languages with smaller cohorts)?

More than half of the respondents viewed the proposed assessment objectives favourably.

The two respondents who disagreed were of the view that proficiency in the speaking exam should be retained as an assessment objective. One respondent noted, “We believe that proficiency in speaking the target language should be retained as an assessment objective.”

Figure 3 – overview of responses to Question 3.

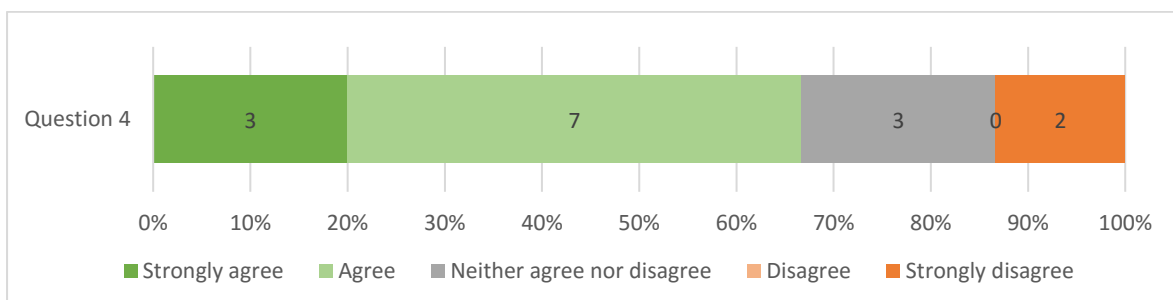


Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for AS qualifications in modern foreign languages (alternative content for languages with smaller cohorts)?

As illustrated in Figure 4, most respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with our proposal, with a number responding “Neither agree nor disagree”.

The two respondents who disagreed with the proposed weightings stated that spoken language skills should be assessed, in line with the other MFL qualifications.

Figure 4 – overview of responses to Question 4.

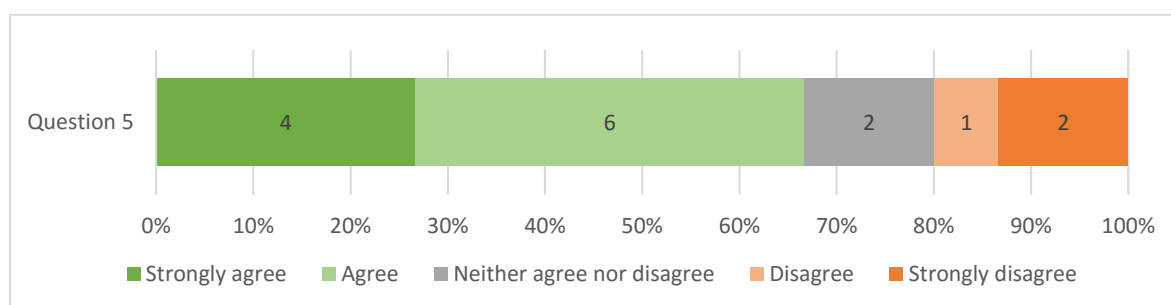


Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for A Level qualifications in modern foreign languages (alternative content for languages with smaller cohorts)?

Most respondents who answered this question either agreed or strongly agreed with our proposal, with one exam board commenting that “the assessment objectives reflect the importance of the skills to be assessed and allow for the requirement of a synoptic skills assessment to replace the speaking assessment, with a higher emphasis on listening (through AO1) and reading (through AO2).”

As with question 3, both of the respondents that disagreed with the proposed weightings stated that spoken language skills should be assessed, in line with the other MFL qualifications.

Figure 5 – overview of responses to Question 5.



Question 6: Do you have any further comments relating to the assessment of this subject?

Eight out of the total 15 respondents provided comments to this question.

Several comments referenced the exclusion of a speaking element in the assessments, with one organisation expressing a concern that this may create a disparity between language qualifications, and another organisation proposing ways to assist in developing teachers’ skills in assessing speaking in Gujarati.

Two respondents expressed concern about the impact of native speakers on the fair assessment of these qualifications, stating that the number of native speakers should be taken into account at the awarding stage, to ensure that candidates taking the language as a new subject at school are still able to achieve the highest grades.

Another respondent commented that a valuable addition to the qualification would be the inclusion of a portfolio to encourage students to reflect on their language learning, set targets, record progress and document their skills.

Question 7: We have identified a number of ways the proposed requirements for reformed GCSEs, AS and A level in modern foreign languages (alternative content for languages with smaller cohorts) may impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any other potential impacts we have not identified? If so, what are they?

Five out of the total 15 respondents provided a response to this question.

Three respondents cited concerns around possible negative impacts on candidates with motor or cognitive difficulties or certain disabilities such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD who could perform better in a speaking assessment than in a written assessment.

One respondent commented that the lack of a speaking assessment would unfairly discriminate against Gujarati speaking students in comparison to native speakers of the other MFL qualification languages, because they would not be afforded the same opportunities to develop their speaking skills.

One respondent reiterated the concern raised at other questions relating to fairness in grades awarded to native and non-native speaker candidates.

Question 8: 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.

Again, five respondents provided comments here, with many reiterating the points raised in answers to question 7.

Mitigating steps to alleviate negative impacts were proposed, with four of the five proposing that speaking assessment be included.

One respondent commented that research into candidates' prior language ability could be used to inform the grading process to ensure fairness in achievement.

Question 9: Have you any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?

Only one respondent provided a response to this question, to raise a concern around the possibility of perceived disparity of status between languages in this group and the other MFL qualifications. The respondent proposed that Ofqual and the DfE should assert the value of the diversity of languages taught, learnt and used in this country, including clarifying that these qualifications count towards EBacc and other school performance measures.

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.

APPG on Modern Foreign Languages
Association for Language Learning
Association of School and College Leaders
AQA
Consortium of Gujarati Schools
Japan Foundation London
Katharine Lady Berkeley's School
Pearson
Voice

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