

Information pages

Sixth Form Colleges' Association's Response

About you

1. Are the views expressed in response to this consultation your personal views or an official response from the organisation you represent? (tick one only)*

- Personal views
- Official response from an organisation/group

If you ticked 'personal views', are you a ...? (tick one only)*

- Student
- Parent/carer
- Teacher (but not responding on behalf of a school)
- Educational specialist (retired teacher, examiner, assessment expert, subject expert, governor) – please state which capacity _____
- General public (interested in education but no direct link) – please state which capacity _____

2. If you ticked 'official response from an organisation/group', please state which type of responding organisation you represent (tick one only)*

- Awarding organisation
- Government department/agency or organisation
- Local authority
- University or higher education institution
- Employer
- School/college (please complete the next question)
- Other representative group / interest group (please skip to 'type of representative group/interest group')

3. Which school/college type do you represent?

- Academy and/or free school
- Comprehensive
- State selective
- Independent/private
- Special school
- Further education

- Sixth-form college
 - None of the above (please state what)
-

4. Type of representative group/interest group

- Group of awarding organisations
- Union
- Business representative group
- Equality organisation/group
- Subject associations/learned societies
- School or teacher representative group
- Other representative/interest group (please state what)

Sixth Form Colleges in England

5. Nation*

- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland
- Other EU country (please state which) _____
- Non-EU country (please state which) _____

Questions

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Core content – common content across all exam boards offering a qualification – will help make sure qualifications are fit for purpose.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Core content – common content across all exam boards offering a qualification – will help make sure qualifications are comparable across exam boards.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Core content – common content across all exam boards offering a qualification – will help make sure qualifications are comparable over time.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Core content – common content across all exam boards offering a qualification – will help make it easier for users* to understand the qualification.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree

- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

* Persons with a legitimate interest in the qualification or type of qualification made available by the awarding organisation, who may include: (a) Learners and Learners' representatives; (b) Centres; (c) Teachers; (d) employers and employers' representatives; (e) further and higher education establishments; (f) schools; (g) government departments and agencies; and (h) professional bodies.

Q5. We propose to set up a regulatory framework to let exam boards develop core subject content. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Q6. If you disagree with our proposal, are there other options we have not considered?

.....

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that exam boards should consult with stakeholders and take their views into account when developing core content for all reformed GCSE, AS and A level qualifications?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Q8. We have identified key stakeholder groups that need to be consulted in core content development (subject associations, teachers, employers, higher and further education, relevant equality groups). To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal that exam boards should include these groups when developing core content?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Q9. Are there other stakeholders you believe should be consulted?

Professional Associations such as the Sixth Form Colleges Association should be consulted on core content development.

Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the benefit of having additional (to those already being reformed) GCSE, AS and A level subjects is worth any additional costs incurred by exam boards in developing core content (common content across all exam boards offering a qualification)?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should develop principles to determine in advance which remaining or new subject areas can be developed as GCSE, AS or A level qualifications?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Q12. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement below:

Current GCSEs/AS/A levels cannot always be easily distinguished from others with a similar title.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Subjects that can be easily distinguished will help make it easier for users* to understand the different qualifications available.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

* Persons with a legitimate interest in the qualification or type of qualification made available by the awarding organisation, who may include: (a) students and their representatives; (b) Centres; (c) Teachers; (d) employers and employers' representatives; (e) further and higher education establishments; (f) schools; (g) government departments and agencies; and (h) professional bodies.

GCSE/AS/A level subjects should be easily distinguished from other GCSE/AS/A level subjects.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

GCSE/AS/A level subjects should only be developed if they meet the specific qualification purpose.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

The performance of students taking GCSEs/AS/A levels in any subject should be able to be differentiated against the full grade range using the relevant grading scale.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

GCSE/AS/A level subjects should be set at a level of demand consistent with that of reformed qualifications.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

GCSE/AS/A level subjects should be capable of being validly assessed (mainly by exam assessment, except for those essential skills that can't be assessed by an exam).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

We agree that GCSE/AS/A level subjects should be capable of being validly assessed; however, exam assessment should only be used if it is the most appropriate means of determining and validating a student's performance. We

believe that teacher assessment has a part to play in the system and should continue to run alongside externally marked examination to develop a broader picture of student skills and understanding.

Q13. Do you think that requiring the last award of all unreformed GCSE qualifications by 2018 is appropriate?

Yes

If No, please comment in relation to the specific subjects.

.....

Q14. Do you think that requiring the last award of all unreformed A level qualifications by 2018 is appropriate?

Yes

If No, please comment in relation to the specific subjects.

.....

Q15. Do you think that requiring the last award of all unreformed AS qualifications by 2018 is appropriate?

Yes

If No, please comment in relation to the specific subjects.

.....

Q16. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should start to apply our principles, to discontinue similar or overlapping qualifications alongside the current reforms?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion

Q17. Referring to the full list of qualifications we are proposing to discontinue as subjects are reformed, listed in appendix B, are there any other qualifications that should be included in the process?

No

If Yes, please comment in relation to the specific subjects.

.....

Q18. Do any of the similar or overlapping qualifications we have proposed in appendix B serve a very distinct purpose from the reformed subjects?

Yes

If Yes, should any alternative qualifications be granted an exception to continue alongside the reformed ones in a given subject?

Yes

If Yes, please list and comment in relation to the specific subjects.

We strongly feel that the following subjects serve a very distinct purpose and should not be discontinued for the following reasons:

AS/A level Use of Mathematics

Use of Mathematics is a vital qualification which many Sixth Form College students undertake. It is a well-known and credible qualification and acts as a useful stepping stone from GCSE Mathematics. The content focuses on the practical application of mathematics which students can use in employment. Furthermore, colleges have found that the knowledge and skills developed throughout the course compliments well with other elements of a student's study programme.

We understand the Government's commitment to improve maths literacy through the introduction of core maths L3 qualifications, however, the Use of Mathematics qualification already successfully achieve these objectives. The subject enhances a student's analytical and problem solving skills making students more mathematically literate.

AS/A level Environmental studies

There is minimal overlap in the content of Environmental studies in comparison to the separate science AS/A levels. The course teaches the political and economic dimension of environmental science including environmental legislations and sustainability. The subject specifically provides a route for students who wish to progress onto land management, conservation and agricultural careers, therefore, serving a distinct purpose as outlined in paragraph 4.22.

AS/A level Applied Science

This subject is very unique as it covers the content of all three science subjects in one and is often taken by students who would not normally study a separate science subject. At a time where Government is encouraging students to take up science subjects, it is vital for students to be given the option to take a subject which broadly covers all 3 science areas. Furthermore, it is a particularly useful qualification for students to undertake if they are unsure which career choice within the sciences they would like to pursue e.g. nursing or laboratory technician work. Applied science is also a natural progression route from the double science GCSE qualification.

AS/A level Home Economics

This subject covers topics such as food nutrition which is a vital topic students need to cover if they are progressing onto university to study nutrition degrees. These students also progress to niche careers such as food scientists or nutritionists.

AS/A level Performance Studies

Similar to Applied science, Performance studies covers a range of areas (dance, singing, music and drama) all in one subject. This subject is appealing to students who wish to continue to develop their creative talents in a multidisciplinary way alongside more academic subjects. Removing this subject, will narrow the student's breadth of study by focusing only on one creative discipline.

AS/A level Applied Business

The incorporation of ICT in Applied Business is a vital component of the subject and one which is not covered in Business studies itself.

GCSE Humanities

Humanities is offered to students at college to help them re-engage with the subjects which they may not have been quite as successful in at school. Many progress onto these courses later on in key stage 5.

It is important to emphasise the importance of multidisciplinary subjects such as AS/A level Applied Science, AS/A level Performance studies and GCSE Humanities. Post 16 institutions, and in particular, Sixth Form Colleges have been hit by steep funding cuts which has resulted in a narrowed curriculum. Subjects which incorporate a range of disciplines are vital in providing the breadth of choice and increasing the opportunity for students to widen their curriculum programme.

Q19. Are there any potential equality impacts of our proposals for the next stage of GCSE, AS and A level reform that we have not identified?

Yes

If Yes, what are they?

It would be useful if an analysis takes place on the gender balance of students undertaking subjects such as applied science and home economics. This will ensure a particular gender is not disadvantaged by the proposed reforms.

Q20. Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impacts of the proposals in this document on persons who share a protected characteristic?

No

If Yes, please comment on the additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impacts.

Q21. Have you any other comments on the impacts of the proposals in this document on persons who share a protected characteristic?

No

If Yes, please comment in relation to the specific subjects.

.....

Q22. Are there any potential regulatory impacts of the proposals in this document that we have not identified?

No

If Yes, what are they?

We are looking at how we provide accessible versions of our consultations and would appreciate it if you could spare a few moments to answer the following questions.

Your answers to these questions will not be considered as part of the consultation and will not be released to any third-parties.

Q23. Do you have any special requirements to enable you to read our consultations? (For example screen reader, large text, and so on)

No

Q24. Which of the following do you currently use to access our consultation documents? (Select all that apply)

- Screen reader / text-to-speech software
- Braille reader
- Screen magnifier
- Speech to text software
- Motor assistance (blow-suck tube, mouth stick, etc.)
- Other

Q25. Which of the following document formats would meet your needs for accessing our consultations? (Select all that apply)

- A standard PDF
- Accessible web pages
- Large type PDF (16 point text)
- Large-type word document (16 point text)
- eBook (Kindle, iBooks or similar format)
- Braille document
- Spoken document
- Other

Q26. How many of our consultations have you read in the last 12 months?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- More than 5

Deepa Jethwa
Sixth Form Colleges Association
Local Government House
Smith Square
London, SW1P 3HZ
info@sixthformcolleges.org

We wish to make our publications widely accessible. Please contact us if you have any specific accessibility requirements.

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation

Spring Place
Coventry Business Park
Herald Avenue
Coventry CV5 6UB

2nd Floor
Glendinning House
6 Murray Street
Belfast BT1 6DN

Telephone 0300 303 3344

Textphone 0300 303 3345

Helpline 0300 303 3346