

Analysis of Responses to our Consultation on Conditions and Guidance for GCSE History



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Contents

Executive summary	2
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Who responded?	4
3. Approach to analysis	5
4. Views expressed	6
5. Equality impact analysis	10
Appendix A: List of organisational consultation respondents.....	12
Appendix B: Consultation details	13

Executive summary

This consultation about the Conditions and Guidance for GCSE history took place between 16th December 2014 and 13th January 2015.

There were 11 responses to the consultation from individuals and organisations, all in a form that matched or broadly followed the layout of the online consultation. Forty-six per cent of the responses were from individuals (all teachers) and 54 per cent were from organisations.

The consultation exercise generated a small number of responses, with some positive and some negative comments on the proposals. The key points from the consultation responses are as follows:

- There was some concern expressed on the breadth of the subject content and the impact on teacher workload.
- There were some requests for clarification on the assessment objectives but there were also supportive comments on the assessment objectives.
- There was a request for clarification on how the 5 per cent spelling, punctuation and grammar and specialist terminology should be incorporated.
- The majority of respondents did not comment on the equality impact analysis questions.

1. Introduction

Technical consultation on the Conditions and Guidance for GCSE history

This report is a summary of the views expressed by those who responded to our recent technical consultation on the Conditions and Guidance for GCSE history, which took place between 16th December 2014 and 13th January 2015.

Background

New GCSEs are being introduced in England. The primary purpose of the new qualifications will be to provide evidence of students' achievements against demanding and fulfilling content and a strong foundation for further academic and vocational study and employment. If required, the qualifications should be able to provide a basis for schools and colleges to be held accountable for the performance of all of their students.

We have consulted on and announced our policy on the general design of new GCSEs, and on our policy and technical arrangements relating to those subjects that are due to be introduced for first teaching in 2015.¹

We have taken decisions on the design of the new GCSEs in history and these are to be introduced for first teaching in 2016.

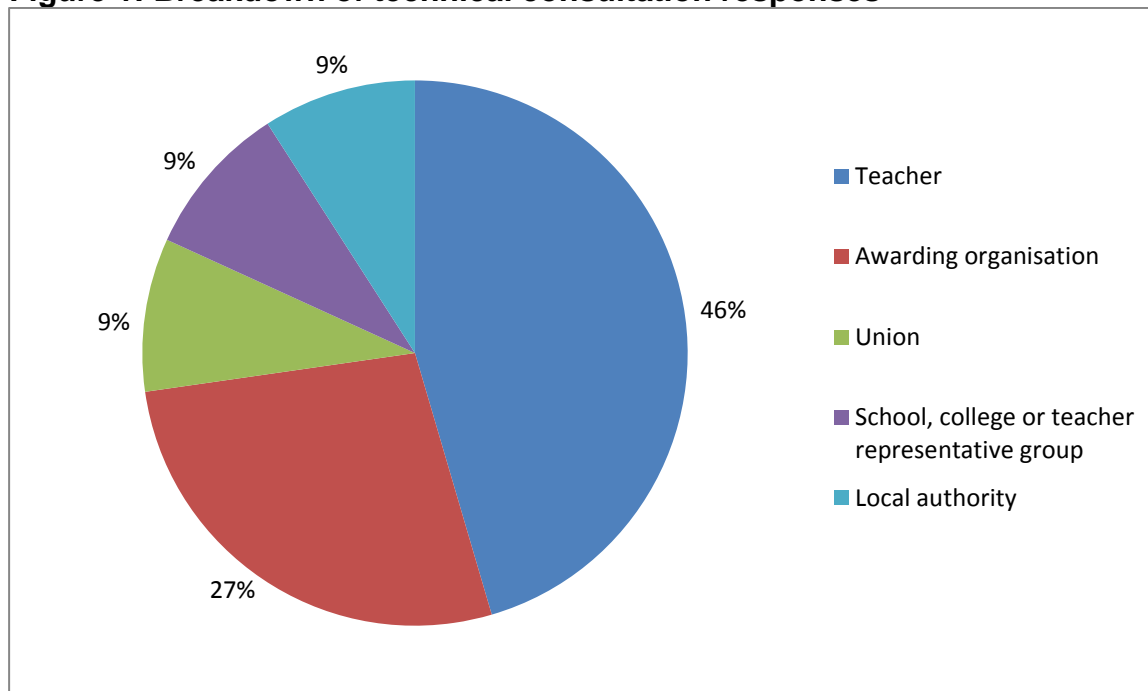
This consultation focused on more technical matters – that is, on the regulatory arrangements that we must put in place to make sure that awarding organisations design, deliver and award the new qualifications in line with our policy decisions.

¹ New GCSEs in English language, English literature and mathematics will be taught from September 2015.

2. Who responded?

We received a total of 11 responses to our consultation.² Five (46 per cent) were responding as individuals and six (54 per cent) were organisational responses. The breakdown of responses is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Breakdown of technical consultation responses



All responses received were from individuals or organisations based in England and Wales.

Table 1: Breakdown of technical consultation responses

Personal / organisation response	Respondent type	Number
Personal	Teacher	5
Organisation response	Awarding organisation	3
Organisation response	Union	1
Organisation response	School, college or teacher representative group	1
Organisation response	Local authority	1

² We entered any hard-copy responses that followed the format of the consultation into the online platform.

3. Approach to analysis

The consultation was published on our website and respondents could choose to respond using an online form. The consultation included seven questions. The questions required a yes or no response as to whether the respondent would like to comment on the issue outlined in the question. Those that responded yes were able to provide a narrative response. Respondents were also able to email or post copies of the consultation questions or provide a solely narrative response to the consultation (for example via letter).

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 seven questions, each with a different focus. Respondents could choose to answer all or just a selection of the questions.

During the analysis phase every response to each question was reviewed. The main comments were identified and then summarised.

4. Views expressed

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 and provide analysis of the data broken down by stakeholder.

A consultation is not the same as a survey and only reflects 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.

Do you have any comments on the draft Condition for new GCSE history? (Question 1)

The Department for Education previously published the new content for GCSE history.³ The draft Condition for new GCSE history states that awarding organisations must ensure compliance with the content requirements.

Nine respondents (five personal, four organisations) answered no to this question. Two organisations provided comments:

- These apply to all GCSEs therefore there is nothing specific to add for history.
- The Condition is comprehensive and supportive.

Do you have any comments on the draft Guidance on subject content for new GCSE history? (Question 2)

There are five elements specified in the GCSE history subject content document⁴. The draft Guidance on subject content is proposed to help awarding organisations understand how to interpret the requirements for a reasonable balance between these elements. The draft Guidance on subject content also provides guidance on how awarding organisations should reflect the subject content requirements on sources and interpretations.

Four respondents (three personal, one organisation) answered no to this question. The two respondents expressing personal views who answered yes to this question made the following comments:

³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-history

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-history

- Concern that five topic areas/elements is too much.
- Concern that studying several eras may become a 'tick-box' exercise and detract from the big picture.
- Concern about the 'study of the historic environment' required by the subject content document, as it sounds like a gimmick that will be dropped later.
- Teacher workload will increase to rewrite/restructure the GCSE course, particularly taking into account the changes required at Key Stage 3 to prepare for GCSE, and the impact of changes at A level.

The five organisations that answered yes to this question made the following comments:

- Recommended weightings are useful, as are the language definitions (for example what constitutes a source).
- Guidance is reasonably balanced and the minimum percentages are appropriate.
- Guidance gives clarity and focus.
- Clarification requested of the words 'coherent and substantial' which appear in the subject content document.
- Clarification requested on how the 'study of the historic environment' should be incorporated into the reformed GCSE in history.
- Clarification requested as to why the weighting for the 'study of the historic environment' is lower as this will put history into context for young people and the weighting undervalues it.
- Request that there should be flexibility in the assessment objective weightings.
- Content is appropriate and works well for Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 and the transition to Key Stage 5.

Do you have any comments on the requirements surrounding the use of spelling, punctuation and grammar and specialist terminology? (Question 3)

The consultation set out the assessment objectives and the requirements around the allocations of marks to spelling, punctuation and grammar and the use of specialist terminology in GCSE history. The consultation stated that an awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the marks used to credit the accuracy of Learners' spelling, punctuation and grammar and their use of specialist

terminology is 5 per cent of the sum of all marks for the assessment objectives AO1 to AO4.

Five respondents (three personal, two organisations) answered no to this question. The two respondents expressing personal views who answered yes to this question made the following comments:

- Support expressed for the focus on specialist terminology, and the five per cent weighting given to credit the accuracy of Learners' spelling, punctuation and grammar and their use of specialist terminology.
- Clarification requested on whether special consideration could be made for students with diagnosed learning disabilities.

The four organisations that answered yes to this question made the following comments:

- Clarification requested on how the marks used credit the accuracy of Learners' spelling, punctuation and grammar and their use of specialist terminology should be incorporated into the design of the assessment, how it will affect the assessment objective weightings and whether Ofqual will provide criteria for this or leave it to the awarding organisations to define.
- Suggestion that the weighting for historical literacy (i.e. the accuracy of Learners' spelling, punctuation and grammar and their use of specialist terminology) should be higher.
- Suggestion to replace the term 'specialist terminology' with 'historical vocabulary' to ensure that history is inclusive rather than exclusive – although this could be improved further if tiered papers were available.

Do you have any comments on the draft Guidance on assessment objectives for new GCSE history? (Question 4)

This question referred to the draft Guidance on assessment objectives which outlines how we expect awarding organisations to interpret the assessment objectives in terms of discrete 'elements' within each assessment objective, coverage expectations and key areas of emphasis in each assessment objective.

Five respondents (four personal, one organisation) answered no to this question. Six respondents (one personal, five organisations) answered yes.

Three respondents (one personal, two organisations) raised the following questions on the assessment objectives:

- Query as to why secondary sources are termed 'interpretations' within the guidance on assessment objectives.
- Concern expressed over the logic of splitting the analysis of sources across two assessment objectives. Suggestion that if it is kept within one assessment objective, the exam boards can set top-end questions using interpretations and the bulk using primary sources.
- Concern expressed that most GCSE students struggle with historiography, therefore assigning 15 per cent of the marks to this skill makes it excessively difficult.
- Request that the crossover marks for 'interpretations and definitions' for element 1b for AO1 and AO2 also apply to 1a to reward historical knowledge in both assessment objectives.
- Request for flexibility in the weightings of the assessment objectives.

Supportive comments were received from four respondents (organisations):

- Assessment objectives seem appropriate but awarding organisations will need to ensure that what is being assessed is clear and transparent to avoid confusion for teachers and students.
- Assessment objectives are realistic and appropriate.
- Assessment objectives are clear and have continuity with previous assessment objectives.
- Support for the definition of 'analyse' in AO2.

5. Equality impact analysis

We have considered the potential impact on students who share a protected characteristic⁵ of the application of the principles and features that will apply to all new GCSE, A level and AS qualifications.

We have not identified any negative impacts on students who share a protected characteristic that would result from our proposals (i) to require all assessments to be by exam, (ii) that the qualifications are untiered and (iii) for the assessment objectives. Awarding organisations are required to consider the accessibility of their qualifications at the design stage and to remove any unjustifiable barriers.

We have not identified any ways in which the proposed requirements for reformed GCSEs in history would impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any potential impacts we have not identified? (Question 5)

Nine respondents (five personal, four organisations) answered no to this question. Those that answered yes commented as follows:

- Concern that the requirement for marks to be awarded for the use of ‘specialist terminology’ will make the subject exclusive.
- There will always be representational/perspective issues that could impact some students – but individual schools should be sensitive to these and therefore this does not need to be explicitly expressed.

Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impact resulting from these proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic? If so, please comment on the additional steps we could take to mitigate negative impacts. (Question 6)

Ten respondents (five personal, five organisations) answered no to this question. One organisation repeated its concerns that specialist terminology could make the subject exclusive.

⁵ For the purposes of the public sector equality duty, the protected characteristics are disability, racial group, age, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

Have you any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic? (Question 7)

Nine respondents (four personal, five organisations) answered no to this question. One respondent (personal) did not provide a response to this question. The only comment received for this question was from an organisation that highlighted that there is a need for high-quality, relevant continuing professional development for teachers.

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.⁶ We have not included a list of those responding as an individual, however all responses were given equal status in the analysis.

ASCL (Association of School and College Leaders)

Buckinghamshire County Council

OCR

Pearson

Voice: The union for education professionals

WJEC-CBAC

⁶ We haven't included organisations that asked for their responses to be treated anonymously.

Appendix B: Consultation details

The consultation questions were available either to complete online or to download.

A copy of the consultation is available at:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/387684/gcse-history-consultation-on-conditions-and-guidance.pdf

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