

Analysis of Responses to our Consultation on Conditions and Guidance for AS and A level Statistics



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Executive Summary

Our consultation about the Conditions and guidance for AS and A level statistics took place between 11th March 2016 and 8th April 2016. 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-statistics.

There were 4 responses to the consultation – one from an individual and 3 from organisations. One of the organisations did not comment directly on our proposals, but instead provided general comments on the process for reform of GCSEs, AS and A levels.

The remaining respondents all supported our proposals. However, one organisation did suggest changes to the wording of our proposed guidance.

Two organisations also commented on issues which were outside the scope of the consultation – in particular the weighting and wording of the assessment objectives.

1. Introduction

The consultation on the Conditions and guidance for AS and A level statistics

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 statistics which took place between 11th March 2016 and 8th April 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 new AS and A level qualifications in statistics that are to 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 AS and A levels in statistics 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 www.gov.uk/government/consultations/developing-new-gcse-as-and-a-levels-for-first-teaching-in-2017

2. Who responded?

We received a total of 4 responses to our consultation – 1 from an individual and 3 from organisations. All respondents were based in England or Wales.

Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses

Personal / organisation response	Respondent type	Number
Personal	Teacher	1
Organisation	Awarding organisation	1
Organisation	Other representative or interest group	1
Organisation	Union	1

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.

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 any specific group.

Data presentation

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

The consultation asked 8 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 free-form narrative 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.

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.

As noted above, one respondent chose not to answer the consultation questions directly, but instead submitted more general comments on the GCSE, AS and A level reform programme which we set out under ‘Other issues’ below.

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.

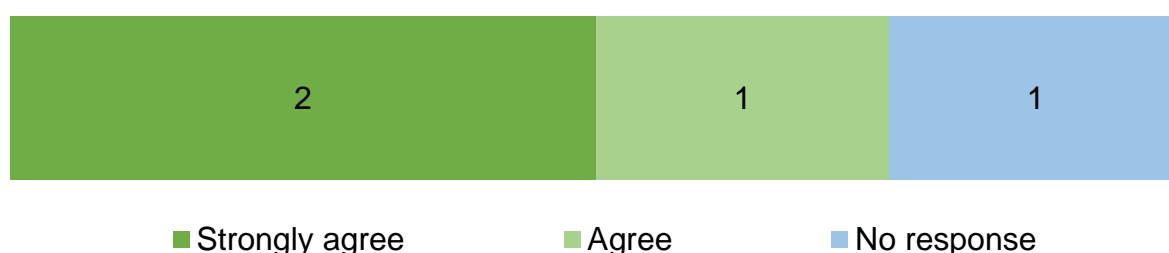
A list of the organisations that responded to the consultation is included in Appendix A.

Our approach to regulating AS and A level statistics

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?

As illustrated in figure 1 below, all of the respondents who answered this question agreed (or strongly agreed) with our proposals.

Figure 1 - Overview of responses to Question 1



Two respondents (both organisations) provided further comments in response to this question. Both commented that our proposal was an essential part of the regulation of this qualification.

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should introduce guidance with our proposal to allow a limited (± 2 per cent) tolerance for each of the assessment objectives in AS and A level statistics?

As illustrated in figure 2 below, all of the respondents who answered this question agreed (or strongly agreed) with our proposals.

Figure 2 - Overview of responses to Question 2



Two respondents (both organisations) provided further comments in response to this question. They commented that:

- our proposal was appropriate given the similarities with mathematics, the sciences and GCSE statistics; and
- a similar approach has worked well in AS and A level mathematics.

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should introduce guidance which clarifies how exam boards should interpret our assessment objectives?

As illustrated in figure 3 below, all of the respondents who answered this question strongly agreed with our proposals.

Figure 3 - Overview of responses to Question 3



Two respondents (both organisations) provided further comments in response to this question. They commented that:

- clear guidance is essential to ensure there is a common understanding of what the assessment objectives mean – and how they should be implemented; and
- the guidance will help ensure there is comparability across awarding organisations.

Our proposed Conditions and guidance

Question 7: Do you have any comments on our proposed Conditions and requirements for AS and A level statistics?

Question 8: Do you have any comments on our proposed guidance for AS and A level statistics?

Two respondents (both organisations) provided comments in response to these questions. Both commented on the weighting and wording of our assessment objectives – these comments are outside of the scope of this consultation and are set out in more detail under ‘Other issues’ below.

One respondent also commented on the detailed wording of our guidance on assessment objectives, noting that:

- our expectation that students should “demonstrate their ability to understand the statistical enquiry cycle as a coherent whole” could be strengthened – and should be more in line with our guidance on problem solving in AS and A level mathematics;
- the separation of elements within AO2 could encourage the false notion that interpreting information and results can be separated from making predictions, constructing arguments, making decisions and drawing conclusions. This respondent’s view was that the practical nature of statistics meant that these skills should normally be assessed together; and
- there appears to be no need to define ‘standard statistical techniques’ in AO2.

Equality Impact Assessment

Question 6: We have not identified any ways (beyond those we have identified in earlier consultations) in which the proposals for AS and A level environmental science would impact (positively or negatively) on persons who

share a protected characteristic.⁴ Are there any potential impacts we have not identified?

Question 7: 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 8: Do you have any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on students who share a protected characteristic?

All three respondents who answered these questions answered 'No' to all three, and provided no further comments.

Other issues

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

Two respondents commented on the weighting and wording of our assessment objectives – which we had already decided following an earlier consultation. The views expressed by respondents were:

- the weighting for AO3 is too high – it could increase the predictability of assessments and limit the breadth of content which can be covered in a single set of exams;
- the wording of AO3 is too narrow, as students could legitimately critically assess other aspects of statistical methodologies and conclusions – such as the need to refine modelling assumptions, or whether the strength of a conclusion is stronger than the evidence warrants;
- the subject content requirements for modelling (which include 8 specific models) do not appear to be reflected in the assessment objectives;
- there appears to be overlap between 'inference' in AO1 and 'reason statistically' in AO2; and
- it is unclear how marks should be allocated when questions target more than one assessment objective.

⁴ 'Protected characteristic' is defined in the Equality Act 2010. Here, it means disability, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

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

Mathematics in Education and Industry

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