



Department
for Education

GCSE, AS and A level subject content: equality analysis

February 2016

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1. Introduction

This document assesses the equalities impact of new subject content for GCSEs in ancient history, classical civilisation, electronics, film studies, media studies and statistics and for AS and A levels in accounting, ancient history, archaeology, classical civilisation, electronics, film studies, law and media studies. Impact is assessed by reference to the protected characteristics of pupils or students. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Secretary of State, when exercising functions, to have due regard to the need:

- to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The relevant protected characteristics are disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Age is not a relevant protected characteristic in relation to pupils in schools.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN), pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM), pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), and looked after children are not groups covered specifically by the Equality Act (although pupils within those groups may otherwise share a protected characteristic), but have been included in this analysis wherever possible. This is because those groups can be over-represented among low attaining pupils and we are keen to ensure the difficulties they face are not unnecessarily compounded by qualification reforms. They have not been included as a proxy for groups with protected characteristics.

2. Engagement and involvement

In developing the new subject content, we asked awarding organisations to work with subject experts to establish what changes were needed to make sure the new qualifications are robust and rigorous. Subject experts included: AAT, Arts Council England, British Academy, British Film Institute, Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, Creative Industries Council, Design Council, Royal Academy of Engineering, Royal Archaeological Institute and the Royal Statistical Society. The consultation proposals incorporated their suggestions for the new GCSEs in ancient history, classical civilisation, electronics, film studies, media studies, statistics and new AS and A levels in accounting, ancient history, archaeology, classical civilisation, electronics, law, and media studies.

The public consultation opened on 10 September 2015 and closed on 5 November 2015. We received 179¹ responses from a range of stakeholders, including schools, higher education institutions and awarding organisations. The consultation response document published on the consultation website outlines how the views of the consultation respondents have been considered.

¹ This number includes responses on draft content for AS/A level statistics. Analysis on this subject has not been included below, however, as further work was needed to address the issues raised by respondents in the consultation. The equalities analysis and the Government's response to consultation findings for this subject will be published later in the year.

3. Description of the policy

The government is reforming GCSEs and A levels to ensure that they prepare students better for further and higher education, and employment. GCSEs are being reformed so that they set expectations which match those of the highest performing countries, with rigorous assessment that provides a reliable measure of students' achievement.

Reformed GCSEs will be respected qualifications in which students, employers and further and higher education institutions can have full confidence. They will provide students with more fulfilling and demanding courses of study. GCSEs will continue to be universal qualifications, entered by the same proportion of students as currently.

The new A levels will be linear qualifications that make sure students develop the knowledge and skills needed for progression to undergraduate study.

Reforms to these qualifications are already underway. GCSE subject content in English literature, English language and mathematics was published in November 2013, and the new qualifications are being taught from September 2015. GCSE subject content in ancient languages, geography, history, modern foreign languages, biology, chemistry and physics was published in April 2014. GCSE subject content in art and design, computer science, dance, music and physical education was published January 2015. GCSE subject content in citizenship studies, religious studies, food preparation and nutrition, and drama was published in February 2015. These new qualifications will be taught from September 2016. GCSE subject content in design and technology GCSE was published in November 2015 and will be first taught from 2017. Subject content for GCSEs in astronomy, business, economics, engineering, geology, and psychology was published in December 2015 and will be first taught from 2017.

At AS and A level, subject content in art and design, biology, business, chemistry, computer science, economics, English language, English literature, English language and literature, history, physics, psychology, and sociology was published in April 2014. These new qualifications are being taught from September 2015. AS and A level subject content in modern foreign languages, ancient languages, geography, dance, music and physical education was published in January 2015. AS and A level subject content in drama and religious studies was published in February 2015. These new qualifications will be taught from September 2016. AS and A level subject content in mathematics and further mathematics was published in December 2015 and will be first taught from 2017. As and A level subject in design and technology, environmental science, history of art, music technology, and philosophy was published in December 2015 and will be first taught from 2017.

We are currently considering consultation responses on geology AS and A level, politics AS and A level and physical education short course GCSE, also for first teaching in 2017.

GCSE, AS and A level reforms are not being introduced in isolation. Reforms across the education system will benefit all pupils and lead to improvements in teaching so that pupil performance will rise to meet the new higher standard. Many policies, for example the introduction of the Pupil Premium, SEN reforms, and the expansion of the academies programme, have a particular focus on those pupils currently left behind. A summary of DfE's programmes to support teaching for pupils with SEN is set out at the annex.

4. Evidence base

Our analysis of the potential impact of the proposed GCSEs in ancient history, classical civilisation, electronics, film studies, media studies and statistics and for AS and A levels in accounting, ancient history, archaeology, classical civilisation, electronics, film studies, law, and media studies has been informed by:

- i. discussions with employers, stakeholders, subject associations and awarding organisations
- ii. a review of relevant literature, as referenced throughout the equality impact assessment
- iii. responses to the following questions in our recent subject content consultation:
 - Do you think that any of the proposals have the potential to have a disproportionate impact, positive or negative, on specific students, in particular those with 'relevant protected characteristics'? (The relevant protected characteristics are disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.) Please provide evidence to support your response
 - How could any adverse impact be reduced and how could the subject content of GCSEs and/or A levels be altered to better advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it? Please provide evidence to support your response

The analysis relates to the protected characteristics and other equalities issues referenced in the above evidence base. Where a protected characteristic was not mentioned by respondents, no impact has been identified by reference to that characteristic. However, we have considered the impact on all protected characteristics in the round. This analysis relates to the subject content for the qualifications listed above. Equalities issues relating to assessment of these subjects will be covered in a separate document from Ofqual.

5. Evidence review

The following summary of evidence draws on evidence in relevant literature, responses to the public consultation on the GCSE, AS and A level content, and views expressed by stakeholders in developing subject content.

In total, 109 respondents to the public consultation answered the question about potential disproportionate impact on students with relevant protected characteristics (from 179 respondents to the overall consultation). 61 stated that it would have a negative impact on those students with one or more protected characteristics. 28 said there would not be a disproportionate impact. 19 respondents were not sure if it would have a disproportionate impact.

In the sections which follow, we have considered those concerns which have been raised by respondents to the consultation alongside other issues which we have identified through our own consideration of the relevant issues. In all cases our consideration of the issues has been informed by previous work with stakeholders in developing subject content and the relevant literature.

5.1 Increased demand across all GCSEs

Some respondents to the consultation responded that the draft content for some reformed GCSEs contains greater demand than the current criteria.

Impact

The government consulted on reforming key stage 4 qualifications in 2012 and published its response and its equality impact assessment on decisions early in 2013. The response stated that: reformed GCSEs should remain universal qualifications, accessible, with good teaching, to the same proportion of students as currently sit GCSE exams at the end of key stage 4. It also stated that at the level of what is widely considered to be a pass (currently indicated by a grade C) there must be an increase in demand to reflect that of high-performing jurisdictions. At the top end, the new qualification should prepare students properly to progress to A levels or other study. This should be achieved through more challenging subject content and more rigorous assessment structures.

This subject content was developed in the context of these decisions.

In relation to the concerns about GCSEs, DfE considered the evidence it had gathered during its September 2012 consultation on reforming key stage 4 qualifications, which indicated that a culture of high expectations is one of several consistent factors essential to high student attainment and good progress. The evidence suggested that, with the right teaching, all students will benefit from those higher expectations.

A discussion of this evidence can be found in the equality impact assessment we published in March 2013². Our review of research indicated that the following factors are shown to have the greatest impact on preventing and responding to low student attainment:

- effective teaching
- a culture of high expectations
- understanding and meeting the needs of all students
- engaging and relevant curriculum
- initial assessments and on-going monitoring
- effective transition
- appropriate infrastructure
- accountability at all levels

² [GCSE Reform Equality Analysis, DfE, March 2013](#)

Andreas Schleicher, the Director for Education and Skills at the OECD, has said that a common factor in high-performing systems is “the belief in the possibilities for all children to achieve” and there is evidence that suggests that, with the right teaching, students will benefit from those higher expectations.³

The intention of reform is to ensure parity of quality and challenge across all subjects. We wish to ensure that students studying GCSEs ancient history, classical civilisation, electronics, film studies, media studies and statistics will achieve a qualification whose value is recognised alongside other GCSEs, and which prepares them for further study or employment.

Conclusion

Our review of evidence indicates that a culture of high expectations is one of several consistent factors essential to high student attainment and good progress for all students, and particularly in responding to low student attainment. For this reason GCSE reform is specifically intended to raise the demand for all students, both more and less academically able. We feel the increased challenge is justified by the benefits we expect it to deliver in the form of higher attainment and better preparation for further study or employment.

We acknowledge that the increased demand may have a greater impact on some students who have protected characteristics which can make aspects of academic curricula more challenging; for example, pupils with dyslexia or those from other national backgrounds for whom English is not their first language. This may also have a variable impact on students of different racial groups, as some are over-represented in the English as an additional language and wider ‘disadvantaged’ category. However, we believe appropriate provision can, and should, be made to mitigate and support pupils with any additional challenge arising from increased demand, in order to enable those pupils to benefit from greater equality of opportunity that will come from attaining higher standards.

Appropriate provision includes good quality teaching and support to students experiencing difficulties, such as those with special educational needs or English as an additional language. The quality of SEN teaching is central to ensuring pupils with SEN are given the best possible opportunities to achieve results in any of the GCSEs, AS and A levels considered here. A summary of DfE’s programmes to support good teaching for pupils with SEN is set out at the annex.

³ [Ofsted \(2009\) Twelve outstanding secondary schools: Excelling against the odds](#), OECD (2010) PISA 2009 Results: [What Makes A School Successful](#)

Means of mitigation also include the Pupil Premium, which is additional funding given to publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and close the gap between them and their peers. This funding is awarded per eligible pupil. It is not ring-fenced and can be used to help support pupils in whatever way their disadvantage impacts on their ability to access, engage with, or succeed in programmes of study.

Further means of mitigation are already embedded in legislation or guidance, such as the Joint Council for Qualification's (JCQ) reasonable adjustments for candidates with disabilities or learning difficulties, which allow for exemptions where pupils are unable to participate in aspects of the course content.

Overall, DfE believes that all pupils will benefit from the higher aspirations, attainment outcomes and strong reputation expected of reformed GCSEs. It is of no benefit to any student to pass a qualification that does not provide evidence – for employers or others – of their competence and knowledge in key areas that are essential to progression.

There is no identified foreseen impact of increased demand in GCSE subjects on protected characteristics of: sex (unless where explicitly referred to), gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief or sexual orientation.

5.2 Increased mathematical content

The draft content for reformed GCSEs in electronics, statistics, and AS and A levels in accounting and electronics contain greater mathematical content/knowledge that specifications must cover.

Impact

Some respondents to the consultation commented that this content would have an impact on students of different sexes.

Research has found that girls can lack self-belief and confidence in their abilities in STEM subjects relative to boys, particularly in maths and sciences (evidence from the Targeted Initiative on Science and Mathematics Education (TISME) (2013)). The values and practices of schools can also have a powerful influence on girls' decisions to study STEM subjects, as indicated by a 2012 report by the Institute of Physics (IOP).

Through our wider research we found that past research on maths performance highlighted a traditional performance gap in favour of boys (Mullis et al, 2004). However, internationally, in the past four decades the gender gap has narrowed or even reversed (Robinson and Lubinski, 2011). In England, there was very little gender difference in attainment at the highest grades (A*-C) in maths GCSE in 2014/15 (boys = 68%; girls = 70%) (DfE, 2015).

For science, in 2014/15, a slightly greater proportion of girls achieved A*-C grades in any science GCSE than boys, 76% compared to 71% respectively (DfE, 2015).

Girls are less likely than boys to be encouraged to study physics post-16 by teachers, family and friends (Mujtaba & Reiss, 2013) and gender stereotypes within schools and wider society contribute to the gender differences in physics and science uptake post-16 society (Archer et al, 2013b). The values and practices of schools can also have a powerful influence on girls' decisions to study STEM subjects. This is indicated in a 2012 report by the IOP (2012), which found that in 2011, 46 per cent of maintained co-educational schools sent no girls on to do Physics A level, in contrast to the figure for boys, which was just 12 per cent. Similarly, 80 per cent of all secondary schools sent no more than two girls on to do physics A Level.

Although not a protected characteristic, our analysis of the evidence raised that the increased level of mathematical knowledge requirements could have an impact on SEN students.

Of the major STEM fields, mathematics is commonly identified in the literature as problematic for students with disabilities. Its visual nature, whether in terms of algebraic equations with complex notation or geometric concepts such as lines and angles, can render much of mathematics education inaccessible to students with visual impairments.

The attainment gap for SEN pupils in maths is evident in the published attainment data (DfE, 2014). 45.8% of pupils with SEN made the expected progress in English compared to 41.3% in mathematics. 78.4% of pupils with no SEN made the expected progress in mathematics compared to 76.8% in English.

Pupils with visual impairments (62.9% in both English and mathematics) and with hearing impairments (60.5% in English and 63.2% in mathematics) were the most likely to make the expected progress. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (2.5% in English and 1.9% in mathematics) and with severe learning difficulties (4.1% in English and 2.2% in mathematics) were the least likely to make the expected progress.

Pupils suffering from dyscalculia will potentially be disadvantaged. Mathematics disabilities frequently entail genetic, neurobiological, and epidemiological considerations (Shalev et al., 2001); yet developmental dyscalculia is typically understood as a brain-based disorder.

Our analysis of the evidence also showed that the increased level of mathematical knowledge requirements could have an impact on students of different racial backgrounds. For example, science and mathematics A level are historically favoured by certain ethnic groups: pupil ethnicity is related to uptake of science and mathematics subjects (Rodeiro, 2007; DfE 2011). Certain ethnic groups were more likely to enter A level maths, with pupils of Indian, Other Asian or Chinese ethnic backgrounds having odds of continuation around four times higher than those of White British pupils.

Conclusion

We acknowledge that the increased demand in mathematical knowledge may have a greater impact on some students who have characteristics, such as dyscalculia, which can make aspects of academic curricula more challenging. However, this has always been a risk given that these subjects have traditionally included mathematical content, although this has now been set out more clearly and in more depth. We believe appropriate provision can, and should, be made to mitigate and support pupils with any additional challenge arising from increased demand in order to enable those pupils to benefit from greater equality of opportunity that will come from attaining higher standards. See [Annex: DfE programmes to support effective teaching for pupils with SEN](#).

As information provided above sets out, the gap between boys and girls in relation to mathematical achievement has started to narrow, and in the case of GCSEs has even reversed. The DfE has been clear throughout the reform process that raising demand in GCSEs is key to raising attainment and ensuring comparability internationally.

Policy changes are not made in isolation – policies such as the Pupil Premium contribute to enabling more disadvantaged students to be properly prepared for GCSEs. In relation to students in future years, the new primary national curriculum for mathematics is focused on building firm foundations for all students, benchmarked against expectations

in high-performing jurisdictions. The new curriculum places a greater emphasis on mental and written arithmetic, including teaching times tables early, written methods of calculation and applying mathematics to solve multi-step problems.

As all students benefit equally from the provisions of the national curriculum, students of all ethnic, faith, sex and socio-economic groups will have the same exposure to this education. It is the responsibility of individual centres and teachers to ensure that students from all genders and backgrounds are given equal advice about their subject choices.

Overall, DfE believes that all pupils will benefit from the higher aspirations, attainment outcomes and strong reputation expected of reformed GCSEs. For the AS and A levels in question universities have been clear that to progress to higher education A level students need stronger numeracy skills and these qualifications provide this.⁴ It is of no benefit to any student to pass a qualification that does not provide evidence – for employers or others – of their competence in key areas that are essential to progression.

There is no identified foreseen impact of more detailed maths content on protected characteristics of: gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

⁴ Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute (April 2012) Fit for Purpose? The view of the higher education sector, teachers and employers on the suitability of A levels;

Cambridge Assessment (April 2012) [What are the impacts of qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds on higher education? A survey of 633 university lecturers](#)

5.3 Ancient History GCSE, AS and A level

Two of the 109 respondents to the consultation stated that the range of topics available will allow teachers to select in ways that will avoid any sort of disproportionate impact. Another responded similarly by stating 'The proposals don't really have the potential to have disproportionate impact on specific students if developed and planned carefully'.

Protected characteristic: Disability

Impact

Two of the 109 respondents to the consultation felt that there would be a negative impact on students with SEN because of the heavy reliance on technical terminology. One, who also provided the same response in relation to classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level and archaeology AS and A level stated 'The very nature of the subjects would seem to provide a real, additional challenge to candidates who have SLDs, notably dyslexia, dyspraxia and inhibited motor skills'.

We are clear that it is right that the content should include technical terminology as it is a vital part of the subject and is important for progression to further study or employment where such terminology will be used. DfE recognises that there may be challenges for students with certain disabilities. However, there is effective legislation and guidance (see [Annex: DfE programmes to support effective teaching for pupils with SEN](#)) in place to mitigate potential adverse impacts on disabled students.

Conclusion

DfE is confident of the ability of teachers to provide differentiation and support to those students facing additional challenge because of disabilities. The DfE is therefore satisfied that this final content is appropriate and will not have an adverse impact in relation to students with disabilities.

Protected characteristic: Race

Impact

The proposals for the reformed ancient history GCSE, AS and A level include content about studying the history of at least two ancient societies, at least one of which must be Greek or Roman history.

One of the 109 respondents to the consultation raised concerns about race stating, 'only teaching the history of Rome and Greece and ignoring other vibrant cultures such as Persia, Egypt, Carthage etc. would I believe have a considerable negative impact on specific students who come from a non-white European background'.

The DfE has no reason to believe that studying ancient history GCSE will have an impact on students in relation to race. The subject criteria clearly allows the study of non-Roman or Greek history, and twice references Persia in the examples it provides, so specifications can provide routes to candidates which will allow schools to tailor the course to the needs of their candidates.

Conclusion

The DfE has concluded that the subject content for GCSE ancient history is appropriate and should not have an impact on students in relation to race.

Protected characteristics: Sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief

Impact

The proposed subject content stated ‘GCSE specifications in ancient history should enable students to learn about the history of ancient societies in their wider context in the ancient world. The study of ancient history at GCSE should enable students to deepen their understanding of the events, people and periods studied and enable them to think critically, weigh evidence (literary and material sources from the ancient world), sift arguments, make informed decisions and develop perspective and judgement. This knowledge and the skills developed will also help them to understand the legacy of the ancient world, and provide them with the basis for further study.’

One respondent was concerned that social history would not be covered sufficiently and there would not be a ‘positive and safe cultural space to talk about issues of race, religion and belief, and sex and sexual orientation’. Two of the 109 respondents to the consultation raised concerns that the content did not sufficiently reflect aspects relating to gender.

Social history is included in the subject content and awarding organisations can therefore include these issues within their specifications.

The DfE has no reason to believe that studying ancient history GCSE will have an impact on students of any particular sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief. As respondents acknowledged and AOs agree the range of topics available will allow teachers to select programmes of study in ways that will avoid disproportionate impact.

On the issue of gender, the DfE is clear that the content contains the key knowledge, understanding and skills required in this subject, and does not contain any content that would particularly discourage either sex from taking the qualification.

The DfE believes it is important to ensure that GCSEs are accessible to all students, regardless of their gender. Working to break down gender imbalances is vital to ensure that both girls and boys have access to the same education and career opportunities. Equality is as much about equality of aspiration as it is about equality of opportunity.

As all students benefit equally from the provisions of the national curriculum, students of all ethnic, faith, sex and socio-economic groups will have the same opportunities to be exposed to different subjects. It is the responsibility of individual centres and teachers to ensure that students from all genders and backgrounds are given equal advice about their subject choices.

All schools are subject to the Equality Act 2010. They are also subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires the school and its trustees, both in planning and running the school, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between communities.

Even where these issues are not included as part of the other qualifications, such as ancient history, PSHE lessons are an ideal opportunity to discuss prejudice, and to open up discussion on gender stereotypes and similar issues. That is why the DfE wants all schools to offer high-quality PSHE, using trained teachers and drawing on the best resources. We are committed to improving the quality of PSHE to ensure that it is excellent in all schools and to ensure that all young people get the skills and information they need to thrive.

The non-statutory PSHE Programme of Study (produced by the PSHE Association) includes teaching young people about:

- the difference between sex and gender identity, the terms associated with sex and gender identity, and the unacceptability sexist language and behaviour, the need to challenge it and how to do so.
- diversity, including the need to recognise and challenge stereotypes, to understand the nature and consequences of discrimination, teasing and bullying, and how to respect equality and to be productive members of a diverse community.

Conclusion

The DfE has concluded that the subject content for GCSE ancient history is appropriate and should not have an impact on students in relation to sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief.

Access to materials

Impact

The proposals for the reformed ancient history AS and A level included a requirement for the study of modern historians using the latest articles or monographs on ancient history.

One of the 109 respondents to the consultation raised concerns about the accessibility of materials relating to the study of modern historians, stating that the requirement 'will disadvantage those centres and student who do not have access to the material and funds to supply it'. The inclusion of monographs, which can be expensive and difficult to obtain for some schools, was a particular concern.

The reference to monographs has been removed but the content retains the requirement that students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of key historical debates by reading and responding to extracts which illustrate the different views of historians today regarding the events which have been studied. By removing the specific reference to monographs, schools could meet the requirement through using, for example, textbooks which could include extracts from articles (if necessary in translation) written by historians.

As students are not self-preparing for examination but will be prepared by centres, socio-economic factors should not be barriers that affect a student's ability to achieve. For these reasons the DfE is content that there is no need to make further changes to the content.

Conclusion

The DfE has concluded that, with the removal of monographs the subject content for GCSE ancient history is appropriate.

5.4 Classical Civilisation GCSE, AS and A level

Some of the comments from respondents to the consultation were identical to those relating to ancient history GCSE, AS and A level and classical civilisation AS and A level.

Two of the 109 respondents to the consultation stated that the range of topics available will allow teachers to select in ways that will avoid any sort of disproportionate impact. Another responded similarly by stating 'The proposals don't really have the potential to have disproportionate impact on specific students if developed and planned carefully'.

Protected characteristic: Disability

Impact

Two of the 109 respondents to the consultation felt that there would be a negative impact on students with SEN because of the heavy reliance on technical terminology. One, who also provided the same response in relation to ancient history GCSE, A and AS level and archaeology AS and A level stated 'The very nature of the subjects would seem to provide a real, additional challenge to candidates who have SLDs, notably dyslexia, dyspraxia and inhibited motor skills'.

As with ancient history, DfE recognises that there may be challenges for students with certain disabilities. However, we are clear that it is right that the content should include technical terminology as it is a vital part of the subject and is important for progression to further study or employment where such terminology will be used.

The proposed subject content for AS and A level classical civilisation requires the study of visual/material culture. Three respondents commented that making this element compulsory would disadvantage students with visual impairments because they would be unable to access the material.

The evidence suggests low vision and blindness present numerous challenges to classroom learning. Students with low vision may find graphics difficult or impossible to access when presented on a classroom whiteboard or projector (Borland & James, 1999). Compounding this problem is the possibility that low-vision students may not even seek accommodations for a variety of personal reasons, even though they may acknowledge privately that they need them (Richardson, 2009). Students with partial or no sight may find the requirement to respond to unseen images challenging.

Exam access arrangements provide access for students with permanent conditions, for example, visually impaired students. Awarding Organisations are already experienced in ensuring that specifications are accessible to disabled students and that assessment can be modified for students with physical disabilities as necessary and appropriate. For example, as now, awarding organisations can embed text in their sources paper to help visually impaired students access the material.

Section 96 of the 2010 Equality Act outlines the specific obligations for qualifications bodies and includes the duty to make reasonable adjustments to the extent specified by the appropriate regulator (in this case Ofqual). Ofqual allows reasonable adjustments to qualifications in the form of an exemption for a student from up to 40% of the marks available for a qualification. In light of Ofqual's determination, the JCQ's "Adjustments for candidates with disabilities or learning difficulties" allow an exemption agreement to be reached by an awarding body, before the examination, for a candidate to miss a component or components amounting to no more than 40% of a GCSE or A level qualification.⁵

Any potential adverse impact on pupils with disabilities needs should be mitigated with appropriate teacher differentiation and support.

The DfE is confident there is legislation (as outlined earlier in this section) and guidance (see annex: [DfE programmes to support effective teaching for pupils with SEN](#)) in place to support pupils with visual impairment in managing the performance requirements and allowing for mitigating actions where there are specific challenges.

Conclusion

DfE is confident of the ability both of awarding organisations to mitigate against adverse impact on students with physical disabilities and of teachers to provide differentiation and support to those students facing additional challenge because of physical disabilities. The DfE is satisfied that this final content is appropriate and can be adapted to mitigate adverse impact in relation to students with disabilities.

Protected characteristic: Race

Impact

The proposals for the reformed classical civilisation GCSE requires students to study literature and visual / material culture relating to Rome and its surrounding world, and Greece and its surrounding world.

One of the 109 respondents to the consultation raised concerns about race stating 'only teaching the history of Rome and Greece and ignoring other vibrant cultures such as Persia, Egypt, Carthage etc. would I believe have a considerable negative impact on specific students who come from a non-white European background'.

⁵ <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance/access-arrangements-and-reasonable-adjustments-2014-2015>

As with ancient history, the content for GCSE, AS and A level classical civilisation allows students to study ancient cultures other than Rome or Greece, so specifications can provide routes to candidates which will allow schools to tailor the course to the needs of their candidates.

Conclusion

The DfE has concluded that the subject content for classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level is appropriate and can be adapted to mitigate adverse impact on students in relation to race.

Protected characteristic: Sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief

Impact

The proposed subject content stated that the specifications for classical civilisation GCSE should allow students to ‘develop awareness of how classical sources reflect issues relevant to both the classical world and today, such as questions of gender, belief, sexuality and citizenship’.

One of these respondents was concerned that social history would not be covered sufficiently and there would not be a ‘positive and safe cultural space to talk about issues of race, religion and belief, and sex and sexual orientation’. Two of the 109 respondents to the consultation raised concerns that the content did not sufficiently reflect aspects relating to gender.

The GCSE, AS and A level content for classical civilisation includes social contexts, and awarding organisations can therefore include these issues, including the issue of gender, within their specifications. As with ancient history, the DfE therefore has no reason to believe that studying classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level will have an adverse impact on students in relation to sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief. See the section above on [classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level](#) for further information.

Conclusion

As with ancient history GCSE, AS and A level the range of topics available will allow teachers to select programmes of study in ways that will avoid disproportionate impact. The DfE has therefore concluded that the subject content for classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level is appropriate and should not have an impact on students in relation to sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief.

Access to materials

Impact

One of the 109 respondents to the consultation raised concerns about the accessibility of materials stating that the requirement 'will disadvantage those centres and students who do not have access to the material and funds to supply it'.

As outlined for ancient history GCSE, students are not self-preparing for examination but will be prepared by centres; socio-economic factors should not be barriers that affect a student's ability to achieve. For these reasons the DfE is content that there is no need to make changes to the content.

The DfE is confident that schools and colleges will have sufficient funding to teach all the elements required in the proposed new subject content, and can if necessary provide additional financial support where pupils are facing the greatest economic disadvantage, through the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

Over the last three years, DfE has introduced a number of important changes to how local authorities distribute funding to schools. These changes have led to a more transparent funding system with more money being allocated based on the needs of pupils. For 2014-15, local authorities are allocating around 90% of schools funding based on the needs of pupils, compared with 71% of schools in 2012-13.

16 -19 funding is calculated using the EFA funding formula that incorporates factors including student numbers, student retention, higher cost subjects, disadvantaged students and area costs. This is supplemented by additional funding for high needs students, bursaries and other financial support awarded to individual students.

Means of mitigation include the pupil premium, which is additional funding given to publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and close the gap between them and their peers. This funding is awarded per eligible pupil. It is not ring-fenced and can be used to help support pupils in whatever way their disadvantage impacts on their ability to access, engage with, or succeed in programmes of study.

Conclusion

The DfE has concluded that the subject content for classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level is appropriate and targeted needs-based funding should help mitigate any disadvantage to pupils from low income families.

5.5 Electronics GCSE, AS and A level

Protected characteristic: Disability

Impact

Two of the 109 respondents to the consultation raised concerns about students with disabilities requiring additional support, particularly with practical elements of the qualifications.

Two of the 109 respondents to the consultation raised concerns that those with physical disabilities would find the practical elements difficult but did not think that the content needed changing. One respondent suggested that using simulations, team working and the use of an amanuensis could mitigate this.

As with other subjects, DfE recognises that there may be challenges for students with certain disabilities. However, there is effective legislation (see section on [classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level](#)) and guidance (see [Annex: DfE programmes to support effective teaching for pupils with SEN](#)) in place to mitigate potential adverse impacts on disabled students. Awarding Organisations are already experienced in ensuring that specifications are accessible to disabled students and that assessment can be modified for students with physical disabilities as necessary and appropriate (see section on [classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level](#)).

As outlined in section 5.1 and in relation to classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level, legislation outlines the specific obligations for qualifications bodies and includes the duty to make reasonable adjustments.

Evidence from literature reviews relating to assessment in STEM subjects may also apply to electronics. Those with visual impairments present numerous challenges particularly in STEM fields where instruction relies heavily on graphically conveyed information, such as charts, graphs, diagrams, engineering drawings, photomicrographs, and 3-D simulations (Jones, Minogue, Oppewal, Cook, & Broadwell, 2006; Wu, Krajcik, & Soloway, 2001). Even students who may be able to access technical information when presented in textbooks or websites may find graphics difficult or impossible to access when presented on a classroom whiteboard or projector (Borland & James, 1999).

The hands on nature of STEM education often equates to 'eyes on', as a large proportion of laboratory-based science and technical STEM education depends heavily on visual observation. They depend on the observation of printed or embossed scales, changes in colour, electronic numerical indicators, CRT displays, or other graphical means.

Owing to the increasing role played by computer-mediated instruction, students who are blind or have low vision are increasingly at risk for exclusion. Assistive technologies such

as screen readers may help, but they are not a guarantee of accessibility, especially if the readers are unable to interpret the text.

Observation requirements may mean that pupils need to be mobile. Classroom accommodations must take into account manoeuvrability, but also a number of positioning, communication, and social factors that make learning easier for students in the classroom setting (Stefanich, 2007). Teachers should take care with delicate equipment where students are forced to use exceptional reach.

Dexterity impairments may impair use of hands, which may range from fine motor skills to digit-specific issues (i.e. missing fingers or, alternately, polydactyly) to the complete inability to use the hands. Only a small body of recent scholarly and practitioner literature specifically addresses accommodations for dexterity issues, particularly technologically advanced accommodations, and most of that available literature focuses on therapy and rehabilitation rather than mainstream classroom integration.

Conclusion

DfE is confident of the ability both of awarding organisations to mitigate against adverse impact on students with physical disabilities and of teachers to provide differentiation and support to those students facing additional challenge because of physical disabilities (see section on [classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level](#)). The DfE is therefore satisfied that this final content is appropriate and can be adapted to mitigate adverse impact in relation to students with disabilities.

5.6 Film Studies GCSE, AS and A level

Several of the comments were from respondents who also replied to media studies GCSE, AS and A level and it was not clear in all cases which subject the comment referred to.

One respondent welcomed the proposals from a diversity perspective 'in as much as they promise a range of films from different cultural backgrounds, addressing a range of complex issues'

Though not related to a specific protected characteristic, one respondent was concerned that the changes would have an adverse impact on students in alternative provision commenting that subjects such as media studies and film have 'allowed students to develop skills and understanding in more practical ways'

Protected characteristics: Disability, race and sex

One of the 109 respondents for both media studies and film studies felt that the absence of film as an industry in film studies and the emphasis on theory were creating barriers for students with English as an additional language.

Impact

One respondent felt that the extensive focus on complex theory and lack of practical opportunities in both media studies and film studies would penalise students with learning difficulties.

One of the 109 respondents for both media studies and film studies felt that the emphasis on theory and the 'absence of industry' were creating barriers for students with English as an additional language and students with SEN such as dyslexia.

The content includes theory as a result of feedback from subject experts who advised that it is a vital part of the subject and is important for progression to further study or employment. Following the consultation amendments have been made to clarify that students will explore how the different institutional contexts have influenced the films studied including production and technological opportunities and constraints. In addition to theoretical understanding, the content still includes opportunities for practical engagement allowing students to create an extract from a film or screenplay at GCSE and AS level and develop either their own short film or screenplay at A level.

There were no comments raised specifically about how the 'absence of industry' in film studies would have an impact on students.

Respondents also felt that the removal of group work would be detrimental to many students but in particular those with disabilities, EAL and female students. As outlined in

the consultation document it is difficult to validly assess the individual contribution of students in group work where only one product is provided for assessment. However, we are aware that it would not be possible to produce a film extract or short film without some collaboration, for example other students operating the lighting or sound equipment. While content does state that work must be individually produced, changes have been made to the content to clarify that other unassessed students and others can collaborate on the work submitted by the student.

As with other subjects, DfE recognises that there may be challenges for students with certain disabilities. However, there is effective legislation and guidance in place to mitigate potential adverse impacts on disabled students, as outlined above. The DfE is satisfied that this final content is appropriate and believes appropriate provision can, and should, be made to mitigate and support pupils with any additional challenge arising from increased demand, including students with disabilities or students with English as an additional language as outlined previously (see section on [classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level](#)) and in the [Annex: DfE programmes to support effective teaching for pupils with SEN](#).

Conclusion

DfE is confident of the ability of teachers to provide differentiation and support to those students facing additional challenge because of disabilities. The DfE is therefore satisfied that this final content is appropriate and will not have an impact in relation to students with disabilities or students with English as an additional language.

5.7 Media Studies GCSE, AS and A level

One respondent was concerned that the changes would have an adverse impact on students in alternative provision, commenting that subjects such as media studies and film have 'allowed students to develop skills and understanding in more practical ways'.

Protected characteristics: Disability and race

Impact

One respondent from 109 felt that the extensive focus on complex theory and lack of practical opportunities in both media studies and film studies would penalise students with learning difficulties.

One of the 109 respondents for both media studies and film studies felt that the absence of film as an industry in film studies and the emphasis on theory were creating barriers for students with English as an additional language.

As with film studies, respondents felt that the removal of group work would be detrimental to many students, in particular those with disabilities, EAL and female students. As outlined above it is difficult to validly assess the individual contribution of students in group work where only one product is provided for assessment.

As outlined for film studies above, the content includes theory as stakeholders have advised it is a vital part of the subject and is important for progression to further study or employment. The content does still require some practical work. Specifications in media studies must require students to complete a media production in response to a brief set by the awarding organisation.

DfE is confident of the ability of teachers to provide differentiation and support to those students facing additional challenge because of disabilities (see section on [classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level](#)) and in the [Annex: DfE programmes to support effective teaching for pupils with SEN](#).

Conclusion

The DfE is therefore satisfied that this final content is appropriate and can be adapted to mitigate adverse impact in relation to students with disabilities or students with English as an additional language.

Protected characteristics: sex, race and other protected characteristics

Impact

Five respondents from 109 thought that the texts and theorists for media were not diverse enough with one respondent that felt these had been presented from a 'White, middle class, male privilege position'. Five responses also felt that having prescribed texts disadvantaged students from ethnic backgrounds, different sexual orientations and those with disabilities. These comments appeared under film studies but were not relevant to that subject as there are no prescribed texts or theorists were included in the content, only examples. In relation to media studies A level specifically there was the additional view that the prescribed theorists did not reflect 'protected characteristics'. One respondent stated 'media allows students to engage with diversity and challenge stereotyping' but that 'a rigid set text approach would miss many opportunities to use up-to-date examples to engage in these issues'.

It is essential at both GCSE and AS/A level for students to have a good understanding of the main theoretical concepts underpinning the subject. The theoretical content has been thoroughly reviewed following the consultation to ensure that the theorists and theories being studied are the most appropriate and relevant to the specific theoretical areas and reflect current thinking. The theorists required in the content have been updated based on the feedback in the consultation, drawing from the canon of media theorists; at A level, the theorists Judith Butler, Liesbet van Zoonen and Paul Gilroy have been added.

At GCSE, while only three theorists are required, the content specifies that students also need to know and understand 'theoretical perspectives on representation... and on gender... including feminist approaches'. Further detail of which specific theorists are studied is a matter for the specifications, and we expect awarding organisations to take account of comments raised during the consultation in developing their specifications.

As a subject media studies encourages students to engage with issues like ethnicity, gender and sexuality in relation to key social, cultural economic, political and historical contexts. For example the subject content for GCSE includes issues of representation, making it clear that students will learn 'how and why particular social groups may be under-represented or misrepresented', 'the different functions and uses of stereotypes', 'how representations convey particular viewpoints', and 'the social, cultural and political significance of particular representations'.

Conclusion

In the light of the above analysis, the DfE is therefore satisfied that this final content is appropriate and will not have an impact in relation to these students.

5.8 Statistics GCSE

There were 11 responses to the equalities section from those who responded to the question on statistics GCSE. One said 'yes' it would have a disproportionate impact, nine said 'no' and one was not sure.

There were no relevant comments provided in relation to equalities issues for statistics GCSE.

Protected characteristic: Disability

Impact

Evidence from literature reviews relating to mathematics, which are covered in the section [Increased mathematical content](#), may also apply to statistics.

In addition students with disabilities may shy away from field work (i.e. to collect primary statistical data as part of the cycle) because they feel inadequate or awkward trying to undertake it (Hall et al, 2002).

As with other subjects, there is effective legislation (see section on [classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level](#)) in place to mitigate any potential adverse impacts on disabled students and schools will need to have regard to their equalities duty when teaching the content.

Conclusion

None of the respondents to the consultation raised any concerns about detrimental impact on students with the protected characteristics of disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. Issues raised in research relate to mathematics more generally and have been addressed earlier. DfE is confident of the ability of teachers to provide differentiation and support to those students facing additional challenge because of physical disabilities. The DfE is therefore satisfied that this final content is appropriate and will not have an impact in relation to students with disabilities.

5.9 Accounting AS and A level

Two out of the 109 responses said that there would be a disproportionate impact but gave no specific comments. Five out of the 109 responses said it would have no disproportionate impact and one was not sure.

Impact

Four respondents provided comments, only one of which related specifically to accounting and said that there would be no disproportionate impact.

Evidence from literature reviews relating to mathematics, which are covered in the section [Increased mathematical content](#), may also apply to accounting.

Conclusion

None of the respondents to the consultation raised any concerns about detrimental impact on students with the protected characteristics of disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. Issues raised in research relate to mathematics more generally, and have been addressed earlier. We also have not encountered any issues relating specifically to accounting in our research to give rise to concerns in relation to any of these protected characteristics.

5.10 Archaeology AS and A level

One of the 109 respondents to the consultation stated that ‘There does not appear to be the potential for disproportionate impact due to the breadth of content’ but another respondent felt the content was too restrictive and may make it difficult for teachers to respond to student diversity.

Diversity

One respondent raised concerns about the ability for teachers to respond to diversity by selecting content to teach. However the content does allow teachers to select appropriate archaeological sites in order to reflect student diversity.

Protected Characteristic: Disability

Impact

Research evidence shows that disabled pupils can face difficulties with archaeology field work resulting in HEIs modifying fieldwork projects and marking for disabled students. However, there is a question over whether this modification always leads to the same educational outcome as in the case of the fieldwork (Phillips and Gilchrist 2005). The findings of the study have also been published as a good practice [guide](#).

Research evidence related to geography fieldwork may also apply. The environments most closely associated with fieldwork are the ones most likely to impose daunting physical barriers to disabled students, consequently marking out differences in students’ bodily capabilities as disabling (Hall et al, 2004). In addition there is evidence that unfamiliar environments create specific barriers for some disabled people (Birnie & Grant, 2001).

Fieldwork may also pose challenges for visually impaired pupils, where tasks such as taking accurate notes in non-classroom environments, multi-sensory tasking, group work and recording data and making mathematical calculations can be problematic (Shepherd, 2001).

DfE recognises that there may be challenges for students with certain physical disabilities, as there can be with all subjects that have practical components. However, the DfE is confident there is legislation (see section on [classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level](#)) and guidance (see [Annex: DfE programmes to support effective teaching for pupils with SEN](#)) in place to mitigate potential adverse impacts on disabled students.

Conclusion

DfE is confident of the ability both of awarding organisations to mitigate against adverse impact on students with physical disabilities and of teachers to provide differentiation and support to those students facing additional challenge because of physical disabilities. The DfE is satisfied that this final content is appropriate and can be adapted to mitigate adverse impact in relation to students with disabilities.

None of the respondents to the consultation raised any concerns about detrimental impact on students with the protected characteristics of gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, sex and sexual orientation. We also have not encountered any issues in our research to give rise to concerns in relation to any of these protected characteristics.

5.11 Law AS and A level

Two of the 109 responses to the consultation felt that the subject itself promotes equality with one stating that law 'by its nature is obliged to be non-discriminatory; this will follow into the teaching'.

Protected characteristic: Disability

Impact

One of the 109 respondents to the consultation felt that the amount of content for law AS and A level could disadvantage students with physical disabilities.

One respondent felt that students with physical disabilities would be disadvantaged as they often need more time to know and understand a topic and that those students with mental health issues may experience gaps in their study meaning less time to master understanding and skills.

As detailed in other subjects there is effective legislation and guidance in place to mitigate potential adverse impacts on disabled students (see section on [classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level](#) and [Annex: DfE programmes to support effective teaching for pupils with SEN](#)).

Conclusion

The DfE is confident of the ability both of awarding organisations to mitigate against adverse impact on students with physical disabilities and of teachers to provide differentiation and support to those students facing additional challenge because of physical disabilities (see section on [classical civilisation GCSE, AS and A level](#) and [Annex: DfE programmes to support effective teaching for pupils with SEN](#)). The DfE is therefore satisfied that this final content is appropriate and will not have an impact in relation to students with disabilities.

6. Summary

We believe that overall the proposals for reformed subject content examined in this equality impact assessment will have a positive impact on equality of opportunity by providing respected qualifications in which pupils, employers and further and higher education providers can have full confidence.

Equalities considerations have been taken into account before, during and after the process of developing new content. In examining the evidence and opinions we have collated, we believe the final changes proposed are objectively justified because they will have the effect of improving standards. Where concerns have been identified about the potentially negative impact of content, we have responded to the concerns as set out above.

Increasing demand across all GCSEs including those which have traditionally had a significant practical component, is intended to help achieve parity in the value to students of all qualifications and in the perception among employers and further/higher education institutions of the qualifications' worth. We are confident that where this presents challenges to students with protected characteristics, there are a number of appropriate and available means of mitigation, which have been outlined in the section [Increased demand](#) and for SEN, in [Annex: DfE programmes to support effective teaching for pupils with SEN](#).

As well as considering each subject individually, we have also given consideration to any potential cumulative impact of the changes across subjects. As we are confident that any possible adverse impacts identified in relation to individual subjects have appropriate means of mitigation, we have no reason to believe there will be any additional impact at the cumulative level.

Annex: DfE programmes to support effective teaching for pupils with SEN

The quality of teaching is central to ensuring that pupils with SEN and Disabilities are given the best possible opportunity to achieve good results in their GCSE and A level studies. As well as reforming qualifications, DfE is committed to supporting the development of teachers' skills in meeting SEN. These include:

- Ensuring all ITT programmes train teachers to teach both mainstream and pupils with SEND. In order to be awarded qualified teacher status (QTS), trainees must satisfy the Teachers' Standards⁶, which include a requirement that they have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with SEN, and are able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them. Teachers themselves tell us that the quality of training for SEN is improving. The majority of new teachers rate this aspect of their training as good or very good and this proportion is consistently increasing. Over eighty per cent of both primary and secondary trained teachers who responded to the latest NQT survey reported that their induction had supported them to teach pupils with special educational needs in their classes (DfE, Annual NQT Survey 2014).
- Following Sir Andrew Carter's independent review of the quality and effectiveness of ITT courses, the Secretary of State appointed an independent working group made up of expert representatives from the sector to develop a framework of core ITT content. This includes considering Sir Andrew's recommendations around the SEND content of the proposed framework.
- We have also funded 10 Teaching Schools and their initial teacher training (ITT) partnerships, to initiate, develop and implement innovative additions to their training programmes, to enhance the skills and knowledge of SEN for prospective teachers. The outcomes of these test and learn projects will be reported on at the end of this year.
- We have developed specialist resources for initial teacher training through the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) and advanced level online modules on areas including autism and speech and language needs, to enhance teachers' knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Between 2009 and 2014, we funded almost 11,000 new SENCOs to undertake the master's-level National Award for SEN Co-ordination.
- We have also awarded contracts totalling more than £2.5m a year to a number of sector specialists, including the Autism Education Trust, the Communications Trust, the Dyslexia SpLD Trust and the National Sensory Impairment Partnership

⁶ <http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards>

(NatSIP) to support the implementation of the SEN reforms and provide information to schools and teachers.

- Nasen continues to run its [SEND Gateway](#) which was launched in May 2014 with the help of funds from DfE. This is an online portal offering education professionals free, easy access to high quality information, resources and training for meeting the needs of children with SEN and disabilities. We are also funding Nasen (2015-16) to develop a free universal offer of SEN CPD for teachers including early years to post 16 which will meet the requirements of providing high quality teaching as described in the SEND Code of Practice. This will enable every teacher to access a package of online learning which takes an enquiry-based learning approach to effectively identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people with SEN.
- The DfE has also continued to support the charity AfA3As in 2015-16 to make the highly successful Achievement for All (AfA) approach available widely. It now provides whole-school support to around 2000 schools to improve outcomes for pupils with SEN and disabilities. We are also supporting them to provide leadership support to an additional 1200 schools and online support to around 10,000 schools to plan and manage the reforms as well as to close the gap for children and young people with SEN.
- In 2014 and 2015 we provided £5.5m per year, to support a 10% increase in the number of training places for educational psychologists (132 per annum). This will increase to £6.1m per year, raising the number of training places further, to 150 in 2016 and again in 2017.



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