

GCSE History: Decisions on Conditions and Guidance



In December 2014 we published a consultation about the rules and guidance we proposed to put in place for reformed GCSEs (graded 9 to 1) in history.

This consultation set out draft Subject Level Conditions and guidance which would apply to all reformed GCSEs in history.

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

Conditions and requirements for GCSE history

Content requirements

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

Respondents generally supported this approach, noting that it was consistent with our requirements for other reformed GCSEs. No respondents raised any significant concerns with our proposed requirements.

Approach to spelling, punctuation and grammar

We also proposed that reformed GCSEs in history should include 5 per cent of marks allocated to accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar, and the use of specialist terminology.

Respondents generally thought that 5 per cent was a reasonable weighting, although some raised concerns about how this would impact on students with learning disabilities, and others felt that more marks should be available for demonstrating historical literacy. Some respondents also commented that the proposed drafting was not clear about how we expected these marks to be included in mark schemes.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-reform-regulations-for-history

² www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-history

We remain of the view that a 5 per cent weighting for accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar, and the use of specialist terminology is the most appropriate way to reflect the curriculum intentions for GCSE history, whilst minimising adverse impacts on assessment design and on students with learning disabilities.

In response to the comments about the clarity of drafting, we have reworded our requirements to make our expectations clearer.

Guidance for GCSE history

Guidance on subject content

We proposed to introduce guidance which clarified:

- how awarding organisations should balance the different elements of the curriculum specified in the subject content; and
- the meaning of some key terms used in the subject content.

Respondents largely supported our proposed guidance, noting that it provides helpful clarity and focus. Some respondents expressed concerns about the breadth of content studied, while others felt it was appropriate for GCSE. Some respondents also felt that the weighting of the Study of the Historic Environment was too low.

Our proposed minimum weightings for the different elements of the curriculum reflect the Department for Education's curriculum intentions. We have specified minimum weightings so that awarding organisations have some flexibility in the design of their qualifications.

Guidance on assessment objectives

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

Most respondents support our proposed guidance, although some suggested areas where we could improve wording, and others suggested that the inclusion of historiography was too difficult for GCSE.

We have amended the wording of some of our guidance to make our expectations clearer. The inclusion of historiography is intended to provide opportunities to set questions targeted at higher grades, and reflects the curriculum intentions.

Other issues

One respondent requested that we allow flexibility in the weighting of assessment objectives for GCSE history. We have already considered and rejected this suggestion in response to an earlier consultation,³ and the responses to this consultation have not raised any new issues that cause us to revisit this earlier decision.

Next steps

Alongside this document, we have published final Subject Level Conditions⁴ and Subject Level Guidance⁵ for GCSE history.

³ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/gcse-reform-june-2013>

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-subject-level-conditions-and-requirements-for-history

⁵ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-subject-level-guidance-for-history