

Decisions on Conditions and guidance for GCSE Psychology



In January 2016 we published a consultation about the rules and guidance we proposed to put in place for new GCSEs in psychology.

This consultation set out draft Subject Level Conditions, requirements and guidance which would apply to all new GCSEs in this subject.

We have reviewed the responses to the consultation and are now announcing our decisions. We are also publishing a more detailed analysis of the responses alongside this document.¹

GCSE psychology

Compliance with content requirements

We proposed that all reformed GCSEs in psychology should comply with the subject content requirements published by the Department for Education,² and with our assessment objectives.

All the respondents who commented on this proposal supported it, noting that it would help ensure comparability between different specifications. No respondents raised any concerns with this aspect of our proposals.

We have therefore decided to confirm our proposals in this area.

Assessment of research methods

We have previously confirmed that reformed GCSEs in psychology will require a minimum of 20 per cent of the marks to be allocated to the assessment of psychological research methods, which are set out in the subject content.

In our consultation, we proposed that in relation to research methods, exams will require students to:

- demonstrate and apply their knowledge, understanding and skills of research methods;

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-reform-regulations-for-psychology>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-psychology>

- apply research methods in the context of written questions and problems; and
- analyse and evaluate information in the context of research methods.

Respondents to the consultation supported our approach and we have decided to adopt this requirement in full.

Assessment of mathematical skills

We have previously confirmed that a minimum of 10 per cent of the marks for GCSE qualifications in psychology must be allocated to the assessment of mathematical skills, which are set out in the content document. This 10 per cent must be contained within the 20 percent allocated to research methods.

In relation to the assessment of mathematical skills, we proposed that exam boards should:

- assess mathematical skills in the context of research methods, and not in isolation;
- allocate at least 10 per cent of the marks for the qualification to rewarding use of mathematical skills at a level of demand which is at least equivalent to Key Stage 3; and
- assess mathematical skills across a range of levels of demand which supports effective differentiation between candidates.

Respondents to the consultation supported our approach to the assessment of mathematical skills and we have decided to adopt this requirement in full.

Guidance

We proposed to introduce guidance clarifying the interpretation of our assessment objectives.

Most respondents supported our guidance, with the exception of:

- one respondent who commented that in the guidance for assessment objective AO2, it should specify whether psychological processes and procedures must be assessed together or separately; and
- one respondent who commented that in the guidance for assessment objective AO1, the limit for the number of marks rewarding knowledge in isolation should be increased from 10 per cent to 15 per cent.

We have considered these comments and our view is that:

- our proposed definition for psychological processes and procedures does not require a single approach to be taken. We believe it should be for each exam board to determine its approach to assessing these aspects of the subject content; and
- in relation to the maximum percentage of knowledge in isolation to be assessed, we believe that 10 per cent is appropriate for this subject based on the subject content.

We have slightly amended the wording of our definitions for *analyse* and *evaluate* in the guidance for assessment objective AO3. This is to ensure that these terms, which are used across a number of subjects, are used consistently. These changes are not substantive and are to improve the clarity of our guidance rather than change its meaning.

There were no further comments on the guidance therefore, with the exception of the small amendment to the definitions of analyse and evaluate outlined above, we have decided to adopt the guidance in full.

Next steps

We have published the following documents which formally introduce our rules and guidance for GCSE psychology:

- *GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Psychology*³
- *GCSE Subject Level Guidance for Psychology*⁴

³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-subject-level-conditions-and-requirements-for-psychology

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-subject-level-guidance-for-psychology