

**Analysis of responses to our
consultation on developing GCSEs in
design and technology for first
teaching in 2017**



November 2015

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Executive Summary

Our consultation on developing GCSEs in design and technology for first teaching in 2017 took place between 1st July 2015 and 26th August 2015. 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/gcse-reform-regulations-for-design-and-technology.

Alongside our consultation, the Department for Education consulted on a revised version of its proposed subject content for reformed GCSEs in design and technology.¹

There were 58 responses to the consultation – 41 from individuals and 17 from organisations.

The majority of respondents (70 per cent) agreed that assessments for GCSE design and technology should not be tiered, and only 2 respondents (4 per cent) disagreed.

For the rest of our proposals, responses were more mixed, with equal numbers of respondents for and against our proposed weighting of non-exam assessment, almost equal numbers for and against our proposed assessment objectives. The majority of respondents (52 per cent) of respondents disagreed with our proposed assessment objective weightings.

We have also identified several distinct themes within the more detailed responses:

- One group of respondents commented that the weighting of non-exam assessment was too low, and that there should be more emphasis on practical ‘design and make’ skills rather than on academic knowledge.
- A second group of respondents (including both the subject associations that responded to the consultation) commented that the subject should focus equally on core knowledge and understanding, and on the application of that knowledge and understanding in a practical context. This group of respondents also identified elements of the subject content that would fall into these two areas, and commented that our assessment objectives needed to reflect this division between core knowledge and practical application.
- Across a range of respondents (including both of the groups identified above), there was concern that it was not clear what should be assessed through written exams, and what should be assessed through non-exam assessment. A

¹ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-reform-design-and-technology

number of these respondents were concerned that assessments could lack consistency and rigour if exam boards were given too much freedom to determine how the subject content is assessed.

A number of respondents also raised concerns about the subject content – in particular, the removal of separate endorsed routes through the qualification which specialised in different materials. Respondents were particularly concerned that the current textiles route would be marginalised within the reformed qualification.

These concerns – and other matters relating to the subject content – are outside the scope of our consultation. We have shared these views with the Department for Education for it to consider as part of its consultation on the subject content.

Introduction

The consultation on Developing GCSEs in Design and Technology for First Teaching in 2017

This report is a summary of the views expressed by those who responded to our consultation on developing GCSEs in design and technology for first teaching in 2017, which took place between 1st July 2015 and 26th August 2015.

Background

Reformed GCSEs are being introduced in England. The primary purpose of the new qualifications will be to provide evidence of students' achievements against demanding and fulfilling content and a strong foundation for further academic and vocational study and employment. If required, the qualifications should be able to provide a basis for schools and colleges to be held accountable for the performance of all of their students.

We have consulted on and announced our policy on the general design of reformed GCSEs,² and on our policy and technical arrangements relating to those subjects that will be taught from September 2015³ and 2016.⁴ This consultation was our first consultation on the subjects due to be taught from September 2017.

We have also previously consulted on the arrangements for the assessment of GCSE design and technology.⁵ However, significant changes to the subject content meant we needed to revisit our earlier proposals.

This consultation set out our proposed arrangements for the assessment of GCSE design and technology based on the revised subject content.

² <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/gcse-reform-june-2013/>

³ Reformed GCSEs in English language, English literature and mathematics will be taught from September 2015

⁴ Reformed GCSEs in art and design, biology, chemistry, citizenship studies, classical Greek, combined science (double award), computer science, dance, drama, food preparation and nutrition, French, geography, German, history, Latin, music, physical education, physics, religious studies and Spanish will be taught from September 2016

⁵ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-new-subjects-to-be-taught-in-2016

1. Who responded?

We received a total of 58 responses to our consultation⁶ – 41 from individuals and 17 from organisations. All the responses were from individuals or organisations based in England or Wales.

Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses

Personal / organisation response	Respondent type	Number
Personal	Teacher	36
Personal	Educational specialist	5
Organisation	School/college	7
Organisation	Awarding organisation	4
Organisation	Subject association or learned society	2
Organisation	Union	1
Organisation	Other representative or interest group	3

⁶ Where responses were received in hard copy we entered them into the online platform.

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 eight questions.

This was a consultation on the views of those who wished to participate and while we tried 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 eight 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 analyse these separately for respondents who agreed with our proposals, disagreed with our proposals, and expressed no preference.

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 and provide analysis of the data broken down by stakeholder.

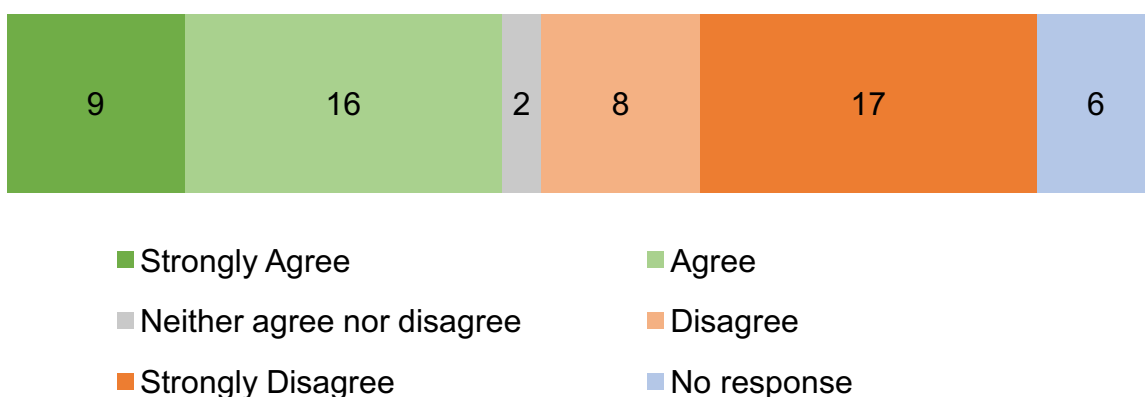
A consultation is not the same as a survey and the responses only reflect the views of those who chose to respond. Typically these will be those with strong views and/or particular experience or interest in a topic. What follows is a fair reflection of the views expressed by respondents to the consultation.

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

Question 1 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that for GCSEs in design and technology, based on the proposed subject content, 50 per cent of the available marks should be allocated to exams, and 50 per cent to non-exam assessment?

As illustrated in Figure 1, responses to this question were mixed. 43 per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with our proposal, and 43 per cent either disagreed or strongly disagreed with our proposal. However, there were more respondents who said they strongly disagreed (29 per cent) than respondents who said they strongly agreed (16 per cent).

Figure 1 Overview of responses to Question 1



Of the respondents who agreed with our proposals:

- four individuals commented on the extensive knowledge requirements within the subject content, with one further individual and two further organisations

commenting that our proposals struck the right balance between the theoretical and practical elements of the subject content;

- two individuals and one organisation commented on the importance of practical work within the subject; and
- two organisations commented that a 50 per cent weighting of non-exam assessment was acceptable, but that a 60 per cent weighting would be preferable. One further organisation commented that the weighting of non-exam assessment should be no less than 50 per cent.

Of the respondents who disagreed with our proposals:

- nineteen individuals and four organisations commented that there should be more emphasis on 'hands-on' practical tasks, project-based working and making of prototypes and products. Six of those (all individuals) commented that – in line with current GCSEs – non-exam assessment should be weighted at 60 per cent of total marks;
- one individual commented that not all students perform well in exams, and greater emphasis on exams would disadvantage students with a weaker grasp of the English language. One further individual commented that the increase in exam assessment would particularly affect less able students; and
- one individual commented that there was a mismatch between the weighting of the assessment objectives and the weighting of exams, as it was difficult to see how AO1, AO2 or AO3 could be assessed in an exam.

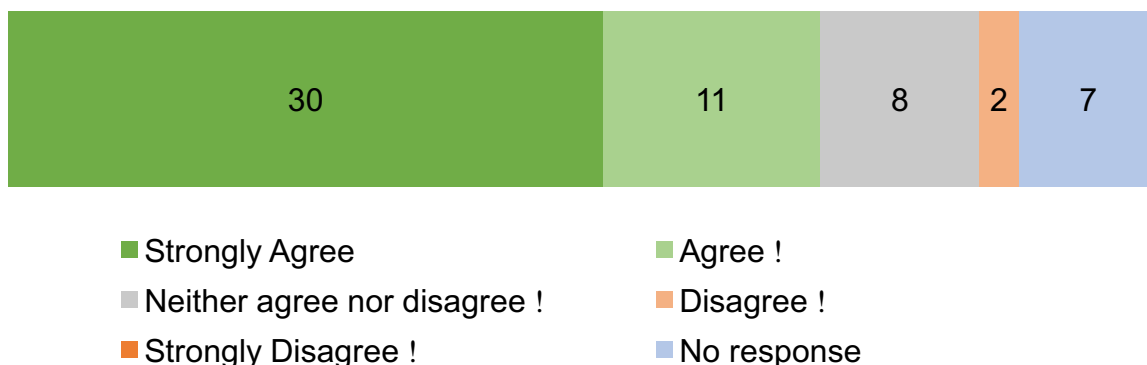
Of the respondents who did not express a preference:

- one (an individual) commented that students should be able to express their technical knowledge in different ways; and
- one (an organisation) commented that it supported a 50 per cent weighting of non-exam assessment, but felt that the subject content and assessment objectives implied that a 60 to 70 per cent weighting for non-exam assessment would be more appropriate.

Question 2 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that GCSEs in design and technology should not be tiered?

As illustrated in Figure 2, a significant majority of respondents (70 per cent) either agreed or strongly agreed with our proposal, and only 2 respondents disagreed.

Figure 2 Overview of responses to Question 2



Of the respondents who supported our proposed approach:

- 11 individuals and three organisations commented that current untiered assessments work well;
- five individuals and two organisations commented that untiered assessments were fairer for students, as tiering artificially limited the achievement of students taking lower tier papers;
- two individuals and two organisations commented that untiered assessments were easier for teachers to manage (and prepare students for), and simpler for students to understand; and
- one organisation commented that there was no evidence tiering would improve differentiation;
- one individual and one organisation noted that previous tiered assessments in design and technology had not been successful.

Of the respondents who did not express a preference, one individual commented that they had worked successfully with both systems, and one individual commented that tiering was often impractical to administer.

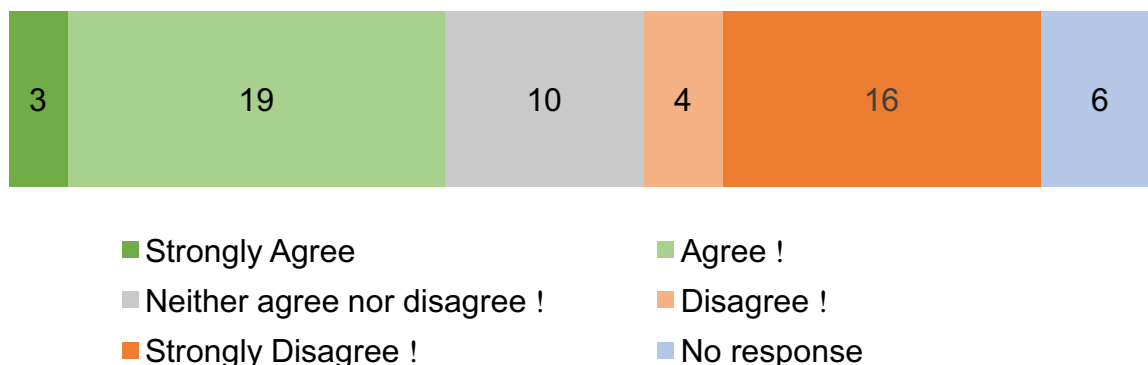
Of the respondents who did not support our proposals, one individual commented that a tiered assessment might make it easier for lower ability students to obtain a pass. One individual also noted that the nature of design and technology meant that it is intrinsically differentiated from the less able to the more able.

Question 3 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in design and technology?

As illustrated in Figure 3, responses to this question were mixed. 38 per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with our proposal, and 34 per cent

either disagreed or strongly disagreed with our proposal. However, there were more respondents who said they strongly disagreed (28 per cent) than respondents who said they strongly agreed (5 per cent).

Figure 3 Overview of responses to Question 3



Of the respondents who supported our proposed approach:

- four individuals and one organisation commented that our proposed assessment objectives made sense and were clearer and more succinct than those used for current GCSEs;
- three individuals and one organisation commented that our proposed assessment objectives were well-focused and comprehensive;
- one individual and one organisation commented that they were content with our proposals;
- one individual commented that our proposed objectives has a broad range;
- one individual commented that the subject needs an overhaul, particularly when additional emphasis is being placed on other subjects;
- one organisation commented that there was some concern that schools would place less emphasis on textiles; and
- one organisation commented that it needed to be clear how assessment objectives mapped to the exam and non-exam assessment.

Most of the respondents who disagreed with our proposals expressed similar views. Ten individuals and two organisations commented that our proposed assessment objectives blurred the distinction between two distinct aspects of the subject content: the core technical knowledge and understanding that all students should have, and the expected level of procedural competence when applying that knowledge and

understanding. This group of respondents commented that core technical knowledge should be assessed through the written exam, and procedural competence through non-exam assessment, and that separate assessment objectives should be assigned to each type of assessment. Two organisations proposed alternative assessment objectives for the exam and non-exam assessment.

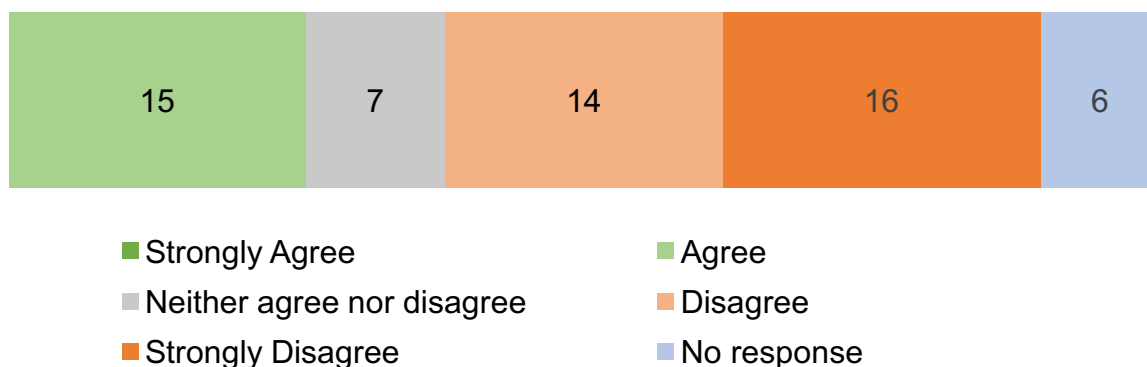
Of the remaining respondents who disagreed with our proposals:

- two individuals commented that there was too much focus on knowledge, and not enough of making products;
- one individual and one organisation commented that separate endorsed routes through the qualification should be retained, which would allow more focused study;
- one individual and one organisation offered detailed comments on the wording of our proposed assessment objectives;
- one individual commented that AO4 largely duplicated what was covered by AO1 to AO3; and
- one individual commented that we should retain a separate textiles qualification.

Question 4 – To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in design and technology?

As illustrated in Figure 3, the majority of respondents (52 per cent) either disagreed or strongly disagreed (28 per cent) with our proposal. Only 26 per cent of respondents agreed with our proposals, and none strongly agreed.

Figure 4 Overview of responses to Question 4



Seven individuals and two organisations who agreed with our proposed weightings provided further comments:

- six individuals and two organisations commented that our proposals seemed reasonable and appropriate;
- one individual commented that the weighting of AO1 should be lower; and
- one organisation commented that we needed to be clear how assessment objectives should map to exams and non-exam assessment, and that some flexibility would be helpful.

As with question three, a number of respondents who disagreed with our proposals gave similar answers to this question, as did several respondents who expressed no preference. Five individuals and four organisations commented that our proposed weightings did not give sufficient weighting to the core technical knowledge and understanding specified in the subject content. These respondents felt this should be assessed through the exam, and consequently be weighted at 50 per cent of total marks.

Of the remaining respondents who either disagreed with our approach or expressed no preference:

- five individuals and three organisations commented that there was too much emphasis on knowledge, and not enough on practical tasks;
- two individuals commented that it was unclear what would be assessed in the exam and through non-exam assessment, with one of those going on to suggest there should be separate assessment objectives for the exams and non-exam assessment;
- two individuals commented that the weighting of AO1 should be lower;
- two individuals commented that the weighting of AO2 should be higher;
- one individual commented that the weighting of AO3 should be lower;
- one individual commented that there should be fewer assessment objectives, and suggested merging AO1 and AO2, as well as AO3 and AO4; and
- one individual commented that the assessment objectives could be appropriate if AO2 and AO4 provided sufficient opportunities for practical work.

Question 5 – Do you have any further comments relating to the assessment of this subject?

Twenty-nine respondents (23 individuals, six organisations) did not comment on this question.

Respondents who answered this question raised the following issues:

- Six respondents (three individuals, three organisations) commented that there should be more emphasis on designing and making than on knowledge and understanding;
- Six respondents (five individuals, one organisation) commented on the lack of focused routes through the qualification. Respondents were concerned that this could lead to students developing a superficial understanding of a range of materials, which would be less useful than the current approach, which enables more detailed study of fewer materials. Two further individuals were concerned that this did not relate well to the needs of employers;
- Two organisations commented that there needed to be more clarity about the extent and level of mathematical and scientific understanding required in specifications and assessments;
- One individual commented that the pressures on teachers to achieve results could compromise results of non-exam assessment. Another individual commented that excessive assessment of students' progress could stifle students' creativity;
- One individual commented that there should only be one written exam, and another individual commented that there should be no more than one (or possibly two) 'design and make' tasks;
- One individual commented that the assessment objectives were unclear;
- One individual commented that more information was needed about the skills students should be taught; and
- One individual commented that the current proposals would mean the GCSE was not rigorous enough.

Question 6 – We have identified that disabled students might not be able to complete the proposed non-exam assessment requirements for reformed GCSEs in design and technology. Are there any other potential impacts we have not identified that may impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic? If so, what are they??

Fifty-two respondents (38 individuals, 14 organisations) did not comment on this question.

One individual commented that any student can participate, provided they have freedom to present their work in any format.

One individual commented that some students who would normally choose a textiles-based route might not if a multi-material approach to teaching were necessary.

One individual commented that question-setters needed to take care to avoid giving the impression that countries in developing economies 'need help' from countries in developed economies – as this stereotype was potentially offensive.

One organisation commented that there needed to be a qualification available for students who could not complete the full GCSE, and that disabled students might need some practical assistance. They also commented that a multi-material approach to teaching could disadvantage students with disabilities such as autism, who might find it difficult to work in a noisy environment.

One organisation commented that disabled students and those with special needs perform less well in exams.

One organisation commented that any failure to assess the technical knowledge and understanding elements of the subject content could disproportionately disadvantage female students, highlighting research which suggested this could lead to poorer educational outcomes for female students.

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?

Fifty-three respondents (39 individuals, 14 organisations) did not comment on this question.

One individual commented that we should evaluate how disabilities could impact on students' ability to complete non-exam assessment tasks, and possibly consider allowing disabled students to work alongside other students.

One individual commented that there should be a separate GCSE in textiles.

One organisation commented that students and teachers should have more choice of specialism within the subject.

One organisation commented that the weighting of non-exam assessment should remain at 60 per cent.

One organisation commented that changes to the assessment objectives would be needed to ensure all students had consistent subject knowledge and understanding (irrespective of gender).

Question 8 – Have you any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?

Fifty-five respondents (40 individuals, 15 organisations) did not comment on this question.

One individual commented that design and technology should not exclude students as a result of accessibility issues.

One organisation commented that the flexibility within existing qualifications made it possible for students with a range of disabilities to achieve success.

One organisation commented that undue emphasis on the scientific or mathematical elements of the subject content could disadvantage students with learning difficulties (or low level mathematical skills), or discourage them from attempting the qualification.

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 non-confidential 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
Blatchington Mill School, East Sussex
Creative Skillset
D&T for D&T
Design and Technology Association
Lord Williams's School, Oxfordshire
OCR
Pearson
Queen Mary's Grammar School, Walsall
Science, Engineering, Manufacturing and Technologies Association (SEMTA)
The Marlborough School, Oxfordshire
Thomas Mills High School, Suffolk
Waddesdon CofE School, Buckinghamshire
WJEC-CBAC

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