

Analysis of Responses to our Consultation on Conditions and Guidance for AS and A level Environmental Science



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Executive Summary

Our consultation about the Conditions and guidance for AS and A level environmental science took place between 17th December 2015 and 20th January 2016. 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/as-and-a-level-reform-regulations-for-environmental-science.

There were 2 responses to the consultation – both 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.

The remaining respondent either supported our proposals, or did not comment on them.

1. Introduction

The consultation on the Conditions and guidance for AS and A level environmental science

This report is a summary of the views expressed by those who responded to our consultation on the Conditions and guidance for AS and A level environmental science which took place between 17th December 2015 and 20th January 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 new AS and A level qualifications in environmental science 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 AS and A levels in environmental science 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

2. Who responded?

We received a total of 2 responses to our consultation – both from organisations based in England or Wales.

Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses

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

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.

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 11 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 present these separately.

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.

As noted above, only one respondent chose to answer the consultation questions directly; the other submitted more general comments which we set 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 AS and A level environmental science

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?

The only respondent who answered this question said they strongly agreed with our proposal.

They commented that it was important that any new AS and A levels in environmental science needed to be comparable, and in accordance with DfE and Ofqual expectations.

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?

The only respondent who answered this question said they strongly agreed with our proposal.

They commented that guidance on the correct interpretation of our assessment objectives should enable a consistent understanding and support effective accreditation.

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should introduce rules for exam assessment ensure exam boards take a consistent approach to assessing mathematical skills and practical work in AS and A level environmental science?

The only respondent who answered this question said they strongly agreed with our proposal. They commented that they were happy with the proposed approach.

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to assessing mathematical skills in exams (including the 10 per cent minimum weighting) for AS and A level environmental science?

The only respondent who answered this question said they strongly agreed with our proposal. They commented that they were happy with the proposed approach, and that the 10% minimum weighting was appropriate for the subject and comparable with similar new AS and A levels.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to assessing practical work in exams (including the 15 per cent minimum weighting) for AS and A level environmental science?

The only respondent who answered this question said they strongly agreed with our proposal.

They commented that a 15% weighting was appropriate, and that the close relationship between subject knowledge and practical skills meant that practical skills should be indirectly assessed in exams.

Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to practical work in AS and A level environmental science?

The only respondent who answered this question said they strongly agreed with our proposal. They commented that they were happy with the proposed approach.

Our proposed Conditions and guidance

Question 7: Do you have any comments on our proposed Conditions and requirements for AS and A level environmental science?

Question 8: Do you have any comments on our proposed guidance for AS and A level environmental science?

The only respondent who answered these question answered 'No' to both. They commented that they were content with the Conditions and guidance as drafted.

Equality Impact Assessment

Question 9: We have not identified any ways (beyond those we have identified in earlier consultations) in which the proposals for AS and A level environmental science would impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic.⁴ Are there any potential impacts we have not identified?

Question 10: 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 11: Do you have any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on students who share a protected characteristic?

The only respondent who answered these question answered 'No' to all three, and provided no further comments.

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 were consulted in individual subject, that qualifications reforms needed to take account of the needs of all relevant stakeholders, and that reforms should be phased in gradually over time.

⁴ 'Protected characteristic' is defined in the Equality Act 2010. Here, it means disability, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

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

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Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation

Spring Place
Coventry Business Park
Herald Avenue
Coventry CV5 6UB

2nd Floor
Glendinning House
6 Murray Street
Belfast BT1 6DN

Telephone 0300 303 3344

Textphone 0300 303 3345

Helpline 0300 303 3346