



Department  
for Education

# **New programme of study for key stage 4 science**

**Government consultation report**

**December 2014**

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## Introduction

This report summarises the responses received to our recent consultation on the draft Order and Regulations that will give effect to a revised national curriculum framework document which will include the new programme of study for science at key stage 4 to be taught from September 2016.

## Background

As part of the review of the national curriculum, the Government published a national curriculum framework document on 11 September 2013 which covered the whole national curriculum except for the programmes of study for key stage 4 English, mathematics and science. The aim was to prepare the key stage 4 programmes of study for English, mathematics and science in tandem with the development of new GCSE content for these subjects. In July 2014, a revised national curriculum framework document was published which included the final programmes of study for English and mathematics for key stage 4.

Following the publication of the GCSE subject content for science in April 2014, the Department undertook a statutory consultation on the draft programme of study for key stage 4 science from 11 June 2014 to 23 July 2014. In line with the statutory procedures, the Department published a summary of the responses received to that consultation on 30 September and undertook a one-month consultation on the draft Order and regulations. We also published a revised draft of the programme of study with the latter consultation. The consultation closed on 30 October and we received 12 responses.

## Findings(summary of responses)

### Question 1

**Do you have any comments on the draft Order which is proposed to give effect to the updated 'National Curriculum in England – Framework Document', which includes the programme of study for science for key stage 4? The programme of study will be taught to year 10 pupils from September 2016 and to all key stage 4 pupils from September 2017.**

**There were 7 responses to this question.**

Four respondents expressed concern that pupils would not be allowed to critically think about and discuss aspects of science such as the theory of evolution, and consider alternative explanations such as creationism.

One respondent thought that the increased challenge within the subject content would disadvantage less able children or children with SEN.

One respondent thought the content gave broad topic descriptions with no clear indication of the depth of study expected, giving a great deal of scope for the awarding bodies to have more variation between their GCSE syllabuses. They also commented that there was now too much emphasis on 'pure science' and insufficient mention of contextualising and setting science in practical real life situations.

The remaining respondents felt it was appropriate to introduce the new programme of study in phases.

## Question 2

**Do you have any comments on the draft Regulations which are proposed to disapply the current programme of study for science for all key stage 4 pupils in school year 2015/16, and for year 11 pupil in school year 2016/17 to allow for the phasing of the new programme of study?**

**There were 7 responses, four of which responded "yes", two answered "no" and one "not sure".**

Two respondents agreed with the proposal to disapply the current programme of study with one respondent commenting that disapplication was essential to ensure a smooth transition to the new programme of study.

One respondent was concerned that disapplication could deprive children of their statutory entitlement to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, and felt that schools should be given a longer period to prepare for the implementation of the new programme of study.

One respondent reiterated concerns raised in their response to question 1 about prohibiting the teaching of creationism.

## Next steps

The Government believes that the programme of study published on 30 September is consistent with the GCSE content for combined science and that it will help to raise standards. The Order and regulations are planned to be laid in December 2014 to give effect to the new programme of study which are set out in a revised framework document. The new key stage 4 programme of study for science will be taught from September 2016, starting with year 10 pupils.

## Overview of Responses

The organisational breakdown of respondents was as follows:

Parents/Carers	4
Grandparent	1
Union	2
Teacher	1
School	1
Local Authority	1
Other/Anonymous	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>



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