

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



May 2016

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Executive Summary

Our consultation about the Conditions and guidance for GCSE sociology took place between 4 March 2016 and 1 April 2016. The consultation questions were available to complete online or to download. A copy of the consultation is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-reform-regulations-for-sociology>

There were three responses to the consultation – all from organisations.

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

Both the remaining respondents supported all of our proposals.

We set out the responses in more detail below.

Introduction

The consultation on the Conditions and guidance for GCSE sociology

This report is a summary of the views expressed by those who responded to our consultation on the Conditions and guidance for GCSE sociology, which took place between 4 March 2016 and 1 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 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 qualifications in sociology 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 sociology 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

Who responded?

We received three responses to our consultation. All of these were from organisations based in England and Wales.

Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses

Personal / organisation response	Respondent type	Number
Organisation response	Awarding organisation	2
Organisation response	Union	1

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.

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 nine 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.

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.

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 did not answer our questions, but 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 sociology

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?

Both respondents strongly agreed with our proposals.

Respondents commented that this approach would ensure there was consistency across exam boards and that stakeholders understand fully what knowledge and skills they can expect an individual who has a GCSE in sociology to be able to demonstrate.

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?

Both respondents strongly agreed with our proposals.

Respondents commented that the proposals would ensure that assessment is balanced and that there is a common understanding of the key elements and terms contained within the assessment objectives.

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should introduce rules for exam assessment to ensure exam boards take a consistent approach to assessing sociological research methods in GCSE sociology?

Both respondents strongly agreed with our proposals.

Respondents commented that there should be a consistent approach to the assessment of research methods in GCSE sociology to ensure comparability and that the proposed rules would ensure this.

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to assessing research methods in exams for GCSE sociology (including the proposed minimum weighting)?

Both respondents strongly agreed with our proposals.

Respondents commented that they agreed there should be a consistent approach between all exam boards and with setting a requirement for a minimum of 15% of the overall marks for the qualification to be for research methods.

Our proposed Conditions and guidance

Question 5: Do you have any comments on our proposed Conditions and requirements for GCSE sociology?

Question 6: Do you have any comments on our proposed guidance for GCSE sociology?

No respondents commented on these questions.

Equality Impact Assessment

Question 7: We have not identified any ways in which the proposals for GCSE sociology would impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any potential impacts we have not identified?

Question 8: 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 9: Do you have any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on students who share a protected characteristic?

No respondents commented on these questions.

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 are consulted in 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.

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.

AQA

ASCL

WJEC

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