

# Confirmed Assessment Arrangements for Reformed AS and A level Qualifications

covering:

**GCSEs:**

Art and design

Computer science

Dance

Music

Physical education

**AS and A level qualifications:**

Dance

Music

Physical education



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## **Confirmed assessment arrangements for reformed GCSEs, AS qualifications and A level qualifications for first teaching in 2016**

In July 2014 we consulted on the assessment arrangements for a number of qualifications that will be first taught from September 2016. The Department for Education (DfE) consulted in parallel on proposed content requirements for the same qualifications.

We announced in December 2014 the outcomes of our consultation in respect of some of those subjects on which we consulted. In this document we are confirming the decisions that we have taken in respect of the remaining.

In the table below we list those subjects on which we consulted and, where we have already consulted on arrangements for GCSEs or AS qualifications and A levels in that subject, we outline the current stage of development.

**Table 1** – List of subjects included in our consultation

	<b>GCSE – covered in this consultation?</b>	<b>AS qualifications and A levels – covered in this consultation?</b>
<b>Ancient languages</b>	No. We have already consulted <sup>1</sup> and the new qualifications are due to be taught from September 2016.	Yes. We confirmed the assessment arrangements in December 2014. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Art and design</b>	Yes	No. We have already consulted <sup>3</sup> and new qualifications are accredited ahead of first teaching in September 2015.
<b>Computer science</b>	Yes	No. We have already consulted <sup>4</sup> and new qualifications are accredited ahead of first teaching in September 2015.
<b>Dance</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Geography</b>	No. We have already consulted <sup>5</sup> and the new qualifications are due to be taught from September 2016.	Yes. We confirmed the assessment arrangements in December 2014. <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/modern-foreign-and-ancient-languages>

<sup>2</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016)

<sup>3</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/a-level-regulatory-requirements-october-2013>

<sup>4</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/a-level-regulatory-requirements-october-2013>

<sup>5</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/gcse-reform-june-2013>

<sup>6</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016)

<b>Mathematics</b>	No. We have already consulted <sup>7</sup> and new qualifications are accredited ahead of first teaching in September 2015.	Yes. However first teaching has now been postponed to 2017.
<b>Further mathematics</b>	Not offered at GCSE.	Yes. However first teaching has now been postponed to 2017.
<b>Modern foreign languages</b>	No. We have already consulted <sup>8</sup> and the new qualifications are due to be taught from September 2016.	Yes. We confirmed the assessment arrangements in December 2014. <sup>9</sup>
<b>Music</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Physical education</b>	Yes	Yes

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<sup>7</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/gcse-reform-june-2013>

<sup>8</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/modern-foreign-and-ancient-languages>

<sup>9</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016)

In this document we set out the decisions we have made in relation to the assessment arrangements for the following reformed GCSE subjects:

- Art and design
- Computer science.

We also set out the decisions we have made for GCSEs, AS qualifications and A levels in the following subjects:

- Dance
- Music
- Physical education.

In reaching these decisions we have carefully considered the responses to our consultation and the potential impact of our decisions in terms of regulatory burden and on those with protected characteristics. We are also publishing our assessments of the potential impact of our decisions.<sup>10</sup>

There are also a number of key decisions about the purpose and the design of reformed GCSEs, AS qualifications and A levels that we have already taken. You can find more information on the reforms to these qualifications on our website.<sup>11</sup>

## **Tiering**

We have previously confirmed that new GCSEs should only be tiered where a single set of assessments cannot in a valid and manageable way assess students across the full ability range. Accordingly and in line with our consultation proposals, we have decided that none of the GCSE subjects that were included in this consultation will be tiered. We have already decided that, as now, AS and A level qualifications will not be tiered.

## **Assessment objectives**

In light of the consultation responses and the updated content requirements, we have finalised the assessment objectives on which we consulted. We will include these assessment objectives in the subject-level conditions for these qualifications. In the

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<sup>10</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016)

<sup>11</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/timeline-of-changes-to-gcses-as-and-a-levels](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/timeline-of-changes-to-gcses-as-and-a-levels)  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-the-facts-gcse-and-a-level-reform](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-the-facts-gcse-and-a-level-reform)

meantime, however, we have put them on our website<sup>12</sup> so that they can be considered alongside the subject content requirements published by the DfE.<sup>13</sup>

## **Balance of exam and non-exam assessment**

We have previously consulted on and agreed a common set of principles that we are applying to all GCSEs, AS qualifications and A levels as they are reformed. Where subject content can be validly assessed by exams, set and marked by exam boards, this should be the default method of assessment. Where other forms of assessment are necessary to assess essential subject skills or knowledge, the non-exam assessment must:

- strike a balance between valid assessment of essential knowledge and skills, sound assessment practice and manageability;
- be designed to fit the requirements of the particular subject, including the relative weighting of exams and other components assigned to it;
- be designed so that the qualification is not easily distorted by external pressures from the wider system.

Having carefully considered the responses to our consultation and the updated subject content requirements against these principles, we have now decided what the balance of exam and non-exam assessment should be for the qualifications on which we consulted. The table below summarises the decisions we have taken about the amount of non-exam assessment needed for each of the GCSE, AS and A level subjects covered in this document.

Where we have indicated that a subject will include a proportion of non-exam assessment, this weighting will be mandatory and will apply to all qualifications in that subject.

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<sup>12</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-objectives-ancient-languages-geography-and-mfl](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-objectives-ancient-languages-geography-and-mfl)

<sup>13</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/speeches/publication-of-reformed-a-level-content](http://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/publication-of-reformed-a-level-content)

**Table 2** – Overview of our decisions on the proportion of non-exam assessment (current % in brackets).

<b>Subject</b>	<b>GCSE weighting of non-exam assessment</b>	<b>AS weighting of non-exam assessment</b>	<b>A level weighting of non-exam assessment</b>
Art and design	100% (100%)	N/A	N/A
Computer science	20% (25–60%)	N/A	N/A
Dance	60% (80%)	50% (60%)	50% (55%)
Music	60% (60–80%)	60% (60–70%)	60% (60–70%)
Physical education	40% <sup>14</sup> (60%)	30% (35–50%)	30% (35–50%)

### **Art and design GCSE**

GCSEs in art and design are currently assessed wholly by non-exam assessment, because of the practical nature of the skills being assessed and the content focusing on the student as the artist rather than on art appreciation or art history. We proposed that this should continue to be the case for reformed GCSEs in the subject. According to the subject content requirements, students must demonstrate and develop their technical skills and realise their creative intentions over an extended period of time, using a range of different materials and context. This is not a skill that could be directly assessed in an exam. Over two-thirds of respondents agreed with our proposal and we have decided that reformed GCSEs in art and design should continue to be assessed entirely by non-exam assessment.

### **Computer science GCSE**

GCSEs in computer science are currently assessed by a combination of exam and non-exam assessment. We have decided that 20 per cent of marks should be allocated to non-exam assessment to allow students to demonstrate practical skills in a more realistic context than would be possible in exams alone. This reflects the proposals made in our consultation and with which respondents were broadly in agreement. In this subject the non-exam assessment will focus on the end-to-end iterative process of programming, allow for the use of a range of programming languages, and require candidates to apply a methodical approach to a complex problem and to recognise when refinements are possible or required.

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<sup>14</sup> This is an increase on the 30 per cent weighting on which we consulted.



## **Dance GCSE**

We proposed that 60 per cent of marks for this subject should be allocated to non-exam assessment. The majority of respondents disagreed with this proposal. The objection raised most frequently was that a 60 per cent weighting of non-exam assessment does not allow a high enough proportion of practical work. There were also concerns that this might push the practical aspects of dance into an extra-curricular activity. Another objection raised was that the three core skills (performance, choreography and written appreciation) were not reflected in a fair and balanced way in the proposed 60 per cent weighting.

We have considered carefully the responses to our consultation and the final content requirements. The subject content requirements include practical abilities, notably performing and choreography, which cannot validly be assessed by exam, as well as more theoretical and conceptual aspects, such as appraising, which can be. Our design principles for reformed GCSEs are that assessment should be by exam where it can be done validly. We consider that students' appraising abilities and their theoretical knowledge and understanding of the subject should be assessed by examination and that this should be weighted at 40 per cent of the overall marks for the qualification. We have therefore decided that 60 per cent of marks for these qualifications should be allocated to non-exam assessment.

## **Dance AS and A level qualifications**

We proposed that marks for AS and A level qualifications in dance should be equally distributed between exam and non-exam assessment – that is, 50 per cent to each form of assessment. Respondents' views were evenly split on these proposals between those who agreed and those who disagreed. Of those who agreed, the most frequently cited reasons were that a 50 per cent weighting was appropriate for the subject and level of study and/or that it provided good preparation for studying dance at higher levels. We are still of the view that 50 per cent non-exam assessment reflects the balance of practical and theoretical aspects of the subject content and supports student progression to further study. We have therefore decided to adopt our proposals for 50 per cent non-exam assessment.

## **Music GCSE, AS and A level qualifications**

We proposed that the percentage of marks for non-exam assessment in GCSE, AS and A level music qualifications should be 60 per cent, reflecting the balance between the practical and theoretical elements in the subject content. The majority of responses we received argued in favour of a higher weighting as this would "enable flexible and musical delivery of assessment and learning". Other arguments in favour of a higher weighting included the practical nature of the subject and a concern that 40 per cent assessment by examination could disproportionately emphasise the 'appraising' aspect of the content requirements.

We have considered the responses to our consultation carefully in light of the updated subject content requirements and our principles for non-exam assessment. We have decided that the percentage of marks for non-exam assessment in GCSE, AS and A level music qualifications should be 60 per cent. This reflects the balance between the practical and theoretical elements in the subject and the weighting accorded to students' abilities to compose, perform and appraise in the content requirements. The focus of the non-exam assessment will be split equally between performing and composing while the examination component will test students' appraising skills and their theoretical knowledge of the subject.

### **Physical education GCSE**

In response to feedback to its consultation, the DfE has made changes to the content requirements for physical education that place more emphasis on, and increase the breadth of, the practical skills that students must demonstrate. The number of sports that students must be able to demonstrate has been increased from two to three, including at least one team sport and one individual sport. The nature and number of practical performance skills have also been expanded.

In light of the changes described above, we have carefully considered again what proportion of non-exam assessment would be appropriate in this subject. The revised content places more emphasis on students' ability to demonstrate a broader range of practical skills and techniques through a greater and more varied range of physical activities. We have concluded that this shift in balance would require a higher weighting than the 30 per cent on which we consulted. We have therefore decided that 40 per cent of GCSE physical education should be allocated to non-exam assessment. This change is also in line with many of the responses we received to our consultation, which argued in favour of a higher weighting of non-exam assessment.

### **Physical education AS and A level qualifications**

Following its consultation, the DfE has not made any substantive changes to the subject content requirements for AS and A level qualifications in physical education. Responses to our proposal for 30 per cent non-exam assessment were mixed, although the majority of respondents disagreed overall. Reasons for disagreeing were often based on the physical nature of the subject. Those that agreed with the proposals said they felt that the split reflected the more theoretical nature of the subject at this level and that it supported progression to the study of sports science at degree level. We have decided that, in line with our consultation proposals and principles for non-exam assessment, 30 per cent of marks for these qualifications should be allocated to non-exam assessment. This is based on the balance of practical and theoretical content within the subject content and supports student progression to further study.

### **Remaining 2016 subjects**

We and the DfE have also recently consulted in parallel on the content and assessment arrangements for a further group of qualifications planned for first teaching in September 2016. These are:

- GCSEs – citizenship studies, cooking and nutrition, design and technology, drama and religious studies
- AS qualifications and A levels – drama and theatre, religious studies.

We are currently considering the responses to our consultation and will confirm the final assessment arrangements for these qualifications in February 2015, when the DfE will also be publishing the final content requirements.

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