

Analysis of Responses to our Consultation on Conditions and Guidance for GCSE Business and GCSE Economics



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Executive Summary

Our consultation about the Conditions and guidance for GCSE Business and GCSE Economics took place between 17th December 2015 and 20th January 2016. The consultation questions were available either to complete online or to download. A copy of the consultation is available at www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-reform-regulations-for-business-and-economics

There were four responses to the consultation. Three of these were from awarding organisations, and the other was from an organisation, which did not comment directly on our proposals, but instead provided general comments on the process for reform of GCSEs, AS and A levels.

Respondents mostly supported our proposals, but two respondents did raise some concerns in relation to our proposed guidance on the assessment objectives. They raised the following specific issues:

- two respondents commented that the guidance on assessment objectives AO1 and AO2 in GCSE business suggests that “business concepts and issues” should be assessed together. The respondents expressed the view that knowledge, understanding and application of concepts can legitimately be assessed without looking at issues (and vice versa), and that the guidance should make this clear. The same issue was raised in relation to GCSE economics, in relation to the guidance on assessment objectives AO1 and AO2 surrounding “economic concepts and issues”.
- one respondent expressed the view that quantitative skills in GCSE business would always be assessed and rewarded against assessment objective AO2, and that the guidance on assessment objective AO2 should be revised to reflect this.
- one respondent suggested that within the guidance on assessment objective AO3 in GCSE business, questions could not meaningfully target elements 1b (evaluate business information and issues to demonstrate understanding of business activity) and 1c (make judgements and draw conclusions) separately. They recommended that elements 1b and 1c should be combined into a single element.

We set out the responses in more detail below.

Introduction

The consultation on the Conditions and guidance for GCSE business and GCSE economics

This report is a summary of the views expressed by those who responded to our consultation on the Conditions and guidance for GCSE business and GCSE economics that took place between 17th December 2015 and 20th January 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 reformed GCSE business and the reformed GCSE economics 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 GCSEs in business and in economics 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/development-of-new-gcses-and-a-levels-for-teaching-from-2017

1. Who responded?

We received four responses to our consultation. All four were from organisations based in England.

Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses

Personal / organisation response	Respondent type	Number
Organisation	Awarding organisation	3
Organisation	Union	1

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 14 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 any specific group.

Data presentation

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

The consultation asked 14 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.

3. 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 our questions directly, and instead submitted more general comments. We set these 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 GCSE business and GCSE economics

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?

Three respondents responded to this question, with each strongly agreeing with our proposal. One respondent additionally commented that this was essential to ensure comparability between awarding organisations.

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?

Three respondents responded to this question, with each strongly agreeing with our proposal. One respondent further commented that guidance was vital to ensure that assessment is balanced and to ensure a common understanding of the key elements and terms contained within the assessment objectives.

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to assessing quantitative skills in exams (including the 10 per cent minimum weighting) for GCSE business and GCSE economics?

One respondent agreed with our proposals, but did not provide any additional comments. Two respondents strongly agreed with our proposals.

One of these respondents commented that the proposed requirements for a minimum weighting of 10 per cent to assess the quantitative skills in GCSE business and GCSE economics, would ensure that these subjects were in line with other reformed GCSE subjects, thus ensuring comparability across exam boards. The other respondent further commented that the proposed requirements would support progression to level three study

Question 4: Do you have any comments on our proposed Conditions and requirements for GCSE business?

Two respondents did not make any comments in response to this question. One respondent provided comments relating to the guidance on assessment objectives which has been considered under question 5 below.

Question 5: Do you have any comments on our proposed guidance for GCSE business?

One respondent did not make any specific comments in response to this question.

Two respondents commented that the guidance on assessment objectives AO1 and AO2 should be revised to make it clear that “business concepts and issues” can (but need not) be assessed separately.

One respondent expressed the view that quantitative skills would always be assessed and rewarded against assessment objective AO2, and that the guidance on assessment objective AO2 should be revised to reflect this.

One respondent raised an issue in relation to the guidance on assessment objective AO3 stating that elements 1b (evaluate business information and issues to demonstrate understanding of business activity) and 1c (make judgements and draw conclusions) could not meaningfully be assessed in isolation. The respondent recommended combining elements 1b and 1c into a single element.

Question 6: Do you have any comments on our proposed conditions and requirements for GCSE economics?

Two of the three respondents to this question did not have any specific comments to make.

One respondent commented that as they would not be offering GCSE economics, they did not feel it was appropriate for them to comment specifically on the Conditions and requirements, but felt that there was a general need for consistency between GCSE business and GCSE economics.

Question 7: Do you have any comments on our proposed guidance for GCSE economics?

Two respondents did not make any specific comments.

One respondent commented that the guidance on assessment objectives AO1 and AO2 should be revised to make it clear that “economic concepts and issues” can (but need not) be assessed separately.

Equality Impact Assessment

Question 8: We have not identified any ways in which the proposals for GCSE business, and GCSE economics would impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic.⁴ Are there any potential impacts we have not identified?

Question 9: 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 10: 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 on individual subjects, that qualification reforms needed to take account of the needs of all relevant stakeholders, and that reforms should be phased in gradually over time.

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.

ASCL

AQA

OCR

Pearson

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