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Consultation outcome

Assessment of modern foreign language GCSEs from 2023: consultation decisions

Updated 30 November 2022

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Introduction

Ofqual published a consultation seeking views on [a proposed adaptation to the assessment of GCSE modern foreign languages \(MFL\) qualifications](#) for students in England taking exams from summer 2023 onwards. The consultation proposed carrying forward to future assessments the changes made to last year's qualifications on the use of vocabulary. In summer 2022, these changes allowed the exam boards greater flexibility by:

- removing the [specific requirement](#) that existed in previous years for the assessments to use vocabulary that is not on the vocabulary lists
- permitting exam boards to give the meaning of (gloss) unfamiliar vocabulary, if they consider this necessary.

Ofqual's consultation ran at the same time as the Department for Education (DfE) [consulted on a minor amendment to its published subject content](#).

The consultation ran from Thursday 29 September to Thursday 20 October and received 497 responses. A [full summary and analysis of the responses](#) has been published at the same time as this decision document.

Decisions

Ofqual has decided to implement the proposals set out in the consultation document. No issues were raised by those responding to the consultation that have made it necessary to revise the proposals, and making these changes will mean that Ofqual's rules align with the revised subject content requirements set by DfE.

Ofqual will, therefore, remove the specific requirement in place before the pandemic for the assessments to use vocabulary that is not on the vocabulary lists. The exam boards can now give the meaning of (gloss) unfamiliar vocabulary, if they consider this necessary.

Details

Ofqual proposed that the exam boards should be allowed greater flexibility by removing the requirement to use vocabulary that is not on the vocabulary lists. In turn, this would allow the exam boards to give the meaning of (gloss) unfamiliar vocabulary.

Respondents who supported the proposal said it would offer greater parity with other GCSEs, which do not assess students on unfamiliar material. They said it would make MFL subjects more accessible and so increase the number of students choosing to study them. Respondents added that this would increase the confidence of students and make the assessments less stressful.

Respondents who disagreed with the proposal thought the removal of the assessment of unfamiliar vocabulary would mean students were less prepared for progression to further MFL study and for real-life conversations.

As set out in the consultation analysis report, there was overwhelming support for this proposal. It aligns with what government, which is responsible for subject content in these GCSEs, expects students to cover in these qualifications this year, and no issues were raised by respondents, including in the equalities and regulatory impact assessments as set out below, that made it necessary to reconsider the proposal.

Equality Impact Assessment

Ofqual considered whether the proposals in the consultation might impact (positively or negatively) on students who share different protected characteristics. These considerations were set out in the equality impact assessment included in the consultation document and the consultation invited views on those, on impacts that may not have been identified and on

ways to mitigate them. Ofqual did not identify any such issues that made it necessary to change the proposals.

Some respondents identified potential negative impacts of the requirement as applied in previous years and more generally in relation to the nature of MFL qualifications in general.

The decision to remove the requirement that assessments use vocabulary that is not on the vocabulary lists is likely to have a positive impact based on the concerns raised about the original requirement.

Many of the other comments did not directly relate to the proposal as they raised more general issues about these qualifications. These comments were, therefore, out of scope of the matters considered within this consultation.

Regulatory Impact Assessment

During this consultation, Ofqual did not identify any significant burdens placed on schools or colleges arising from these proposals. Ofqual did identify that exam boards might incur costs to implement the changes to their exam and assessment materials.

The consultation sought views on the initial regulatory impact assessment. It asked about any other potential costs or burdens that had not been identified, and what steps could be taken to reduce them.

Many comments referred to the need for new resources such as textbooks and subscriptions, training and administration. These comments also said the proposals might cause more work for teachers in the form of re-planning lessons.

Whilst acknowledging these concerns, Ofqual believes the overwhelming support for the proposals and the benefits for students outweigh the concerns.

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