

Analysis of Responses to our Consultation on Conditions and Guidance for GCSE, AS and A Level Physical Education



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Executive summary

Our consultation about the Conditions and guidance for GCSE, AS and A level physical education took place between 17th March 2015 and 12th April 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-physical-education.

There were 19 responses to the consultation – 11 from individuals and eight from organisations. All responses were in a form that matched or broadly followed the layout of the online consultation.

Most respondents did not comment directly on our proposals, but focused instead on issues that were outside the scope of our consultation. In particular, respondents raised concerns about the nature and focus of the subject content, the range of permitted sports and activities, and the balance between exams and non-exam assessment. Each of these issues was addressed either in our earlier consultation on assessment arrangements,¹ or in the Department for Education’s consultation on the subject content.²

Where respondents did comment on our proposals, they were largely supportive – with the exception of concerns about our proposed approach to the use of video recording of students’ performances.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016

² www.gov.uk/government/news/high-quality-and-more-rigorous-arts-based-gcses-and-a-levels

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 physical education which took place between 5th February 2015 and 6th March 2015.

Background

Reformed GCSE, AS and A level qualifications are being introduced in England.

Following earlier consultations, we have already taken decisions on:

- the general design of reformed qualifications;
- our policy and technical arrangements relating to those subjects that are due to be introduced for first teaching in 2015;³ and
- the design of the reformed GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in physical education that are to be introduced for first teaching in 2016.⁴

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 physical education in line with our policy decisions.

³ Reformed GCSEs in English language, English literature and mathematics will be taught from September 2015.

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016

2. Who responded?

We received a total of 19 responses to our consultation.⁵ Eleven responses were from individuals and eight were from organisations. All of the responses were from individuals or organisations based in England or Wales.

Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses

Personal / Organisation response	Respondent type	Number
Personal	Teacher	9
Personal	Educational specialist	2
Organisation response	Exam board	4
Organisation response	Union	2
Organisation response	Charity	1
Organisation response	School / College	1

⁵ 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 11 questions.

This was a consultation on the views of those who wished to participate and while we tried 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 11 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.

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.

Question 1 – Do you have any comments on the draft Conditions for new physical education GCSEs?
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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 physical education,⁶ and with our published assessment objectives;
- in line with our previous decisions, allocate 40 per cent of marks to non-exam assessment, with the remaining 60 per cent allocated to exams; and
- comply with any rules and guidance we put in place around assessments (we asked a separate question about our proposed assessment rules).

Ten respondents (five individuals and five organisations) did not comment on this question.

Of the nine respondents who did comment, none commented directly on our proposals.

Seven (six individuals, one organisation) commented on the increased weighting of theoretical content compared to existing GCSEs, or on the more restricted range of sports and activities that will be permitted in reformed GCSEs. We have analysed these comments under ‘Other issues’ below.

⁶ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-physical-education

Two (both organisations) commented on our proposed assessment rules. We have analysed these comments under question 2 below.

Question 2 – Do you have any comments on the draft assessment requirements for new physical education GCSEs?

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

Five respondents (four individuals, one organisation) did not comment on this question.

Seven respondents commented directly on our proposals:

- Four (two individuals, two organisations) raised concerns about our proposed approach to the use of video evidence.
- Two (both organisations) suggested that it was unclear how the performance analysis assessment should be set and marked.
- One (an organisation) welcomed the flexibility provided by the non-exam assessment arrangements, and commented that they should result in a broad and balanced curriculum offer.

The remaining seven respondents (five individuals, two organisations) commented on the increased weighting of theoretical content compared to existing GCSEs, or on the more restricted range of sports and activities that will be permitted in reformed GCSEs. We have analysed these comments under 'Other issues' below.

Question 3 – Do you have any comments on our proposed change to the assessment objectives for new physical education GCSEs?

This question referred to a minor change in the wording to broaden the performances that students could analyse.

Eleven respondents (eight individuals, three organisations) did not comment on this question.

Four (all organisations) commented directly on our proposals, with three supporting our proposals, and one suggesting we should retain wording that required students to 'identify areas of improvement'.

Three (all individuals) commented on the increased weighting of theoretical content compared to existing GCSEs. We have analysed these comments under 'Other issues' below.

One (an organisation) commented on our proposed guidance on assessment objectives. We have analysed these comments under question 4 below.

Question 4 – Do you have any comments on the draft guidance on assessment objectives for new physical education GCSEs?

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.

Fourteen respondents (all 11 individuals, three organisations) did not comment on this question.

Two (both organisations) sought more clarity on our approach to limiting questions that target recall of knowledge.

One (an organisation) suggested that we should specify weightings for the different strands within assessment objectives.

One (an organisation) suggested that the guidance should refer to physical education, not just physical activity and sport.

One (an organisation) commented that the guidance was helpful.

Question 5 – Do you have any comments on the draft Conditions for new physical education A levels and AS qualifications?

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 physical education,⁷ and with our published assessment objectives;
- in line with our previous decisions, allocate 30 per cent of marks to non-exam assessment, with the remaining 70 per cent allocated to exams; and

⁷ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-physical-education

- comply with any rules and guidance we put in place around assessments (we asked a separate question about our proposed assessment rules).

Fifteen respondents (all 11 individuals, four organisations) did not comment on this question.

Of the four respondents who did comment, none commented directly on our proposals.

Two (both organisations) commented on our proposed assessment rules. We have analysed these comments under question 6 below.

One (an organisation) commented on the demand of the subject content and the reduction in non-exam assessment compared to current qualifications. We have analysed these comments under 'Other issues' below.

One (an organisation) suggested that there should be a period of stability for the qualification, and suggested that any changes to our assessment rules should be kept to a minimum.

Question 6 – Do you have any comments on the draft assessment requirements for new physical education A levels and AS qualifications?
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This question referred to our draft assessment rules, which specified the nature, structure and conduct of non-exam assessments for reformed GCSEs in physical education.

Thirteen respondents (all 11 individuals, two organisations) did not comment on this question.

Of the respondents who did comment, five commented directly on our proposals:

- Four (all organisations) raised concerns about our proposed approach to the use of video evidence.
- Two (both organisations) suggested that it was unclear how the performance analysis assessment should be marked.
- One (an organisation) welcomed the non-exam assessment arrangements, but suggested that there should be an option for students to perform two sports and analyse/evaluate performance in a third.

One further respondent (an organisation) commented that a greater proportion of marks should be allocated to non-exam assessment. We have analysed these comments under 'Other issues' below.

Question 7 – Do you have any comments on our proposed change to the assessment objectives for new physical education A levels and AS qualifications?

This question referred to a minor change in the wording to broaden the performances that students could analyse.

Thirteen respondents (ten individuals, three organisations) did not comment on this question.

Of the respondents who did comment, four (all organisations) commented directly on our proposals, with three supporting our proposals and one suggesting that we should retain wording that required students to 'identify areas of improvement'.

One (an individual) commented on the relative weightings of practical and theoretical content. We have analysed these comments under 'Other issues' below.

One (an organisation) commented on our proposed guidance on assessment objectives. We have analysed these comments under question 4 below.

Question 8 – Do you have any comments on the draft guidance on assessment objectives for new physical education A levels and AS qualifications?

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.

Thirteen respondents (all 11 individuals, two organisations) did not comment on this question.

Of the respondents who did comment, four commented directly on our proposals:

- Two (both organisations) sought more clarity on our approach to limiting questions that target recall of knowledge.
- One (an organisation) suggested that we should specify weightings for the different strands within assessment objectives.
- One (an organisation) commented that the guidance was helpful.

Of the remaining respondents, one (an organisation) commented on the relative weightings of practical and theoretical content. We have analysed these comments under 'Other issues' below.

One (an organisation) commented on our proposed changes to assessment objectives. We have analysed these comments under question 7 above.

Question 9 – We have not identified any ways in which the proposed requirements for new physical education GCSEs, A levels and AS qualifications would impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any potential impacts we have not identified?

Fifteen respondents (nineteen individuals, six organisations) did not comment on this question.

Two (one individual, one organisation) commented that the impact on students with protected characteristics would depend on the design of assessments – and on how well grading criteria for individual activities took account of the scope for students with and without disabilities to participate in that activity.

One (an organisation) commented that the reduction in non-exam assessment (compared with existing qualifications) and the move to terminal examinations could disadvantage candidates with certain disabilities. We considered these issues when taking our decisions on assessment arrangements following our earlier consultation.⁸

One suggested that the reduction in non-exam assessment at GCSE could impact on teaching at Key Stage 3. We have analysed this response under ‘Other issues’ below.

Question 10 – Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impact resulting from these proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?

Sixteen respondents (ten individuals, six organisations) did not comment on this question.

The three respondents who did comment all suggested different ways in which impacts could be mitigated:

- allowing schools to apply for special consideration;
- retaining a higher weighting for practical skills;

⁸ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016

- allowing candidates to sit modular assessments, or terminal assessments at different times of the year; and
- allowing schools to suggest alternative activities to suit particular candidates' disabilities.

Question 11 – Have you any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?

Seventeen respondents (all 11 individuals, six organisations) did not comment on this question.

One (an organisation) suggested that there was a need to ensure that schools can provide high-quality resources and continuing professional development for teachers.

One (an organisation) suggested that Ofqual should consider reinstating a short-course GCSE in physical education as it was a popular option for special schools. For clarity, our proposed rules do not prevent exam boards from developing short-course GCSEs in physical education.

Other issues

Throughout their responses, respondents commented on four key issues that were outside the scope of this consultation:

- the nature and level of demand of the subject content;
- the range of sports and activities that students can participate in;
- the balance between theoretical and practical skills in the subject content; and
- the weighting of non-exam assessment.

Issues relating to the subject content – including the permitted list of sports/activities and the balance between theoretical and practical content – are a matter for the Department for Education, which has carried out its own consultation prior to taking decisions on the subject content.⁹

We have already considered concerns about the relative weightings of exams and non-exam assessment in response to our earlier consultation.¹⁰ Our view remains

⁹ www.gov.uk/government/news/high-quality-and-more-rigorous-arts-based-gcses-and-a-levels

¹⁰ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcses-as-and-a-levels-reform-of-subjects-for-september-2016

that our chosen non-exam assessment weightings best reflect both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject content.

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

OCR

Pearson

The Youth Sport Trust

Voice

WJEC-CBAC

Woodhey High School, Ramsbottom

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