

# AS and A Level Geography: Decisions on Conditions and Guidance



In February 2015 we published a consultation about the rules and guidance we proposed to put in place for reformed AS and A level qualifications in geography.

This consultation set out draft Subject Level Conditions and guidance that would apply to reformed AS and A level qualifications in geography.

We have reviewed the responses to the consultation and are now announcing our decisions. We are also publishing a more detailed analysis of the responses alongside this document.<sup>1</sup>

## Conditions and requirements for AS and A level geography

### Content requirements

We proposed that all reformed AS and A level qualifications in geography should comply with the subject content requirements published by the Department for Education,<sup>2</sup> and with our assessment objectives.

Most respondents did not comment directly on this proposal. Those who did supported our proposed approach.

This is the same proposal that we have taken for all other reformed AS and A level qualifications, and we see no reason to take a different approach here. We have therefore decided to confirm our consultation proposals.

### Assessment requirements

We proposed to introduce a Condition and requirements setting out the approach that exam boards should take to non-exam assessment for A level geography.

Respondents generally supported our proposed approach – with one important exception. Almost two-thirds of respondents raised concerns with our proposal that

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<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/as-and-a-level-reform-regulations-for-geography](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/as-and-a-level-reform-regulations-for-geography)

<sup>2</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-geography](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-geography)

exam boards should mark the non-exam assessment. Respondents suggested that internal marking by teachers (moderated by exam boards) would be more valid and reliable than external marking.

We recognise the concerns raised here. Our view is that the arguments are finely balanced – and that both internal and external marking have their strengths and weaknesses. We have decided that we will not require exam boards to take any particular approach to the marking of the non-exam assessment at A level. Both external marking and internal marking (with moderation by exam boards) will be permitted. Whichever approach they choose, exam boards must justify it in their assessment strategy, and explain how they will manage the particular risks to validity and reliability associated with that approach.

### **Fieldwork statements**

The subject content requires students to undertake fieldwork (two days at AS, four days at A level). To support this, we proposed to introduce a Condition that required exam boards to collect annual statements from schools confirming that students entered for exams that year had completed the required fieldwork. We also proposed that exam boards should treat any failure to provide an accurate statement as malpractice and/or maladministration.

Respondents' comments focused on the subject content requirements themselves, rather than the requirement for exam boards to collect a statement from schools. The Department for Education has already considered these issues, when taking decisions following its earlier consultation on the subject content.<sup>3</sup>

Given the importance of fieldwork to AS and A level geography, we remain of the view that exam boards should seek assurances from schools about the fieldwork that their students have done. We have therefore decided to confirm our consultation proposals in this area.

## **Guidance for AS and A level geography**

### **Guidance on assessment objectives**

We proposed to introduce guidance clarifying the interpretation of our assessment objectives.

Respondents did not comment on our proposals. We remain of the view that our proposed guidance will help ensure that exam boards interpret our assessment

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<sup>3</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/news/decisions-following-consultation-on-as-and-a-level-subjects](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/decisions-following-consultation-on-as-and-a-level-subjects)

objectives consistently. We have therefore decided to confirm our consultation proposals.

## **Other issues**

Some respondents reiterated concerns they had raised in response to earlier consultations<sup>4</sup> around the decoupling of AS and A level. We have already taken this decision following our earlier consultations, and responses here do not raise any new issues that cause us to revisit our decision.

## **Next steps**

Alongside this document, we have published final Subject Level Conditions<sup>5</sup> and Subject Level Guidance<sup>6</sup> for AS and A level geography.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141110161323/http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/a-level-regulatory-requirements-october-2013> and [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)

<sup>5</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-subject-level-conditions-and-requirements-for-geography](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-subject-level-conditions-and-requirements-for-geography)

<sup>6</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-subject-level-guidance-for-geography](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-subject-level-guidance-for-geography)