

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



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Contents

Executive summary	2
Introduction.....	3
The consultation on the Conditions and guidance for AS and A level Politics.....	3
Background	3
Who responded?	4
Approach to analysis	5
Data presentation	5
Views expressed – consultation response outcomes	6
Our approach to regulating AS and A level Politics	6
Our proposed Conditions and guidance	6
Equality Impact Assessment	7
Appendix A: List of organisational consultation respondents.....	8

Executive summary

Our consultation about the Conditions and guidance for AS and A level politics took place between 11 March and 8 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-politics.

There were seven responses to the consultation – five from organisations and two from individuals.

One organisation did not comment directly on our proposals, but instead provided general comments on the process for reform of GCSEs, AS and A levels.

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

Introduction

The consultation on the Conditions and guidance for AS and A level politics.

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 politics which took place between 11 March and 8 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 2015¹, and for the subjects, which will be introduced for first teaching from September 2016².

Following an earlier consultation, we took decisions on the design of the reformed AS and A level qualifications in politics 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 politics 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

Who responded?

We received a total of seven responses to our consultation. The responses were from organisations and individuals based in England or Wales.

Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses

Personal / Organisation response	Respondent type	Number
Organisation	Awarding Organisation	2
Personal	Individual	2
Organisation	School	1
Organisation	Professional Body	2

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.

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.

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 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.

Our approach to regulating AS and A level Politics

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?

All of the respondents who answered this question either agreed or strongly agreed with our proposals. One of the respondents commented that the Condition would support comparability 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?

All of the respondents who answered this question either agreed or strongly agreed with our proposal. One respondent commented that guidance would help ensure consistency of assessment across all exam boards. The respondent further commented that such guidance was also vital to ensure that assessment is balanced and that there is a common understanding of the key elements and terms contained within the assessment objective.

Our proposed Conditions and guidance

Question 3: Do you have comments on our proposed Conditions and requirements for AS and A level Politics?

One respondent commented on our proposed Conditions and requirements, stating that exam boards should have sufficient scope to innovate and develop distinctive specifications.

Question 4: Do you have any comments on our proposed guidance for AS and A level Politics?

One organisation requested clarification of Ofqual's expectations concerning assessing AO1 in relation to comparative politics. They commented that comparative politics necessitates analysis and could not be assessed under the current wording of AO1. They were concerned that this could lead to 'overloading other sections with knowledge and understanding'

One respondent raised concerns that our proposed definition of "political information" would mean that exams would have to test candidates on their ability to analyse political source material. The respondent felt this would create a mechanistic element to the course, and that the focus on analysis and evaluation found in current specifications should be retained.

One respondent questioned the distinction between "parallels" and "similarities" in AO2, and suggested removing the former.

The same respondent also raised concerns about the inclusion of "comparative analysis" in both elements of AO2, suggesting this could raise the demand of the assessment relative to current qualifications. They suggested that comparative analysis should be restricted to element 1a.

They also suggested that our definition of "parallels, connections, similarities and differences" should be broadened.

Equality Impact Assessment

Question 5: We have not identified any ways in which our proposals would impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any potential impacts we have not identified?

Question 6: Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impact resulting from these proposal on persons who share a protected characteristic?

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

All respondents answered no to these questions 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.

One respondent also commented on the subject content for AS and A level politics, which was outside the scope of this consultation. The subject content has already been determined by the Department for Education, following its earlier consultation.⁴

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform-geology-and-politics-pe-short-course

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.

Association of School and College Leaders

AQA

Pearson

St Catherine's School, Surrey

Political Studies Association of the UK

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