

Developing a new GCSE design and technology qualification for first teaching in 2017

Regulatory impact assessment



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1. Introduction

GCSE qualifications are being reformed. We are introducing regulatory requirements to achieve comparability of similar qualifications' assessment arrangements across all exam boards. We regulate how these arrangements are implemented to secure standards over time.

This regulatory impact assessment considers the impact of the new assessment arrangements compared with the pre-reform arrangements for the GCSE Design and Technology qualification. As well as the changes to assessment arrangements we also consider the move to a single qualification title from the previous approach of having a range of qualifications each focusing on an area of specialism.

2. Changes to assessment arrangements

We have revised the percentage of non-exam assessment in Design and Technology qualifications from 60% to 50% in line with our principles that non-exam assessment should only be used when there is not a valid way of assessing through examination, and, in most circumstances, the percentage of marks that are attributed through non-exam assessment should be the same across all exam boards.

2.1 Wider benefits of changes to assessment arrangements

In 2013, we set out the following principles for when a qualification should include a non-exam assessment¹:

1. Non-exam assessment should only be used when it is the only valid way to assess essential elements of the subject.
2. Non-exam assessment must strike a balance between the valid assessment of essential knowledge and skills, sound assessment practice and manageability.
3. Any non-exam assessment arrangements should be designed to fit the requirements of the particular subject, including the relative weighting of written exams and other components.
4. Non-exam assessment should be designed so that the qualification is not easily distorted by external pressures.

We have applied these principles to the GCSE in Design and Technology to arrive at the changes outlined above. Overall, this should ensure that qualifications are validly

¹ *Review of Controlled Assessment in GCSEs:*

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/377903/2013-06-11-review-of-controlled-assessment-in-GCSEs.pdf

assessed, meaning that skills that cannot be assessed by exam are assessed through non-exam assessment. By ensuring validity, users of qualifications can be sure that the assessment measures what it purports to measure, and is clearer and more transparent.

3. Costs and cost savings of changes to assessment arrangements

Students will continue to complete a non-exam assessment for the Design and Technology qualification. The amount of marks attributed to the practical assessment will be a smaller percentage than previously and this may mean that schools and students spend less time on this part of the qualification. This may lead to a moderate reduction in the time teachers spend on supervising non-exam assessment, although teachers will still need to undertake marking. Overall teachers seem likely to be just as busy because they may spend any saved time in helping students prepare for the exam assessment.

Exam boards will continue to need to produce exam papers and non-exam assessment tasks. Our regulatory changes mean an increase in the proportion of marks coming from the exam. It will be for the exam boards to decide whether this will lead to a change in the length and complexity of the exam but it is possible that with more marks available there will be an increase in time that examiners spend marking completed papers.

The new qualification could mean increased costs for schools if different facilities or equipment are required. Some existing staff might also need extra training, although where this is to be the case it is a consequence of changes to the qualification content rather than the specific assessment arrangements.

3.1 Creation of a single GCSE Design and Technology qualification title

As well as the changes to assessment arrangements outlined above the changes to GCSE Design and Technology subject content developed by Department for Education have led to the creation of a single qualification title, instead of the previous approach of having a separate title for each specialism or study of a particular material.

For the reformed GCSE qualification, students will design and make their product using the appropriate materials under the single qualification title and all students from the same exam board will sit the same exam.

Overall the single qualification title may mean that exam boards design and develop one exam where previously they had to develop one for each separate title. An exam board that currently offers a range of different titles but has a small number of

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entrants for each one, might be more profitable in the future if they experience a reduction in development costs and retain a similar overall number of entries. On the other hand, an exam board that currently has a high number of entries in one or two of the existing titles may be worse off if they have a smaller number of entries in the reformed qualification in the future.

Considering the aggregate impact, it is likely that reducing the amount of non-exam assessment and rationalising qualification titling will have a positive overall impact. There will be a reduction in costs to exam boards through eliminating the duplication of workload in developing and delivering similar subjects. There will also be positive impacts for users of qualifications. This is weighed against any additional costs that schools may face in changing facilities and retraining staff.

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