

# **Analysis of Responses to our Consultation on Conditions and Guidance for GCSE Ancient Languages**



June 2015

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## **Executive Summary**

This consultation about the Conditions and Guidance for GCSE ancient languages took place between 16th December 2014 and 13th January 2015.

There were 172 responses to the consultation from individuals and organisations; all responses were in a form that matched or broadly followed the layout of the online consultation. Of these responses, 73.3 per cent were from individuals, the majority of whom were teachers, and 26.7 per cent were from organisations. In addition, two letters from organisations were received, and two research reports were provided for our consideration.

The consultation exercise generated a broad range of responses, some in support of the proposals, and some against. The key point made in response to the consultation was concern about the number of lines of text to be studied in the ancient language. The draft Guidance suggested that the number of lines of text should be at least 120 which many, although not all, respondents felt was too many.

Concern was also expressed in a number of responses about the subject content<sup>1</sup> published by the Department for Education, which was not the subject of this consultation. The Department for Education has conducted its own consultation in relation to the GCSE ancient languages subject content and has already considered these concerns.<sup>2</sup>

A number of respondents also expressed concern that the removal of tiering in Latin would disadvantage some students, including those with special needs and those from non-selective schools. We have already considered this issue in response to an earlier consultation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-ancient-foreign-languages](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-ancient-foreign-languages)

<sup>2</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-subject-content-and-assessment-objectives](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-subject-content-and-assessment-objectives)

<sup>3</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/modern-foreign-and-ancient-languages/>

## **1. Introduction**

### **The consultation on the Conditions and Guidance for GCSE Ancient Languages**

This report is a summary of the views expressed by those who responded to our consultation on the Conditions and Guidance for GCSE Ancient Languages which took place between 16th December 2014 and 13th January 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, and on our policy and technical arrangements relating to those subjects that are due to be introduced for first teaching in 2015.<sup>4</sup>

We have taken decisions on the design of the reformed GCSEs in ancient languages that are to be introduced for first teaching in 2016.

This consultation focused on more technical matters – that is, on the regulatory arrangements that we must put in place to make sure that awarding organisations design, deliver and award the new qualifications in line with our policy decisions.

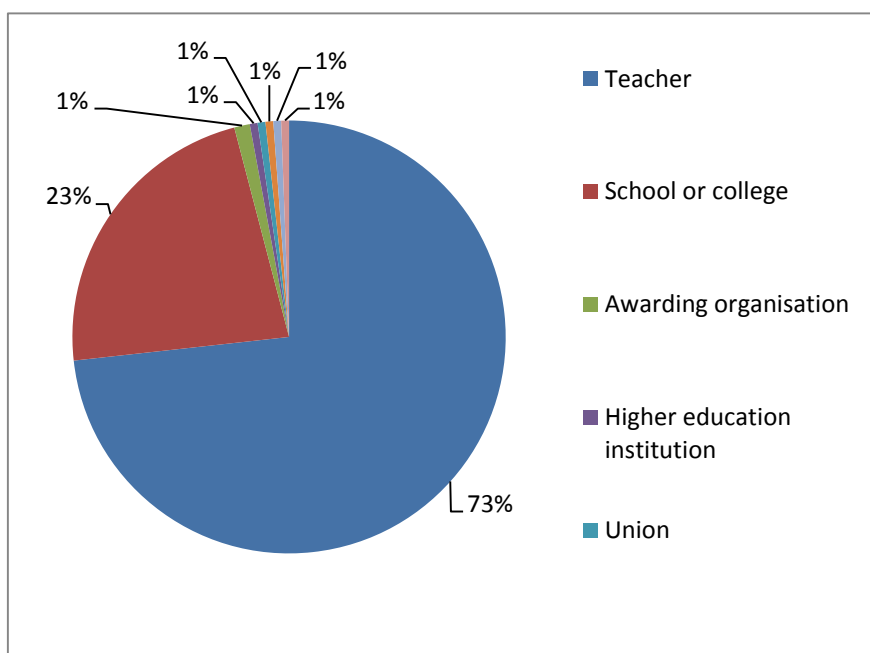
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<sup>4</sup> Reformed GCSEs in English language, English literature and mathematics will be taught from September 2015.

## 2. Who responded?

We received a total of 172 responses to our consultation.<sup>5</sup> There were 126 responses from individuals (73.3 per cent) and 46 responses from organisations (26.7 per cent). The breakdown of responses is shown in Figure 1 and Table 1.

**Figure 1: Breakdown of consultation responses<sup>6</sup>**



All of the responses received were from individuals or organisations based in England or Wales.

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<sup>5</sup> Where responses which followed the format of the consultation were received in hard copy we entered them into the online platform. Responses which did not follow the format of the consultation are not included in the charts, tables or figures we quote.

<sup>6</sup> Figures in the pie chart have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage. As a result of rounding, the figures do not add up to 100 per cent.

**Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses**

<b>Personal / organisation response</b>	<b>Respondent type</b>	<b>Number</b>
Personal	Teacher	126
Organisation response	School or college	39
Organisation response	Awarding organisation	2
Organisation response	Higher education institution	1
Organisation response	Union	1
Organisation response	School, college or teacher representative group	1
Organisation response	Local authority	1
Organisation response	Subject association or learned society	1

In addition to the responses to the consultation detailed above, some respondents provided further information, such as letters and reports, for us to consider.

### **3. 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 six 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 six questions and each had a different focus. Respondents could choose to answer all or just some of the questions.

During the analysis phase we reviewed every response to each question.

## 4. 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.

Throughout many consultation responses, comments were made in relation to the subject content<sup>7</sup> published by the Department for Education, which was not the subject of this consultation. The main points raised in relation to the subject content are summarised below:

- The inclusion of English to target language translation and grammar analysis is too demanding, with some respondents stating that the translation and grammar requirements are more appropriate for A level than for GCSE.
- At the time of our consultation, the subject content document stated that:

*GCSE specifications in ancient languages should enable students without prior knowledge of its grammar and vocabulary to meet the requirements of the course.*

A number of respondents, including one of the exam boards, expressed concern that there would not be enough teaching time in a two-year course to deliver the content, and thus exam boards would find it very difficult to meet this requirement. The Department for Education has subsequently revised the subject content document to remove this requirement.

- Respondents raised concerns that timetabling constraints, particularly within state schools, will make it difficult to cover the content within a two-year course of study.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-ancient-foreign-languages](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-ancient-foreign-languages)



- Greater flexibility in design was requested, with preferences expressed for the current courses offered by both WJEC<sup>8</sup> and OCR.<sup>9</sup> A number of respondents felt that the content could be split into two separate courses, each with a different focus, which would make the teaching and learning more manageable.
- Concerns were expressed over the content requirements which could have a negative impact on subject take-up at GCSE, with a knock-on impact on take-up at A level. It was felt that the new GCSEs in ancient languages could be taken by a very narrow cohort of students.
- Given the various issues raised, a large number of respondents expressed the view that the subject content should not be adopted, and that the exam boards should be left to develop the subject content themselves.
- A smaller number of respondents expressed support for the subject content and welcomed the inclusion of English to target language translation.

The Department for Education has conducted its own consultation in relation to the GCSE ancient languages subject content and has already considered these many of these concerns.<sup>10</sup>

A number of respondents also expressed concerns that the removal of tiering in Latin would disadvantage some students, including those with special needs and those from non-selective schools. We have already considered this issue in response to an earlier consultation.<sup>11</sup>

**Question 1 – Do you have any comments on the draft Condition for new GCSE ancient languages?**

The Department for Education has published the new content for GCSE ancient languages.<sup>12</sup> The draft Condition for new GCSE ancient languages states that awarding organisations must ensure they comply with the content requirements.

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<sup>8</sup> WJEC currently offers Level 1 and Level 2 Certificates in Latin Language, Latin Language and Roman Civilisation and Latin Literature.

<sup>9</sup> OCR currently offers GCSEs in Latin and Classical Greek.

<sup>10</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-subject-content-and-assessment-objectives](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-subject-content-and-assessment-objectives)

<sup>11</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/modern-foreign-and-ancient-languages/>

<sup>12</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-ancient-foreign-languages](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-ancient-foreign-languages)

There were 75 respondents who said they had no comments to make (57 personal views, 18 organisational views); 94 who did make comments (66 personal views, 28 organisational views); and 3 personal respondents who did not answer the question.

Of the 94 who confirmed that they had comments to make, 96 per cent (90 responses) raised concerns about the subject content document, as described above, and to the fact that we were not requiring reformed GCSEs in ancient languages to be tiered. Two further respondents did not make any comments.

The 2 respondents who made comments in answer to this question, expressed support for the Condition as worded, and commented that this was consistent with other reformed GCSE subjects.

**Question 2 – Do you have any comments on the draft Guidance on subject content for new GCSE ancient languages?**

The draft Guidance on subject content covers interpretation of ‘ancient sources’, the volume of text studied in relation to their relative weightings and the specific number of lines of text in the ancient language to be studied.

There were 20 respondents who said they had no comments to make (17 personal views, 3 organisational views); 140 who did make comments (99 personal views, 41 organisational views); and 12 respondents (10 personal views, 2 organisational views) who did not answer the question.

Of the 140 who commented, 36 per cent (50 respondents) raised concerns about the subject content and our previous decision on tiering, as detailed above; and 54 per cent (76 respondents) raised concerns that the number of lines of text to be studied in the ancient language (which the guidance suggests should be 120 lines) is too high, with some respondents indicating a preference for guidance suggesting that 90 lines of text should be studied. Both of the exam boards who responded to this consultation expressed the view that the guidance on the number of lines of text to be studied should be reduced to 90 lines.

A total of 5 per cent of respondents (7 respondents) who made comments in answer to this question expressed support for the guidance on the number of lines of text to be studied, or suggested that the number of lines of text should be increased.

Two respondents expressed general support for the draft Guidance on subject content.

**Question 3 – Do you have any comments on the draft Guidance on assessment objectives for new GCSE ancient languages?**

This question referred to the draft Guidance on assessment objectives which outlines how we expect awarding organisations to interpret the assessment objectives in terms of discrete 'elements' within each assessment objective, coverage expectations and key areas of emphasis in each assessment objective.

There were 91 respondents who said they had no comments to make (68 personal views, 23 organisational views); 63 who did make comments (42 personal views, 21 organisational views); and 18 respondents (16 personal views, 2 organisational views) who did not answer the question.

Of the 63 who commented, 68 per cent (43 respondents) raised concerns about the subject content and our previous decision on tiering, as detailed above; and 29 per cent (18 respondents) provided comments on the guidance on assessment objectives. These comments were wide-ranging. Some suggested amendments to the guidance on assessment objectives, some requested greater flexibility in the assessment objective weightings, and some suggested that historical context should be explicitly covered within the assessment objectives and guidance. Others commented that the guidance on assessment objectives was comprehensive.

**Question 4 – We have not identified any ways in which the proposed requirements for reformed GCSEs in ancient languages would impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any potential impacts we have not identified? If so, what are they?**

There were 118 respondents who said they had no comments to make (87 personal views, 31 organisational views); 31 who did make comments (20 personal views, 11 organisational views); and 23 respondents (19 personal views, 4 organisational views) who did not answer the question.

Of the 31 who commented, 55 per cent (17 responses) raised concerns about the subject content and our previous decision on tiering, as detailed above; and 45 per cent (14 respondents) provided comments on potential impacts on those who share protected characteristics including the following:

- Students with dyslexia may find the optional translation and grammar requirements inaccessible.
- Students with visual impairments may find some sources (for example those where photographs are used) inaccessible.
- Where students require reasonable adjustments, computer assessment is impractical for Classical Greek exams.

- Students with English as an additional language (EAL) may find the translation requirements difficult.

**Question 5 – Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impact resulting from these proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?**

There were 118 respondents who said they had no comments to make (86 personal views, 32 organisational views); 27 who did make comments (19 personal views, 8 organisational views); and 27 respondents (20 personal views, 7 organisational views) who did not answer the question.

Of the 118 who commented, 85 per cent (23 responses) raised concerns about the subject content and our previous decision on tiering, as detailed above. Of the remaining 15 per cent (4 responses), only one suggested additional steps that could be taken to mitigate any negative impact. This related to the use of a keyboard map for Classical Greek exams for students who require reasonable adjustments. It was suggested that this would enable students to type their exams using the Greek alphabet.

**Question 6 – Have you any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?**

There were 135 respondents who said they had no comments to make (99 personal views, 36 organisational views); 8 who did make comments (5 personal views, 3 organisational views); and 29 respondents (22 personal views, 7 organisational views) who did not answer the question.

Of the 8 who commented, 7 raised concerns about the subject content and our previous decision on tiering, as detailed above.

The remaining respondent expressed the view that there will be additional costs to centres to resource the reformed GCSEs in ancient languages (for example the need to purchase new textbooks).

## **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.

Abingdon School  
All Saints RC School, York  
ASCL  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
Burnage Academy for Boys  
Channing School  
Christ's Hospital School  
Classical Association Teaching Board  
Clifton High School  
Dartford Grammar School  
Downside School  
Eton College  
Godolphin School  
Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls  
Hereford Cathedral School  
King Edward VI High School for Girls  
OCR  
Princethorpe College  
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Wakefield  
Redborne Upper School and Community College  
Rye St Antony  
Shrewsbury High School  
St James Senior Girls School  
St Joseph's College  
Stephen Perse Foundation  
Taunton School  
The Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls  
The Leys School  
The Manchester Grammar School  
The Queen's School, Chester  
University of Cambridge School Classics Project  
Voice  
WJEC-CBAC

## **Appendix B: Consultation details**

The consultation questions were available to either complete online or to download.

A copy of the consultation is available at:

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/387638/gcse-ancient-languages-consultation-on-conditions-and-guidance.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/387638/gcse-ancient-languages-consultation-on-conditions-and-guidance.pdf)

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