



Open consultation

Proposed changes to the assessment of mathematics, physics and combined science GCSEs

Published 2 March 2026

Applies to England

[Contents](#)

[Proposals at a glance](#)

[Audience](#)

[Consultation arrangements](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Consultation details](#)

[Equality impact assessment](#)

[Regulatory impact assessment](#)

[Annex A: Consultation responses and your data](#)

[Annex B: Ofqual's role, objectives and duties](#)

Proposals at a glance

Ofqual invites your views on proposed adaptations to the assessment of GCSEs in mathematics, physics and combined science for students in England taking exams from 2028, for the lifetime of the current GCSE specifications. As set out in its [response to the government's Curriculum and Assessment Review](#), the Department for Education (DfE) intends that reformed qualifications will be first taught in 2029 or 2030. Based on this timing, Ofqual expects the proposals below will apply to GCSE exams taken by students up to and including 2030 or 2031, and any resit series after that.

DfE has confirmed its decision, in relation to the subject content for which it is responsible, that it is not necessary for students to memorise formulae for GCSE mathematics and equations for GCSE physics and combined science for the lifetime of the current GCSE specifications in these subjects.

As a result of this, Ofqual proposes carrying forward the provision of support materials, in the form of formulae and revised equations sheets, in the exams for GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science. This proposal will be in place for the lifetime of the current GCSE specifications in these subjects. This includes resit opportunities for the current qualifications after the new ones are introduced, and the November GCSE mathematics exams. Ofqual expects to confirm the arrangements for resits for the current GCSE qualifications when it sets out the expectations for the reform of these qualifications in due course.

Audience

This consultation is likely to be of interest to:

- students, including private candidates, who are expecting to take GCSE exams from 2028 and their parents and carers
- teachers, private tutors and home-educators of these qualifications
- school and college leaders and heads of other types of exam centre
- stakeholder representative organisations and unions
- exams officers
- the exam boards that will provide the exams

- those who use qualifications to make selection decisions: further and higher education institutions and employers

Consultation arrangements

Duration

The consultation will be open for 3 weeks starting on 2 March 2026 and ending on 23 March 2026 at 11:45pm.

Respond

Please respond to this consultation by completing [the online response form](#).

For information on how Ofqual will use and manage your data, please see Annex A.

Introduction

This is an Ofqual consultation on assessment arrangements for GCSEs in mathematics, physics and combined science in England. It is proposed that these arrangements will be in place for the lifetime of the current GCSE specifications in these subjects.

DfE is responsible for setting the curriculum requirements and subject content for all GCSE qualifications. Ofqual is responsible for how the subject content will be assessed and for ensuring that the assessment arrangements can support valid and reliable results.

Previously DfE decided as a matter of policy that it was not necessary for students taking exams from 2022 to 2027 to memorise the formulae for GCSE mathematics and equations for GCSE physics and combined science that they must in a normal year. Ofqual has consulted 3 times on the assessment arrangements necessary to

implement that policy decision. Ofqual then amended its Conditions and Requirements for GCSE qualifications to require exam boards to provide a formulae sheet in the exams for GCSE mathematics and a revised equations sheet in the exams for GCSE physics and combined science. Exam boards provide copies of the formulae and equations sheets for use in teaching and to ensure that students are familiar with them prior to the exams. Clean copies of the formulae and equations sheets are provided in the exams.

In November 2025, the [Curriculum and Assessment Review published its final report](#), recommending that government evaluate whether students should be required to memorise and recall each formula and equation in these subjects, as well as being able to apply them. As set out in its letter to Ofqual, DfE confirmed in the government response to the review that it is now considering this as it reviews and develops revised subject content for reformed GCSEs in these subjects. Therefore, the longer-term expectations will be confirmed when new qualifications are developed. As set out in its response to the government's Curriculum and Assessment Review, DfE intends that these new qualifications will be first taught in 2029 or 2030. Based on this timing, Ofqual expects the proposals below will apply to GCSE exams taken by students up to and including 2030 or 2031, and any resit series after that.

DfE has now told Ofqual that students will not be expected to memorise all the usual formulae and equations in GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science for the lifetime of the current GCSE specifications in these subjects. This will include resit opportunities for the current qualifications after the introduction of new qualifications. It will also include November exams for students taking GCSE mathematics.

Ofqual proposes to continue requiring exam boards to provide support materials for exams for the lifetime of the current GCSE specifications in mathematics, physics and combined science. This will include resit opportunities and the November exams for students taking GCSE mathematics.

Ofqual last consulted on similar arrangements in 2024 and the proposal to introduce these support materials for the exams in 2025, 2026 and 2027 received [strong support from all stakeholder groups](#). The feedback Ofqual gathered before and following the exams in 2022, 2023 and 2024 indicated these assessment arrangements had a positive impact on student confidence when preparing for their exams. Ofqual considered the impact of the changes made to these assessments in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 and found no evidence that the functioning of the assessment was compromised. Ofqual did receive feedback about accessibility issues including that the formulae and equations should be attached to specific

questions or included in the question paper. Also, that the presentation of the formulae and equations could be considered to ensure they are accessible to students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

As a result of this feedback, Ofqual decided the formulae and equations sheets used in exams should remain consistent with those in previous years and between specifications. Ofqual did, however, confirm that exam boards may consider the possibility of making minimal presentational-only changes, in response to the above feedback, that could be consistent for all specifications.

Ofqual welcomes your views on the continuation of these arrangements for the lifetime of the current GCSE specifications in GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science. Ofqual will consider all responses and is aiming to announce its decisions as soon as possible.

Consultation details

Ofqual is seeking views on whether the use of formulae sheets and revised equation sheets currently in use in GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science should be continued for students taking these exams from 2028 onwards.

This section explains the proposals and sets out the consultation questions, which can be accessed in the online response form.

Ofqual's proposals to change exam and assessment requirements

DfE has asked Ofqual to carry forward current arrangements so students taking exams do not need to memorise the formulae for GCSE mathematics and most equations for GCSE physics and combined science that they must in a normal year. To achieve this, Ofqual proposes students should be given support materials in the exam room that set out the formulae and equations they would usually have to memorise. It is proposed these arrangements will be in place for the lifetime of the current GCSE specifications in these subjects and will include resit opportunities for

the current qualifications after the introduction of new qualifications. It will also include November exams for students taking GCSE mathematics.

Ofqual has considered:

- that DfE has made changes to its expectations for students taking GCSE qualifications in these subjects
- that Ofqual has not identified any significant assessment issues relating to the introduction of these arrangements in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025
- feedback received in response to previous consultations on these arrangements for exams from 2022 to 2027

Support materials

For GCSE mathematics, the DfE's subject content lists formulae that must be studied as part of the qualification. Some of the formulae, such as those relating to the surface area and volume of cones and spheres and kinematics, are included within exam questions or, where appropriate, in a formulae list at the start of the question paper. However, there are other formulae that the subject content specifies students are expected to memorise and recall for use in the exam. DfE has decided students should not have to memorise these formulae. To achieve this, Ofqual proposes that students should be provided with a formulae sheet in the exam room for this subject.

Students sitting GCSE physics and combined science papers normally have access to an equations sheet giving more complex equations and must recall a further 18 to 23 equations depending on the subject, specification and tier. The exams test recall and use of these equations. DfE has decided students should not have to memorise these. To achieve this, Ofqual proposes providing additional support to students by requiring the equation sheet to include all equations. This will be in place for the lifetime of the current GCSE specifications in these subjects and will include resit opportunities for the current qualifications after the introduction of new qualifications. It will also include November exams for students taking GCSE mathematics.

Ofqual expects the formulae and equations sheets used in exams to remain consistent with those in previous years and between specifications. We propose that exam boards can, however, consider the possibility of making minimal presentational-only changes, in response to the above feedback, that could be consistent for all specifications. In addition, we will require exam boards to no longer include questions in exams that can be answered by transferring information from the equations sheet in GCSE physics and combined science.

Question 1

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal that formulae sheets should be provided in the exams for GCSE mathematics for the lifetime of the current qualifications?

Question 2

Do you have any comments on the proposal to provide formulae sheets in the exams for GCSE mathematics for the lifetime of the current qualifications?

Question 3

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal that equations sheets should be provided in the exams for GCSE physics and combined science for the lifetime of the current qualifications?

Question 4

Do you have any comments on the proposal to provide equations sheets in the exams for GCSE physics and combined science for the lifetime of the current qualifications?

Equality impact assessment

As a public body, Ofqual is subject to the public sector equality duty. Ofqual has considered whether these proposals might impact (positively or negatively) on students who share particular protected characteristics.

In proposing changes to the exam arrangements Ofqual has taken care to consider how any changes might have an impact on disabled students, some of whom will have reasonable adjustments when taking their exams and assessments. Feedback from the previous consultations on the support for formulae and equations has been

considered when developing the proposals above.

Some respondents highlighted the impact of formulae and equations sheets on students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), noting that some students find them helpful while others find them confusing. This was particularly the case for students needing reasonable adjustments, such as enlarged modified papers, due to the materials being unwieldy and time-consuming to navigate in the exam. While recognising this, we have judged that the continued use of such sheets provides the most effective means of making sure students have access to the relevant formulae and equations without having to recall them. However, we have encouraged the exam boards to consider also including formulae and equations in the stem of questions where appropriate. We also intend to require exam boards to no longer include questions in exams that can be answered by transferring information from the sheets.

Some respondents also commented on the presentation of the formulae and equations. Exam boards previously worked together to agree a format and presentation that reflected DfE's subject content and which would be consistent for all students. Together with the exam boards, Ofqual has considered whether any changes could be made for exams from 2028 onwards. However, introducing changes now risks a lack of consistency across exam boards, and different styles of support being available across exam boards and different exam years. This would also affect students who have taken these exams in 2027 and wish to retake them in 2028. It is also unclear that there is an alternative that would be an improvement for all students. The current approach will be familiar to teachers and students, both in its standard form and when adapted to appear in modified papers as part of arrangements for reasonable adjustments. Ofqual is therefore proposing the support for formulae and equations should remain as that provided in previous years and be in the form of formulae and equations sheets.

Question 5

Are there other potential equality impacts Ofqual has not identified?

Question 6

If yes, what are they and do you have any suggestions for how any potential negative impacts on particular groups of students could be mitigated?

Regulatory impact assessment

Ofqual's proposed changes to the exam arrangements for students taking GCSEs in mathematics, physics and combined science exams from 2028 onwards are made in response to a request from DfE. The changes mean students will not be expected to memorise all the usual formulae and equations, while ensuring the qualifications remain valid and meaningful. Ofqual has developed these proposals with input from the exam boards, with the aim of putting in place appropriate and manageable arrangements. Ofqual anticipates schools and colleges will experience limited or no burden from these proposals. Indeed, the changes, as outlined above, are intended to reduce burden on centres, to enable more time for teaching. While some centres might choose to print copies of the formulae and equation sheets for use during teaching, they are not required to do so. Clean copies for use in the exam room will be provided by the exam board with the relevant question papers.

Exam boards will incur costs to implement the changes to the exam arrangements, although these proposals would not require them to undertake major changes. They are familiar with the use of formulae and equations sheets and know what is required to provide them. This helps to minimise any risks or costs associated with this proposal.

Question 7

Are there additional activities associated with providing students with formulae and equations sheets in their GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science exams that Ofqual has not identified above?

Question 8

If yes, what are they and do you have any suggestions for alternative approaches that could reduce burden and costs, if identified?

Annex A: Consultation responses and

your data

Why we collect your personal data

As part of our consultation process, you are not required to provide your name or any personal information that will identify you. However, we are aware that some respondents would like to provide contact information. If you or your organisation are happy to provide personal data, with regard to this consultation, please complete the details below. We seek to reach as broad a range of people and institutions as possible to inform our proposals. For us to monitor this, understand views of different groups and taking steps when reaching out to specific groups, we may ask for sensitive data such as ethnicity and disability to understand the effectiveness of our approach. However, it is optional to provide this information.

If there is any part of your response that you wish to remain confidential, please indicate at the appropriate point in the survey.

Where you have requested that any part of your response remains confidential, we will not include your details (or your organisation's details) in any published list of respondents. However, we may quote from the response anonymously to illustrate the kind of feedback we have received.

Your data

Your personal data:

- will not be sent outside of the UK unless there are appropriate safeguards in place to protect your personal data
- will not be used for any automated decision making
- will be kept secure

We implement appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect your personal data against accidental or unlawful destruction, accidental loss or alteration, unauthorised disclosure or access and any other unlawful forms of processing.

Your rights

You have the right to:

- be informed that your personal data is being processed by Ofqual
- access the information we hold about you
- request that we rectify any information about you that is incorrect
- request that data we hold about you are erased. There are certain conditions which apply to the erasure of personal data, depending on the purpose of processing. You will be informed if your request has been declined and the reason for this
- restrict processing in certain circumstances

If you would like to exercise your rights, please contact us using the details below. You can also find out [more about Ofqual's privacy information](#).

Freedom of Information Act and your response

Please note that information in response to this consultation may be subject to release to the public or other parties in accordance with access to information law, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). We have obligations to disclose information to particular recipients including members of the public in certain circumstances. Your explanation of your reasons for requesting confidentiality for all or part of your response would help us balance requests for disclosure against any obligation of confidentiality. If we receive a request for the information that you have provided in your consultation response, we will take full account of your reasons for requesting confidentiality and assess this in accordance with applicable data protection rules.

Members of the public are entitled to ask for information we hold under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. On such occasions, we will usually anonymise responses, or ask for consent from those who have responded, but please be aware that we cannot guarantee confidentiality.

If you choose 'no' in response to the question asking if you would like anything to be kept confidential, we are able to release the content of your response to the public,

but we won't make your personal name and private contact details publicly available.

How we will use your response

We will use your response to help us shape our policies and regulatory activity. If you provide your personal details, we may contact you in relation to your response. We produce and publish reports on [Ofqual - GOV.UK](#) setting out an analysis of the consultation responses and decisions made as a result of that analysis. In the course of analysis, we will avoid using your name and contact details. We will only process the body of your response, but we are aware that in some cases, this may contain information that could identify you.

Sharing your response

Your response will be shared internally within Ofqual to analyse the responses and shape our policies and regulatory activity. We may also share your response with The Department for Education (DfE) and Skills England where the consultation is a joint consultation or part of work involving those organisations. We may share responses with them to ensure that our approaches align. If we share a response, where possible we will not include any personal data (if you have provided any). Where we have received an organisational response to a consultation, we will provide DfE and Skills England with the name of the organisation that has provided the response, although we will consider requests for confidentiality.

Where we share data, we ensure that adequate safeguards are in place to ensure that your rights and freedoms are not affected. We will not share your information with any third parties for the purposes of direct marketing.

We use data processors who are third parties who provide elements of services for us. We have contracts in place with our data processors. This means that they cannot do anything with your personal information unless we have instructed them to do it. They will hold it securely and retain it for the period we instruct. Where we transfer any personal data outside the UK, we make sure that appropriate safeguards are in place to ensure that the personal data is protected and kept secure.

We use Citizen Space, which is part of Delib Limited, to collect consultation

responses and they act as our data processor. You can view [Citizen Space's privacy notice](#).

We may also publish an annex to the analysis listing all organisations that provided a non-confidential response, but this will not include personal names or other contact details.

Use of AI for Consultation Analysis

To support the analysis of consultation responses, we may use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, such as Microsoft Copilot. This is a secure AI tool, which uses a combination of Large Language Models (LLMs) to assist in identifying themes, summarising feedback, and generating insights. This tool has appropriate safeguards in place that ensures the privacy and security of confidential responses. All personal and special category data will be robustly anonymised before analysis. Any use of AI is solely for enhancing the efficiency and quality of our consultation analysis and reporting. Copilot does not make decisions about individuals but supports human-led analysis and decision-making by providing summarised information and insights. All final outcomes and decisions arising from the consultation analysis are determined by humans.

Where AI tools are used to process personal data, this is done in accordance with the original purposes for which the data was provided and processed in accordance with this notice. Copilot has the same security, compliance, and privacy settings configured within Microsoft 365.

How long will we keep your personal data?

Unless otherwise stated, Ofqual will keep your personal data (if provided) for a period of 6 years after the consultation closing date.

Our legal basis for processing your personal data

Where you provide personal data for this consultation, we rely upon the public task basis as set out in Article 6(1)(e) of UK GDPR which allows processing of personal

data when this is necessary for the performance of our public tasks. We will consult where there is a statutory duty to consult or where there is a legitimate expectation that a process of consultation will take place. Where you provide special category data, such as ethnicity and disability data, we process this in accordance with Article 9(2)(g) of UK GDPR where processing is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest.

The identity of the data controller and contact details of our Data Protection Officer

This privacy notice is provided by The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). The relevant data protection regime that applies to our processing is the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 ('Data Protection Laws'). We ask that you read this privacy notice carefully as it contains important information about our processing of consultation responses and your rights.

How to contact us

If you have any questions about this privacy notice, how we handle your personal data, or want to exercise any of your rights, please contact our data protection officer at dp.requests@ofqual.gov.uk

We will respond to any rights that you exercise within a month of receiving your request. If the request is particularly complex, we will respond within 3 months.

Please note that exceptions apply to some of these rights which we will apply in accordance with the law.

You also have the right to lodge a complaint with [the Information Commissioner](#) (ICO) if you think we are not handling your data fairly or in accordance with the law. You can contact the ICO at:

ICO,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,

Annex B: Ofqual's role, objectives and duties

The Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009

Ofqual has 5 statutory objectives, set out in the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009;

1) The qualification standards objective, which is to secure that the qualifications it regulates:

a) give a reliable indication of knowledge, skills and understanding; and

b) indicate:

i) a consistent level of attainment (including over time) between comparable regulated qualifications; and

ii) a consistent level of attainment (but not over time) between qualifications it regulates and comparable qualifications (including those awarded outside of the UK) that it does not regulate

2) The assessment standards objective, which is to promote the development and implementation of regulated assessment arrangements which:

a) give a reliable indication of achievement, and

b) indicate a consistent level of attainment (including over time) between comparable assessments

3) The public confidence objective, which is to promote public confidence in regulated qualifications and regulated assessment arrangements

4) The awareness objective, which is to promote awareness and understanding of:

a) the range of regulated qualifications available,

b) the benefits of regulated qualifications to students, employers and institutions within the higher education sector, and

c) the benefits of recognition to bodies awarding or authenticating qualifications

5) The efficiency objective, which is to secure that regulated qualifications are provided efficiently, and that any relevant sums payable to a body awarding or authenticating a qualification represent value for money

Ofqual must therefore regulate so that qualifications properly differentiate between students who have demonstrated that they have the knowledge, skills and understanding required to attain the qualification and those who have not.

Ofqual also has a duty under the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 to have regard to the reasonable requirements of relevant students, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, of employers and of the higher education sector, and to aspects of government policy when so directed by the Secretary of State.

The Equality Act 2010

As a public body, Ofqual is subject to the public sector equality duty. This duty requires Ofqual to have due regard to the need to:

a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Equality Act 2010

b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

The awarding organisations that design, deliver and award qualifications are required by the Equality Act, among other things, to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people taking their qualifications, except where Ofqual has specified that such adjustments should not be made.

When Ofqual decides whether such adjustments should not be made, it must have regard to:

a) the need to minimise the extent to which disabled persons are disadvantaged in

attaining the qualification because of their disabilities

b) the need to secure that the qualification gives a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and understanding of a person upon whom it is conferred

c) the need to maintain public confidence in the qualification

Ofqual is subject to a number of duties and it must aim to achieve a number of objectives. These different duties and objectives can sometimes conflict with each other. For example, if Ofqual regulates to secure that a qualification gives a reliable indication of a student's knowledge, skills and understanding, a student who has not been able to demonstrate the required knowledge, skills and/or understanding will not be awarded the qualification.

A person may find it more difficult, or impossible, to demonstrate the required knowledge, skills and/or understanding because they have a protected characteristic. This could put them at a disadvantage relative to others who have been awarded the qualification.

It is not always possible for Ofqual to regulate so that qualifications give a reliable indication of knowledge, skills and understanding and advance equality between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Ofqual must review all the available evidence and actively consider all the available options before coming to a final, justifiable decision.

Qualifications cannot mitigate inequalities or unfairness in the education system or in society more widely that might affect, for example, students' preparedness to take the qualification and the assessments within it. While a wide range of factors can have an impact on a student's ability to achieve a particular assessment, Ofqual's influence is limited to the qualification design and assessment.

Ofqual requires awarding bodies to design qualifications that give a reliable indication of the knowledge, skills and understanding of the students that take them. Ofqual also requires awarding organisations to avoid, where possible, features of a qualification that could, without justification, make a qualification more difficult for a student to achieve because they have a particular protected characteristic. Ofqual requires awarding organisations to monitor whether any features of their qualifications have this effect.

In setting its proposed requirements, Ofqual wants to understand the possible impacts of the proposals on students who share a protected characteristic. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnerships
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

With respect to the public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equality Act, Ofqual is not required to have due regard to impacts on those who are married or in a civil partnership.

[↑ Back to top](#)

Help us improve GOV.UK

To help us improve GOV.UK, we'd like to know more about your visit today. [Please fill in this survey \(opens in a new tab\)](#).



Services and information

[Benefits](#)

Government activity

[Departments](#)

[Births, death, marriages and care](#)

[Business and self-employed](#)

[Childcare and parenting](#)

[Citizenship and living in the UK](#)

[Crime, justice and the law](#)

[Disabled people](#)

[Driving and transport](#)

[Education and learning](#)

[Employing people](#)

[Environment and countryside](#)

[Housing and local services](#)

[Money and tax](#)

[Passports, travel and living abroad](#)

[Visas and immigration](#)

[Working, jobs and pensions](#)

[News](#)

[Guidance and regulation](#)

[Research and statistics](#)

[Policy papers and consultations](#)

[Transparency](#)

[How government works](#)

[Get involved](#)

[Help](#) [Privacy](#) [Cookies](#) [Accessibility statement](#) [Contact](#)

[Terms and conditions](#) [Rhestr o Wasanaethau Cymraeg](#)

[Government Digital Service](#)

OGI

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated





© Crown copyright