

# **Analysis of Responses to our Consultation on Conditions and Guidance for GCSE, AS and A Level Music**



June 2015

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## **Executive summary**

Our consultation about the Conditions and guidance for GCSE, AS and A level music took place between 5th February 2015 and 27th February 2015.

The consultation questions were available either to complete online or to download. A copy of the consultation is available at [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-as-and-a-level-reform-regulations-for-music](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-as-and-a-level-reform-regulations-for-music).

There were nine responses to the consultation – two from individuals and seven from organisations. All responses were in a form that matched or broadly followed the layout of the online consultation.

## **1. Introduction**

This report is a summary of the views expressed by those who responded to our consultation on the Conditions and guidance for GCSE, AS and A level music which took place between 5th February 2015 and 27th February 2015.

Following earlier consultations, we have already taken decisions on:

- the general design of reformed GCSE, AS and A level qualifications;
- our policy and technical arrangements relating to those subjects that are due to be introduced for first teaching in 2015;<sup>1</sup> and
- the design of the reformed GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in music that are to be introduced for first teaching in 2016.<sup>2</sup>

This consultation focused on more technical matters – that is, on the regulatory arrangements that we must put in place to make sure that exam boards design, deliver and award the new GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in music in line with our policy decisions.

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<sup>1</sup> Reformed GCSEs in English language, English literature and mathematics will be taught from September 2015. Reformed AS and A level qualifications in art and design, biology, business, chemistry, computer science, economics, English language, English language and literature, English literature, history, physics, psychology and sociology will be taught from September 2015.

<sup>2</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016)

## **2. Who responded?**

We received a total of nine responses to our consultation.<sup>3</sup> Two responses were from individuals and seven were from organisations (see Table 1 for a more detailed breakdown). All of the responses were from individuals or organisations based in England or Wales.

**Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses**

<b>Individual / Organisation response</b>	<b>Respondent type</b>	<b>Number</b>
Individual	Teacher	2
Organisation response	Exam board	4
Organisation response	Union	2
Organisation response	Representative group	1

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<sup>3</sup> Where responses were received in hard copy we entered them into the online platform.

### **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. The consultation included nine questions.

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 of any specific group.

#### **Data presentation**

We present the responses to the consultation questions in the order in which they were asked.

The consultation asked nine questions and each had a different focus. Respondents could choose to answer all or just some of the questions.

During the analysis phase we reviewed every response to each question.

Respondents raised a number of issues, including about the assessment window, recording arrangements and the number and nature of the composition briefs provided by the exam boards. Some also requested clarification of the meaning of our proposed requirements.

## **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 and provide analysis of the data broken down by stakeholder.

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.

<b>Question 1 – Do you have any comments on the draft Conditions for new GCSE music?</b>
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Our draft Conditions stated that exam boards must ensure that they:

- comply with the Department for Education’s subject content requirements for new GCSEs in music,<sup>4</sup> and with our published assessment objectives;
- in line with our previous decisions, allocate 60 per cent of marks to non-exam assessment, with the remaining 40 per cent allocated to exams; and
- comply with any rules and guidance that we put in place around non-exam assessments (we asked a separate question about our proposed rules).

Two respondents (one individual, one organisation) did not comment on this question.

Two (both organisations) expressed support for our proposed Conditions.

Four (all organisations) commented on our draft assessment requirements. We have analysed these responses under question 2 below.

One (an individual) commented on issues outside the scope of the consultation. We have analysed these under ‘Other issues’ below.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-music](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-music)

**Question 2 – Do you have any comments on the draft requirements in relation to assessments which are not Assessments by Examination for new GCSE music?**

This question referred to our draft assessment rules, which specified the nature, structure and conduct of non-exam assessments for reformed GCSEs in music.

One respondent (an organisation) did not comment on this question.

Three (all organisations) requested clarity on the approach that exam boards should take to recording performances.

Two (both organisations) commented that our proposed window for assessment seemed unnecessarily restrictive.

Two (both organisations) commented that our proposed arrangements for composition tasks could stifle creativity.

Two (both organisations) commented that it was important that performances should be marked by teachers within schools.

Two (both organisations) expressed concerns that our proposed requirements did not take account of technological developments in music.

Two (one individual, one organisation) suggested that we should not stipulate minimum performance times.

One (an individual) commented on issues outside the scope of the consultation. We have analysed these comments under 'Other issues' below.

**Question 3 – Do you have any comments on the draft guidance on assessment objectives for new GCSE music?**

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

Two respondents (one individual, one organisation) did not comment on this question.

Five (all organisations) broadly supported our proposed guidance, but offered comments on, and suggested improvements to, the drafting.

One (an organisation) expressed support for the assessment objectives themselves.



One (an individual) commented on issues outside the scope of the consultation. We have analysed these comments under 'Other issues' below.

**Question 4 – Do you have any comments on the draft Conditions for new A level and AS music?**

Our draft Conditions stated that exam boards must ensure that they:

- comply with the Department for Education's subject content requirements for new AS and A levels in music,<sup>5</sup> and with our published assessment objectives;
- in line with our previous decisions, allocate 60 per cent of marks to non-exam assessment, with the remaining 40 per cent allocated to exams; and
- comply with any rules and guidance that we put in place around non-exam assessments (we asked a separate question about our proposed rules).

Four respondents (two individuals, two organisations) did not comment on this question.

Three (all organisations) expressed broad support for our proposed Conditions.

One (an organisation) commented on issues outside the scope of the consultation. We have analysed these comments under 'Other issues' below.

**Question 5 – Do you have any comments on the draft requirements in relation to assessments which are not Assessments by Examination for new A level and AS music?**

This question referred to our draft assessment rules, which specified the nature, structure and conduct of non-exam assessments for reformed AS and A level qualifications in music.

Three respondents (two individuals, one organisation) did not comment on this question.

Two (both organisations) commented that our proposed window for assessment seemed unnecessarily restrictive.

Two (both organisations) commented that our proposed arrangements for composition tasks could stifle creativity.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-music](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-music)

Two (both organisations) requested clarity on the approach that exam boards should take to recording performances.

One (an organisation) suggested that we should not stipulate minimum performance times.

**Question 6 – Do you have any comments on the draft guidance on assessment objectives for new A level and AS music?**

This question referred to the draft guidance on assessment objectives which outlines how we expect exam boards to interpret the assessment objectives in terms of discrete ‘strands’ and ‘elements’ within each assessment objective, coverage expectations and key areas of emphasis in each assessment objective.

Two respondents (one individual, one organisation) did not comment on this question.

Five (all organisations) broadly supported our proposed guidance, but offered comments on, and suggested improvements to, the drafting.

One (an organisation) expressed support for the assessment objectives themselves.

One (an individual) commented on issues outside the scope of the consultation. We have analysed these comments under ‘Other issues’ below.

**Question 7 – We have not identified any ways in which the proposed requirements for reformed GCSEs and GCEs in music would impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any potential impacts we have not identified? If so what are they?**

Five respondents (two individuals, three organisations) did not comment on this question.

Two (both organisations) commented on issues outside the scope of the consultation. We have analysed these comments under ‘Other issues’ below.

One (an organisation) suggested that using video recordings of performances could impact on students with some protected characteristics.

One respondent (an organisation) also commented that requiring exam boards to offer only a single brief for composition assessments could impact on students with protected characteristics. For clarity, our rules do not require exam boards to offer only a single brief. Rather, they give exam boards flexibility to choose the appropriate number of briefs. Potential impact on students with protected characteristics is one of

the factors that exam boards must take into account when deciding on the appropriate number of briefs.

**Question 8 – 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.**

Seven respondents (two individuals, five organisations) did not comment on this question.

One (an organisation) suggested that exam boards should be required to offer at least two briefs for composition assessments.

One (an organisation) suggested we should carefully consider the requirement to video record assessments.

**Question 9 – Have you any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?**

Eight respondents (two individuals, six organisations) did not comment on this question.

The remaining respondent commented on issues outside the scope of the consultation. We have analysed these comments under 'Other issues' below.

### **Other issues**

Respondents commented on two main issues that were outside the scope of the consultation. These were subject content for GCSE, AS and A level music, and the weighting of non-exam assessment within these qualifications.

The Department of Education has already carried out its own consultation<sup>6</sup> on the subject content.

We have already considered the issue of weighting of non-exam assessment, when taking decisions following an earlier consultation.<sup>7</sup> None of the responses to this consultation raised any new issues that would cause us to revisit our earlier decisions.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/news/high-quality-and-more-rigorous-arts-based-gcses-and-a-levels](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/high-quality-and-more-rigorous-arts-based-gcses-and-a-levels)

<sup>7</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016)

Two respondents also commented that because exams will require students to listen to music, students with hearing impairments would be unable to access part of the assessment. For clarity, nothing in our rules requires exam boards to use listening tasks as part of the exam. In fact, they require exam boards to consider carefully how particular assessment designs could impact on students with disabilities, and to take appropriate steps to ensure that those students are not unfairly disadvantaged.

Finally, one respondent commented that the content and structure of GCSE, AS and A level music qualifications could confer an unfair advantage on students from households with higher levels of disposable income. For clarity, this is not defined as a protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010, and is therefore not something that we must have regard to when discharging our Public Sector Equality Duty.

## **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

Buckinghamshire County Council

Voice

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