

Developing New GCSEs, A Levels and AS Qualifications for First Teaching in 2016 – Parts 2 and 3

Regulatory Impact Assessment



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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Changes to assessment arrangements.....	3
Costs and cost savings of changes to assessment arrangements	4
Citizenship studies GCSE	4
Drama GCSE	4
Drama and theatre studies A level and AS qualification.....	4
Religious Studies GCSE, A level and AS qualification	4
Wider benefits of changes to assessment arrangements	5
3. Overlapping qualifications	5
Food preparation and nutrition GCSE	5

1. Introduction

GCSEs, A levels and AS qualifications are being reformed. We are introducing regulatory requirements to achieve comparability of similar qualifications' assessment arrangements across all exam boards. We regulate how these arrangements are implemented to secure standards over time.

This regulatory impact assessment considers the impact of the new assessment arrangements compared with the pre-reform arrangements for the following qualifications:

- GCSE: Citizenship studies; food preparation and nutrition; drama; and religious studies.
- A level and AS qualification: drama and theatre; and religious studies.

2. Changes to assessment arrangements

We have revised the percentage of non-exam assessment in each qualification in line with our principles that non-exam assessment should only be used when there is not a valid way of assessing through examination, and, in most circumstances, the percentage of marks that are attributed through non-exam assessment should be the same across all exam boards. Table 1 outlines the current position and the changes that we will introduce.

Table 1: Changes to the weighting of non-exam assessments

Qualification	Current weighting of non-exam assessment	Future weighting of non-exam assessment	Number of entries ¹
Citizenship studies GCSE	60%	0%	19,600
Food preparation and nutrition GCSE	N/A	50%	N/A
Drama GCSE	60–100%	60%	71,400
Drama and theatre studies AS qualification	40–100%	60%	16,500
Drama and theatre studies A level	40–70%	60%	11,900

¹ JCQ, Summer 2014 series, England only. www.jcq.org.uk/examination-results

Costs and cost savings of changes to assessment arrangements

Citizenship studies GCSE

Students will no longer complete a non-exam assessment for citizenship studies GCSE. This will mean a reduction in workload for the teachers who previously marked these assessments. However, they could feel just as busy because they may spend this extra time in helping students prepare for the exam assessment. Additionally, exam boards will also save time as they will no longer be required to develop or moderate the non-exam assessment.

Without a non-exam assessment, increased importance will be placed on the exam. Exam boards will set the length of exam papers based on their assessment strategies. Increasing the proportion of exam-based marks could mean longer exams. This would have cost implications for exam boards in both preparing longer or additional papers and marking them.

Drama GCSE

Currently, exam boards have the option to weight marks for the non-exam assessment at between 60 and 100 per cent of the total score. Despite this choice, all exam boards currently specify a weighting of 60 per cent. In future, the boards will be required to set the limit of non-exam assessment weighting to 60 per cent. Although this does not change their current assessment strategy, it will limit their future ability to increase the proportion of marks that come from the non-exam assessment.

Drama and theatre studies A level and AS qualification

Exam boards have the option to weight non-exam assessment in these qualifications at anywhere between 40 and 70 per cent. In future, we will require them to weight it at 60 per cent. There is currently some variation between the exam boards: 40 per cent in specifications developed and run by AQA and Pearson, and 50 per cent for the WJEC specification. (OCR does not currently offer these qualifications.)

For all exam boards, this will mean an increase in the proportion of marks coming from non-exam assessment. It will be for the exam boards to decide whether this will lead to a change in the length and complexity of the non-exam and/or changes to the exam elements of the assessment strategy.

Religious Studies GCSE, A level and AS qualification

There are no changes to the assessment arrangements for religious studies qualifications. Currently, assessment for religious Studies GCSE, A level and AS qualification is conducted entirely by exam. This will remain the case for the new qualifications.

Wider benefits of changes to assessment arrangements

In 2013, we set out the following principles for when a qualification should include a non-exam assessment:²

1. Non-exam assessment should only be used when it is the only valid way to assess essential elements of the subject.
2. Non-exam assessment must strike a balance between the valid assessment of essential knowledge and skills, sound assessment practice and manageability.
3. Any non-exam assessment arrangements should be designed to fit the requirements of the particular subject, including the relative weighting of written exams and other components.
4. Non-exam assessment should be designed so that the qualification is not easily distorted by external pressures.

We have applied these principles to the qualifications assessed in this impact assessment to arrive at the changes outlined above. Overall, this should ensure that qualifications are validly assessed, meaning that skills that cannot be assessed by exam are assessed through non-exam assessment. By ensuring validity, users of qualifications can be sure that the assessment measures what it purports to measure, and is clearer and more transparent.

Additionally, exam boards will be required to have the same weighting for non-exam assessment for any given qualification. This means that qualifications will be more comparable across exam boards.

3. Overlapping qualifications

Food preparation and nutrition GCSE

When the Department for Education announced the content requirements for the new food preparation and nutrition GCSE, it stated that there would no longer be a food element included within the design and technology GCSE.³ Additionally, following the adoption of our principle that qualifications should not overlap, we do not anticipate

² *Review of Controlled Assessment in GCSEs:*
www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/377903/2013-06-11-review-of-controlled-assessment-in-GCSEs.pdf

³ Department for Education, September 2014, *Reformed GCSE and A Level Subject Content Consultation* (page 6):
www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/358590/GCSE_and_A_level_consultation_document_FINAL.pdf

that home economics (food and nutrition), catering or hospitality GCSEs will be redeveloped. Table 2 illustrates the current entries.

Table 2: Entries in GCSEs that overlap with the new food preparation and nutrition GCSE⁴

GCSE subject	Entries
Design and technology (food)	50,200
Home economics of which home economics: food and nutrition	24,300 9,200
Catering	19,900
Hospitality	1,900
Hospitality and catering (double award)	800

The principal benefit of replacing these four overlapping qualifications with one food preparation and nutrition GCSE will be less confusion for users of qualifications – schools would no longer face a choice of similar qualifications with overlapping content. Employers and further and higher education establishments would also find it less confusing – students would be more likely to apply with the same qualification and knowledge.

The new qualification could mean increased costs for schools if different facilities are required. Some staff might also need extra training, although this should not be significant as the food preparation and nutrition GCSE builds on the other qualifications.

We considered whether students are currently gaining GCSEs in more than one of these overlapping subjects. The numbers of entries are set out in Table 3. The largest overlap is between Hospitality and Catering, with over 800 students taking both. This is likely to be due to a candidate taking catering and hospitality separately, as two GCSEs, rather than taking the double award in hospitality and catering.

⁴ National Pupil Database Key Stage 4, 2013 (England only).

Table 3: Number of entries in more than one of the overlapping GCSE subjects⁵

	Design and technology (food)	Home economics (food and nutrition)	Catering	Hospitality	Hospitality and catering
Design and technology (food)					
Home economics (food and nutrition)	137				
Catering	312	11			
Hospitality	81	11	864		
Hospitality and catering	20	X	50	7	

X represents less than 6

Finally, it is likely that the introduction of the new food preparation and nutrition GCSE combined with the withdrawal of the Design and Technology (Food), Home Economics, Catering and Hospitality GCSEs will impact on the exam boards' profitability, either in a positive or negative way. The impacts will be different for each exam board depending on:

- the number of overlapping subjects that they currently offer;
- the number of entries in each of these subjects;
- the cost of developing the new food preparation and nutrition GCSE;
- the number of entries for the new food preparation and nutrition GCSE;
- the difference in costs of assessing the new food preparation and nutrition GCSE compared to the cost of assessing the overlapping subjects.

An exam board that currently offers three of the overlapping subjects, but has a small number of entrants for each one, might be more profitable in the future if they have a larger number of entries for the new food preparation and nutrition GCSE (depending on development costs and costs of assessment). On the other hand, an exam board that currently has a high number of entries to one or two of the overlapping GCSEs may be worse off if they have a smaller number of entries to the new food preparation and nutrition GCSE.

Considering the aggregate impact, it is likely that withdrawing four qualifications following the introduction of the new food preparation and nutrition GCSE will have a

⁵ This table is based on the National Pupil Database Key Stage 4, 2013 (England only).

positive overall impact. There will be a reduction in costs to exam boards through eliminating the duplication of workload in developing and delivering similar subjects. There will also be positive impacts for users of qualifications. This is weighed against the additional costs that schools may face in changing facilities and retraining staff.

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