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Consultation outcome

# Decisions: Proposed amendment to the assessment of Chinese and Japanese AS

# and A levels

Updated 13 July 2023

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## Introduction

Ofqual published a [consultation on a proposed amendment to the assessment requirements for AS and A level Chinese and Japanese qualifications being taught from autumn 2024](#). This consultation sought views on whether, and if so how, Ofqual should amend a requirement for AS and A level qualifications in Chinese and Japanese that limits how many marks can be used for responses in English. This was in response to a separate [consultation conducted by the Department for Education \(DfE\)](#).

Ofqual's consultation was open from 26 April to 31 May 2023 and received 125 responses. [A full summary and analysis of the responses](#) has been published at the same time as this decision document.

## Summary of decisions

Ofqual has decided to implement the proposal set out in the consultation document. No issues were raised by those responding to the consultation that Ofqual has judged would make it necessary to revise the proposal. The proposal was made in response to changes DfE wished to make to its subject content expectations for AS and A level qualifications in Chinese and Japanese. Making the amendment for each language will mean that Ofqual's assessment requirements align with the revised subject content expectations set by DfE.

Ofqual will, therefore, amend its existing requirement that no more than 10% of the total qualification marks may be used for responses in English for AS and A level Chinese and Japanese qualifications. It will amend the requirement so that no more than 40% of the total qualification marks may be used for responses in English. This will apply to Chinese and Japanese AS and A level qualifications taught from autumn 2024.

## Details

Following public consultation, DfE has decided to make changes to its AS and A level subject content for the 2 logographic languages, Chinese and Japanese. One of DfE's changes is that the questions and responses for comprehension (listening and reading) tasks should be in English, rather than in the language of study. Ofqual does not have a requirement that specifies the language in which questions should be asked. It does, however, currently have an assessment requirement that limits how many marks can be used for responses in English.

To reflect DfE's changes to its subject content, Ofqual proposed amending this requirement for AS and A level Chinese and Japanese qualifications. It proposed to increase the percentage of marks that may be used for responses in English from no more than 10% to no more than 40%. The majority of respondents supported the proposed amendment. Of the 123 respondents who answered questions on Chinese, 67% were in favour of amending the requirement, and 87% agreed that the existing limit should be increased from 'no more than 10%' to 'no more than 40%'. Of the 108 respondents who answered questions on Japanese, 62% were in favour of amending the requirement, and 74% agreed that the existing limit should be increased from 'no more than 10%' to 'no more than 40%'.

Respondents supporting the proposal said it was right to assess students' comprehension skills through written English. They were concerned that currently students might understand what they are listening to and reading in an examination but not be able to demonstrate this unless they can write in the target language to a certain standard. Other comments supporting the proposal suggested it was appropriate given the nature of the Chinese and Japanese written languages, which makes them particularly challenging languages to study compared with others. These respondents expressed concerns about the workload associated with the demand of the current qualifications and suggested the amendment should improve this. Some respondents also expressed the opinion that the amendment would especially benefit non-native speaking students.

There were few comments from the respondents who disagreed with the proposal to increase the percentage of marks that may be used for responses in English from no more than 10% to no more than 40%. Some respondents stated that the A levels should maintain their demand by expecting wide use of the target language in the examination to reflect real-life use of the language. Another respondent suggested that the proposed amendment was unnecessary because, instead, more significant changes should be made to AS and A levels in Chinese and Japanese. This respondent noted that the 2 languages are very distinct from others and there should be less focus on language acquisition in these qualifications.

As set out in the consultation analysis report, there was strong support for the proposal to amend the assessment requirement so that up to 40% of the total qualification marks may be used for responses in English for AS and A level Chinese and Japanese qualifications. No issues were raised by respondents, including in the equalities and regulatory impact assessments as set out below, that Ofqual has judged would make it necessary to reconsider the proposal. The proposal aligns with what DfE, which is responsible for subject content in these qualifications, expects students to do in these 2 languages from 2024. Ofqual has, therefore, decided to implement the proposed amendment to the assessment requirements for AS and A level qualifications in Chinese and Japanese.

## Equality Impact Assessment

In its consultation, Ofqual considered whether the proposal might impact (positively or negatively) on students who share different protected characteristics. Ofqual invited views on its equality impact assessment, and on any impacts that might not have been identified and on ways to mitigate them.

Two respondents expressed concern about the potential impact on students with dyslexia and on students with specific learning difficulties. One said the proposed amendment would go some way to addressing barriers faced by this group. Their additional comments related to how the qualifications might be amended to improve accessibility for these students generally rather than on specific issues with, or mitigations for, the proposal itself.

A few respondents commented on possible impacts for students with English as an additional language (EAL) and native speakers of Chinese and Japanese. Two suggested that native speakers should have the option to respond in their own language, rather than in English. Another suggested that students should not be disadvantaged by the quality of their written English during these assessments.

[Ofqual's general conditions require that qualifications in England are assessed in the English language](#), except for where the qualification assesses students' knowledge, skills and understanding of another language. For these AS and A level Chinese and Japanese qualifications, DfE's revised subject content expectations make clear that students are no longer required to demonstrate their comprehension using the target language. Instead, students will be expected to demonstrate their comprehension through responses in English and Ofqual's proposal reflects DfE's expectation. While responses are expected in written English, the focus of the assessment is not being changed. Ofqual would not expect to see any reward for the use or quality of students' written English beyond what is necessary for them to demonstrate their comprehension of the target language.

The other comments either focused on the proposal more generally or did not directly relate to the proposal as they suggested alternative or additional amendments to the qualifications. Ofqual did not find any further issues that made it necessary to change its proposal and notes it is likely to have a positive impact for students overall.

## Regulatory Impact Assessment

During this consultation, Ofqual did not identify any significant ongoing burdens placed on schools, colleges or exam boards arising from the proposal. It did identify that these organisations might experience some one-off, direct costs and administrative burdens, such as in the production of, and familiarisation with, updated assessment materials and teaching resources. Some respondents' comments aligned with this view. There were a few comments about ways costs could be mitigated.

Other comments did not directly relate to the proposal as they suggested alternative or additional amendments to the qualifications. Ofqual recognises there is support for the proposal, and notes it is necessary to enable DfE's changes to its subject content to take effect.

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