



Department
for Education

GCSE, AS and A level subject content: equality analysis

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1. Introduction

This document assesses the equalities impact of new subject content for GCSEs in physical education short course, and for AS and A levels in geology and politics.

Sociology GCSE was included in the consultation which took place between July and September 2015, and statistics AS/A level in the consultation which took place between September and November 2015. Further work was needed to address the issues raised by respondents in relation to these subjects in the consultation. The final content has therefore been published today, alongside the subjects named above. However, the equalities analysis for these subjects has been included in updated version of the relevant equalities analysis published in [December 2015](#) and [February 2016](#).

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: British Political Association, National Geological Association, National Geological Survey, and Association for Physical Education and Youth Sport Trust whom awarding organisations worked with in developing the PE GCSE full course (which was published in January 2015 and of which short course is a subset). The consultation proposals incorporated their suggestions for the new GCSE in physical education short course and new AS and A levels in geology and politics.

The public consultation opened on 03 November 2015 and closed on 15 December 2015. We received 3,819 responses (3,500 of these were emails to the consultation inbox in relation to politics A level) 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.

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. Subject content for ancient history, classical civilisation, electronics, film studies, media studies and statistics was published in February 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 January 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. Subject content for accounting, ancient history, archaeology, classical

civilisation, electronics, film studies, law and media studies was published in February 2015 and will be first taught from 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 GCSE in PE short course, and for AS and A levels in geology and politics 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, 214 answered the question about potential disproportionate impact on students with relevant protected characteristics (from 319 respondents to the overall consultation). 140 stated the changes would have a negative impact on those students with one or more protected characteristics. 47 said there would not be a disproportionate impact. 27 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 physical education short course 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 2013.¹ 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 and
- accountability at all levels

¹ [GCSE Reform Equality Analysis, DfE, March 2013](#)

Andreas Schleicher, Deputy 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 expectations².

The intention of reform is to ensure parity of quality and challenge across all subjects. We wish to ensure that students studying a GCSE in physical education short course or AS/A levels in geology or politics will achieve a qualification whose value is recognised alongside other GCSEs and A levels, 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.

² [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: gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief or sexual orientation.

5.2 Increased mathematical content

The draft content for the reformed AS and A level in geology and PE GCSE short course contains greater emphasis on mathematical content/knowledge and sets out the minimum requirements that specifications must cover.

Impact

One respondent to the consultation (in response to geology A level) commented that this content would have an impact on students of different sexes, with the potential to discourage female students from taking the subject.

Impact

Evidence from literature reviews relating to mathematics may apply to geology AS and A level and GCSE PE short course.

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 A levels 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.

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 2 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 in geology and PE GCSE short course 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. Science and Maths 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.

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 that³ to progress to higher education A level students need stronger numeracy skills and these qualifications provide this. 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.

³ 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 Physical Education GCSE Short Course

Protected characteristic: Disability

The proposals for the reformed physical education GCSE short course reflect increased rigour by sharpening the definition of what is expected of students and emphasising the theoretical knowledge needed to underpin physical activity and practical performance. They also include practical work.

Impact

In the consultation which ran from July to September 2014 on the revised physical education GCSE, three respondents raised concerns about the potential impact on less able students of increasing the emphasis on theory in the consultation. The content for physical education short course is drawn from the original content for the full course GCSE, and so the same issues are relevant here. While less able students are not a protected group under equalities legislation, it may be that certain individuals with a protected characteristic, such as those with learning difficulties, are more likely to fall into this group.

The short course content requires students to be assessed in two sports or activities, including at least one team sport or activity and one individual sport or activity. This will ensure students are able to demonstrate practical skills that are integral to this subject.

There remains some increase in the emphasis on theoretical content. As with all subjects being reformed, the intention is to ensure that physical education GCSE short course will be a qualification in which students and employers can have confidence. Furthermore, to allow the effective teaching of this subject it is important that the content from it is a subset of the full GCSE.

To help them manage the theoretical demands of the subject, less able students will be supported in the same ways as they are in other subject areas, with appropriate differentiation and additional support. Students with Special Educational Needs and English as an Additional Language, would, in particular, be expected to receive appropriate, targeted support.

One of the 319 respondents to the consultation commented that the practical work in physical education “needs to be amenable and accessible to all, so some consideration will need to be given to what activities might be appropriate or inappropriate for individuals with protected characteristics (e.g. individuals who are pregnant and/or disabled may be physically restricted for medical reasons, whilst others may be restricted for reasons of race/gender/religion. Guidance needs to be issued regarding inclusive

support to those with mobility, visual, aural and other sensory, physical or cultural challenges.”

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. 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. Furthermore the list of activities in which students can be assessed is inclusive of specialist activities suitable for students with various disabilities. This can be accessed at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/447738/GCSE_activity_list_for_PE.pdf

The Training and Development Agency for Schools (now National College for Teaching and Leadership) has prepared best practice guidance on including students with SEN and/or disabilities in secondary physical education, which can be accessed at: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/13805/1/physicaleducationpe.pdf>

It recommends: “To overcome potential barriers to learning in physical education, some students may require:

- adapted, modified or alternative activities that offer an equivalent degree of challenge to the activities in the programmes of study and that enable the students to make progress
- specific support they need to take part in certain activities or types of movement, and
- careful management of their physical regime to allow for their specific medical conditions.”

Assessment may need to be modified: “When assessing students, you need to plan carefully to give students with SEN and/or disabilities every opportunity to demonstrate what they know and are able to do, using alternative means where necessary.”

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). Furthermore, in terms of the activities available for assessment awarding organisations can jointly consider alternative activities in respect of ‘reasonable adjustments’ to make sure candidates with a disability are not discriminated against. This can be done on a periodic basis once specifications are available for live assessment.

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.

Conclusion

To the extent that the remaining increase in emphasis on theory presents a greater challenge for less able pupils, DfE feels the change is justified by the rationale and purpose of reform outlined above. As with all subjects, any negative impact on students who are finding the subject matter demanding can be supported with appropriate teacher differentiation and additional support. We feel that it is more important for them to study a subject with an appropriate level of demand than to achieve a less rigorous qualification which will not be viewed as having the same value for further study or employment.

We are clear that it is right that the content should include practical work as it is a vital part of the subject and is important for progression to further study or employment. Furthermore, increasing the theoretical content will also positively impact on students who are less able physically, allowing them to engage with the subject in other ways. This includes pupils managing disability, pregnancy and gender reassignment. The Department is satisfied that this final content is appropriate and that any impact in relation to students with disabilities can be mitigated against.

None of the respondents to the consultation on PE GCSE short course raised any concerns about detrimental impact on students with the protected characteristics of gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, 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.

Protected characteristic: Sex

To ensure comparability between practical activities, when reforming the physical education GCSE, awarding organisations amended the number of options available. The updated activity list, which can be accessed at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/447738/GCSE_activity_list_for_PE.pdf, was published alongside the revised physical education GCSE in January 2015, and some of the activities currently available, such as rounders, were removed. This list applies to both the full physical education GCSE and the GCSE short course and so the same issues raised in relation to the full physical education GCSE are relevant to the short course as well.

The [equalities analysis](#) published in January 2015, alongside the activity list includes a full analysis of the issues raised in the 2014 consultation and the evidence gathered. The analysis concluded that appropriate teacher support and encouragement should mean that no activity lacks accessibility or appeal to female students, and that we found no evidence to suggest any likely disproportionate adverse impact on any other characteristic.

Impact

Whilst it was not raised by respondents in relation to physical education GCSE short course, concerns were raised in the consultation which ran from July to September 2014 on the revised physical education GCSE, about the impact of reducing the number of options available for the practical component of focus primarily on the impact on gender. Respondents to the 2014 consultation expressed concerns that activities, for example rounders, which traditionally appeal to girls have been removed, therefore risking the possibility that fewer girls will opt to study physical education in the future.

The list of approved activities was developed to reflect Ofqual's principles that non-exam assessment should ensure sound assessment practice, be manageable and ensure a qualification is not easily distorted. The list is intended to ensure parity and comparable levels of rigour across activities, and can be accessed at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/447738/GCSE_activity_list_for_PE.pdf.

Claims about the popularity of rounders among girls are supported by evidence in the Young People in Sport Survey National Survey, 2002, which found that rounders was the most popular sport for girls. However, the survey also showed that it was the second most popular sports for boys. Therefore the impact on girls is not likely to be significantly disproportionate compared to the impact on boys. A more recent 2010 survey by the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, however, listed rounders as the tenth most popular sport among 11 – 15 year old girls for weekly participation after others including netball, swimming, football, basketball and cycling.⁴

There are a number of activities on the proposed activity list that are traditionally seen as appealing to girls, including netball, contemporary dance and swimming, however, DfE would not want to encourage gender stereotyping in perceptions of sport preferences. The 2002 Young People in Sport Survey also saw a significant increase in girls' participation in football, which is traditionally seen as a boys sport, which is supported by its position as the fifth most popular sport among girls aged both 5 – 10 and 11 – 15 in the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation survey. The Football Association have claimed that women's football could be the second most popular team sport in Britain by 2018⁵. Whilst this is a goal driven by aspiration, that aspiration is founded on evidence of change.

⁴http://www.wsff.org.uk/system/1/assets/files/000/000/284/284/f3957f6e2/original/FACTSHEETyoung_womenand_girls_FINAL281010.pdf

⁵ <http://www.mancunianmatters.co.uk/content/210569011-girl-power-women%E2%80%99s-football-could-be-second-most-popular-team-sport-britain-2018>

We are confident that all the activities on the list are accessible to both boys and girls with the right teaching and encouragement.

Some respondents to the 2014 consultation raised concerns that the changes would further encourage a 'drop off' in participation by girls in sports. The evidence of falling participation rates by girls over their school life is well documented⁶. However, we queried the assumption that the removal of rounders from the list of activities would contribute to increasing this trend. A paper published by the Institute of Youth Sport shows that the decline in participation is influenced by multiple factors that slowly change over time, including social influences, such as the attitudes of friends and family, and the role of the environment⁷. Choice of activity is not noted as a factor.

As well as concerns about the potential impact on girls, in 2014 we were made aware of concerns that the list of activities has been perceived by some stakeholders as elitist due to the inclusion of activities such as outdoor skiing on snow and equestrian sport. The implication was that this discriminates against disadvantaged pupils who cannot afford to participate in these activities. However, none of the activities on the list are new. They are all options which are currently available. This equality impact assessment is looking specifically at the impact of changes to content. As these activities are not new, there is unlikely to be any disproportionate impact brought about by their inclusion. DfE believes that the full list of activities published in 2014 includes a broad range of activities to cater for schools and colleges with differing demographics.

Conclusion

The requirement for parity and comparable levels of rigour across activities is itself intended to ensure greater equality for students studying physical education in different contexts. Appropriate teacher support and encouragement should mean that no activity lacks accessibility or appeal to female students. DfE wishes to encourage attitudes towards physical activities that are not gender dependent.

In the course of the 2014 consultation, no stakeholders raised concerns about the impact of the reduction in the list of activities on pupils with any other protected characteristics and we have found no evidence to suggest any likely disproportionate adverse impact. Data on sporting preferences among ethnic minority groups⁸ leaves us confident that

⁶ e.g. Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, Changing the Game for Girls (http://www.wsff.org.uk/system/1/assets/files/000/000/285/285/f4894dccf/original/Changing_The_Game_For_Girls_Final.pdf)

⁷ Gorley, Sandford et al, 2011, Understanding psycho-social attitudes towards sport and activity in girls, Institute of Youth Sport

⁸ Sport England, Sports Participation and Ethnicity in England, National survey 1999-2000

there are sufficient options on the list of approved activities to cater for the tastes of all ethnic minorities. The activity list will however be reviewed again at a later stage.

5.5 Geology AS/A level

Compulsory fieldwork

The proposals for the reformed geology AS and A level include compulsory fieldwork.

Protected characteristic: disability

12 of the 319 respondents to the consultation commented on the compulsory fieldwork requirement, and suggested that it might be difficult for students with disabilities including mobility problems and visual impairments. Although respondents acknowledged that 'fieldwork is an important part of any geology course'.

Respondents suggested that the techniques could be carried out in a laboratory for those who have physical disabilities and are unable to complete tasks in the field, or that they could complete virtual fieldwork if sites were not wheelchair accessible.

One said 'there is a growing body of advice and practice in how to adapt teaching and student's work to such impairments' and that 'while students with physical disabilities might find some fieldwork challenging it is not impossible to provide them with good experiences to cover a range of geological features in a field setting. It will just take a little more planning. Geology fieldwork opportunities always cover a range of experiences so all students should be able to be catered for.' Another said 'the practical endorsement has the potential to increase access to practical geology for all students, and in particular should open up fieldwork opportunities as centres will no longer be restricted to "the perfect site" but rather emphasises the positive practical geology that can be achieved at most natural and manmade exposures'.

Socio-economic

One of the 319 respondents to the consultation commented that the compulsory fieldwork requirement could have a 'disproportionate impact on students from less wealthy households' who might not be able to cover the cost of the trips. Another commented that 'the suggested requirements for fieldwork are not realistic. Schools are constrained by time, money and which geological sites they have access to' and suggested the fieldwork requirements should be made more flexible.

Impact

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

Fieldwork can 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).

As in relation to the practical requirements of physical education GCSE short course, 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 and guidance in place to mitigate potential adverse impacts on disabled students

In relation to socioeconomic considerations, 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

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 therefore satisfied that this final content is appropriate.

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.

5.6 Politics AS/A level

Alternative political ideas and political thinkers

The proposals for the reformed politics AS/A level include the compulsory study of conservatism, liberalism and socialism and the ideas of their key thinkers, and did not require the study of the additional ideas included in some current specifications.

Protected characteristic: sex

60 of the 319 respondents to the consultation commented that they thought the content would have a disproportionate impact on women. Additionally the consultation inbox received 3,500 emails about the need to include more content on feminism and women and 38 Degrees also submitted a consultation response with 41,186 signatures in favour of this. Respondents commented that not including content on topics such as feminism and gender equality and not including more named female political theorists in the content would be detrimental for all students, but especially would deter female students from taking the subject. For example, one commented that 'it is already hard to attract girls to study the course' and that removing some of the alternative ideologies, especially feminism, will further affect this'.

However four respondents commented that the nature of politics means that people from diverse background will not be disproportionately negatively impacted. One said that 'politics, by its very nature, encompasses concepts such as representation...and participation. There seems little better training for students to be active citizens regardless of age, race, sex, or any other characteristic than to undertake academic learning in this subject.'

Another recommended that, while it is good to include examples of the diversity of people who have participated in political life, to provide role models, 'the literature reflects the fact that we are talking about societies that were for a long time (and continue to be) patriarchal – all the more reason to leave flexibility for teachers and students to discover thinkers together who reflect a wider range of thought'.

Protected characteristic: pregnancy and maternity

One of the 319 respondents to the consultation commented that that not including content on feminism and gender could have an impact on women going through pregnancy and maternity.

Protected characteristic: disability

One of the 319 respondents to the consultation commented that the lack of content on feminism and gender could have an impact on students with disabilities, particularly

significant mental health problems. They said that ‘feminist thinking is an essential tool to reduce soaring levels of depression, self-harm, eating disorders and other forms of mental illness in girls and in boys too.’

Two respondents also commented that the lack of coverage in the content on disabled people’s rights movements, and lack of focus on the contribution of activists from this community would have a detrimental impact of students from these groups.

Protected characteristic: race and religion or belief

14 of the 319 respondents to the consultation commented that the lack of content on multiculturalism and lack of people of colour as named thinkers could marginalise students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. One said ‘ the removal of multiculturalism from the syllabus by removing Political Ideologies as a second year option would heavily discriminate against students from a non-traditional background in the UK, whether of a different race, religion or belief.’ Another said the ‘lack of focus on ...issues around multiculturalism, nationalism and integration may...undermine our ability to challenge stereotypes and promote the values of tolerance, inclusion and pluralism.’

However one respondent commented that ‘a study of politics will naturally cover gender/race/sexual orientation etc. issues in a number of areas (most notably in the study of the constitution and civil liberties (democracy, judiciary)) and does not need to be forced in.’

Protected characteristic: sexual orientation

15 of the 319 respondents to the consultation commented that the lack of content on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) right’s movements and role models would have a detrimental impact on students of these groups. One commented that their politics class ‘generally have a good proportion of LGBT+ students, but the removal of the alternative ideologies element as above will again negatively affect this’.

Protected characteristic: gender reassignment

Two of the 319 respondents to the consultation respondent commented that the lack of content on under-represented groups and lack of non-cis gender role models would have a detrimental impact of students from these groups.

Impact

We have listened to the clear and compelling views expressed in the consultation, and changes have been made to the content to address them.

As well as studying conservatism, liberalism and socialism students will also be required to study of a fourth political idea. This will give all students the opportunity to study an additional theory, one of feminism, multiculturalism, nationalism, anarchism or ecologism, including their core ideas and the ideas of their key thinkers.

The key thinkers named have been thoroughly reviewed following the consultation to ensure that they are the most appropriate and relevant to the political ideas named, and reflect the diversity of political thinkers for each idea. The theorists required in the content have been updated based on the feedback in the consultation. They have been drawn from the canon of political thinkers available for each idea, ensuring that they reflect the breadth of different views on each idea and how the idea has changed over time. As a result a greater number of named theorists who are female and /or persons of colour have been included in the content and of course specifications are free to include and teachers to teach more.

As numerous respondents commented, politics is a subject that encourages an awareness and tolerance of diverse cultures, beliefs and experiences, and discussion of challenging topics and issues should be encouraged. One person commented that studying rights 'might even serve to empower student with protected characteristics' and another that 'the discursive nature of this subject engenders respect for opposing and differing ideas.' Various respondents recommended that these topics should be 'covered with some sensitivity but teachers' judgement on how to do so can be trusted.' We agree, and are confident that sensitive and tactful teaching will allow this content to be delivered successfully and actually have a positive impact on students from protected groups.

Increased volume of content

The proposals for the reformed politics AS and A level include more detailed content than the previous criteria – for example, by requiring that all students study four political ideas.

Two of the 319 respondents to the consultation commented that the increase in content will have an impact on students of lower ability. One commented that 'the content overload will certainly impact on weaker students in particular.' Another said that 'current proposals probably suit the top academic ability bands but will be very challenging to middle / low ability students.'

Three of the 319 respondents to the consultation commented that the increase in content will have an impact on students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. One said that 'the vast expansion of content presumably means that students are expected to engage in a huge amount of homework. This will clearly disadvantage students from disadvantaged backgrounds (poor housing, overcrowding, lack of resources, access to internet etc.), whilst those from privileged ones will probably be able to cope with the greater workload.' Another said that they 'do not think that these proposals will have an

impact on those with 'relevant protected characteristics' but I do think that students with little cultural capital will struggle with the demands of these two options.'

Three of the 319 respondents to the consultation commented that the increase in content will have an impact on students with disabilities. One commented that 'the enormous amount and range of material will have a disproportionate impact on all students, but especially those with learning needs. They will find it very hard to cope.' Another said that 'if there is to be extra content, this may have a harmful impact on students with specific learning difficulties.'

Impact

In response to the consultation, the overall volume of content has been reduced, including removing additional historical content, content on pressure groups, and reducing the sizes of the USA and global politics sections. We are confident that the size and demand of the final content is appropriate an equal to that of other reformed A levels. A fuller list of changes to the content can be found in the Government response document.

Conclusion

Changes to the content have been made to respond to the views expressed in the consultation, including increasing the diversity of political theories and political theorists studied, and reducing the overall size of the content. With these changes, we are confident that the final content for politics AS and A level is appropriate, and will not have a disproportionate impact on students of any protected group.

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.

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' Standards⁹, 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 next year.
- We have developed specialist resources for initial teacher training through the National College for Teaching and Learning (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 National Association for Special Educational Needs (Nasen) SENCOs to undertake the master's-level National Award for SEN Co-ordination.

⁹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards

- We have also awarded contracts totalling more than £2.5m a year to a number of sector specialists, including the Autism Trust, Communications Trust, Dyslexia SpLD Trust and National Sensory Impairment Partnership (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. 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 Department is also supporting the charity AfA3As 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.



Department
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