

Analysis of Responses to our Consultation on Conditions and Guidance for AS and A Level Philosophy



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Executive Summary

Our consultation about the Conditions and guidance for AS/A level philosophy took place between 17th December 2015 and 20th January 2016. The consultation questions were available to either complete online or to download. A copy of the consultation is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/as-and-a-level-reform-regulations-for-philosophy>.

There were six responses to the consultation – four from individuals and two from organisations.

One individual commented only on the subject content for AS and A level philosophy, which was out of scope for this consultation.

One of the organisations did not comment directly on our proposals, but instead provided general comments on the process for reform of GCSEs, AS and A levels.

Respondents broadly supported our approach, and our proposed conditions and guidance. One respondent (an organisation) suggested changes to our proposed guidance on assessment objectives, to ensure the guidance did not narrow the coverage of subject content.

1. Introduction

The consultation on the Conditions and guidance for AS/A level philosophy

This report is a summary of the views expressed by those who responded to our consultation on the Conditions and guidance for AS/A level philosophy which took place between 17th December 2015 and 20th January 2016.

Background

New GCSE, AS and A level qualifications are being introduced in England. We have consulted on and announced our policy on the general design of these new qualifications. We have also set out our policy and technical arrangements for the subjects where first courses began in September 2015,¹ and for the subjects which will be introduced for first teaching from September 2016.²

Following an earlier consultation,³ we took decisions on the design of the new AS/A level in philosophy that is to be introduced for first teaching from September 2017.

This consultation focused on the regulatory arrangements that we must put in place to make sure that awarding organisations design, deliver and award the new AS/A level philosophy in line with our policy decisions.

¹ New GCSEs in English language, English literature and mathematics, as well as new AS and A levels in art and design, biology, business, chemistry, computer science, economics, English language, English language and literature, English Literature, history, physics, psychology and sociology.

² New GCSEs in art and design, biology, chemistry, citizenship studies, classical Greek, combined science, computer science, dance, drama, food preparation and nutrition, French, geography, German, history, Latin, music, physical education, physics, religious studies and Spanish. New AS and A levels in classical Greek, dance, drama and theatre, French, geography, German, Latin, music, physical education, religious studies and Spanish.

³ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/development-of-new-gcses-and-a-levels-for-teaching-from-2017

2. Who responded?

We received a total of six responses to our consultation – four from individuals and two from organisations. All of the responses were from individuals or organisations based in England.

Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses

Personal / organisation response	Respondent type	Number
Personal	Teacher, responding in an individual capacity	4
Organisation	Awarding organisation	1
Organisation	Union	1

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 seven 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 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 and each had a different focus. Respondents could choose to answer all or just some of the questions.

For some of the questions, respondents could indicate the extent to which they agreed with our proposals, using a 5-point scale (Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree and Strongly disagree), as well as providing free-text comments on our proposals.

For these questions, we set out respondents' views using the 5-point scale. Where respondents provided further comments, we present these separately.

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.

There were six responses to our consultation; two from organisations, and four personal responses from teachers.

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.

Our approach to regulating AS/A level Philosophy

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should introduce a Condition which requires exam boards to comply with the relevant subject content and assessment objectives?

One respondent (an organisation) strongly agreed, two respondents (both individuals) agreed, and one (an individual) neither agreed nor disagreed with this question. Two respondents did not answer this question.

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should introduce guidance which clarifies how exam boards should interpret our assessment objectives?

Three respondents (one organisation, two individuals) agreed, and one respondent (an individual) strongly agreed that we should introduce guidance which clarifies how exam boards should interpret our assessment objectives. Two respondents did not answer this question.

Our proposed Conditions and guidance

Question 3: Do you have any comments on our proposed Conditions and requirements for AS and A level philosophy?

One respondent (an individual) answered this question, but their comments were out of scope for this consultation, and are set out in the 'other issues' section below.

Question 4: Do you have any comments on our proposed guidance for AS and A level philosophy?

One respondent (an organisation) provided comments on our proposed guidance, expressing concern that the wording of Ofqual's proposed guidance misaligned with the subject content, and potentially misrepresented the subject content requirements. The respondent suggested changes to our proposed guidance to ensure full alignment with the subject content.

Equality Impact Assessment

Question 5: We have not identified any ways in which the proposals for AS and A level philosophy would impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any potential impacts we have not identified?

One respondent (an individual) remarked that the performance of BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) students ought to be reviewed 'to check that the qualification does not impact on them negatively'. The respondent did not provide details on how the qualification might impact BME students negatively.

Two respondents answered 'No', and three respondents did not answer this question.

Question 6: Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impact resulting from these proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?

Two respondents (both individuals) answered 'Yes' to this question. The first respondent commented that the length of the assessment stood to disadvantage learners with learning disabilities, and suggested that they should be broken into smaller assessments to make them comparable to other AS/A level qualifications. The second respondent expressed the view that provision should be made for a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Two respondents answered 'No', and two did not answer this question.

Question 7: Do you have any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on students who share a protected characteristic?

Four respondents answered 'No' to this question. Two respondents did not answer this question.

Other issues

One respondent (an individual) made comments relating to the subject content requirements and suggested changes to the content for AS and A Level. The Department for Education determined subject content for AS and A level philosophy

in December 2015,⁴ following its own consultation process, and this issue was out of scope for this consultation.

One respondent (an organisation) did not comment directly on our proposals. Instead they noted that it was important that relevant subject associations were consulted on individual subjects, that qualification reforms needed to take account of the needs of all relevant stakeholders, and that reforms should be phased in gradually over time.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-philosophy>

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

Association of School and College Lecturers (ASCL)

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