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1. About this consultation

The Department for Education (DfE) has recently made changes to the subject content for [GCSEs, AS and A levels](#) in ancient languages. These changes allow for the development of reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels in biblical Hebrew, which will be taught in schools from September 2018.

We are proposing to change our rules and guidance for reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels in ancient languages to accommodate these new qualifications, and are seeking views on those changes.

2. Our proposed approach

We are proposing to make minor changes to our rules and guidance for reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels in ancient languages, so that:

- in addition to reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels in Latin and classical Greek, they also apply to reformed qualifications in biblical Hebrew

- where our assessment objectives for GCSE refer to “ancient sources”, for biblical Hebrew this should be read in the context of the requirement in the DfE’s subject content that “specifications must not require the study of content beyond the set texts”
- where our guidance on assessment objectives for AS and A level refers to requiring “Learners to show an understanding of the wider social, cultural and historical context from a range of sources”, for biblical Hebrew this should be read in the context of the following requirements in the DfE’s subject content:
 - “social, cultural and historical contexts, and the ancient world, are as described within the set texts (not beyond)”
 - “specifications must not require the study of content beyond the set texts”

We are also proposing to make two substantive changes to our guidance for reformed ancient languages GCSEs.

The first relates to our guidance on the length of set texts. Our guidance for Latin and classical Greek sets out our expectation that the compulsory literature component of specifications in these subjects should include the study of at least 110 lines of text in the ancient language.

For biblical Hebrew, the concept of “lines” of text is not particularly meaningful, as set texts are more normally divided into verses. So we are proposing to introduce equivalent guidance for length of set texts in reformed biblical Hebrew GCSEs that is expressed in terms of the number of verses.

Based on advice from our independent subject expert, our view is that 75 verses in biblical Hebrew would be broadly equivalent to 110 lines in Latin or classical Greek. We are therefore proposing to amend our guidance as follows:

- “ We also expect the compulsory literature component to include the study of: [...] in the case of GCSE Qualifications in biblical Hebrew, at least 75 verses (numbered units of text within a biblical chapter) in the ancient language.

The second change relates to our guidance on the subject content requirement for assessments to offer an option to translate from English into the ancient language. For Latin and classical Greek, our current guidance clarifies that:

- “ A short sentence should be interpreted as meaning a single sentence consisting of a single clause (i.e. not a compound or complex sentence). Learners should be expected to translate at least 3 sentences, each of which requires the declension of one or more regular nouns and the conjugation of a regular verb in the indicative

The grammar and syntax of biblical Hebrew is very different from classical Greek and Latin – for example it does not use cases, and does not have regular and irregular nouns and adjectives. As a result, we are proposing to include the following additional guidance on translation into biblical Hebrew, which takes account of those differences and secures (as far as possible) comparability of demand across all three ancient languages.

- “ In the context of a GCSE Qualification in biblical Hebrew, a short sentence should be interpreted as meaning a single clause. Learners should be expected to translate at least 3 clauses, each of which requires the conjugation of strong verbs in at least two aspects (tenses)

3. Impact of our proposals

Our proposed changes are designed to enable the development of reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels in biblical Hebrew. They do not affect reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels in classical Greek or Latin.

Other than securing the continued availability of GCSEs, AS and A levels in biblical Hebrew, we have not identified any impacts (either on students who share protected characteristics or more widely) which would result from our proposed changes.

‘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.

4. Your views

We are seeking your views on both the way we are proposing to change our rules and guidance to reflect the new subject content for biblical Hebrew, and on the detailed drafting of those changes.

We would also welcome your views on our assessment of the likely impact of our proposals – including whether there are any additional impacts we have overlooked, and any steps we could take to mitigate such impacts.

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