

Consultation on regulating Advanced Extension Awards

How to respond to this consultation

The closing date for responses is **17:00 on 7 March 2018**.

Please respond to this consultation in one of three ways:

- complete the online response (click 'Respond online') on our [consultation homepage](#)
- complete this response form and either:
 - email your response to consultations@ofqual.gov.uk – please include *Regulating AEAs* in the subject line of the email and make clear who you are and in what capacity you are responding
 - post your response to: Regulating AEAs, Ofqual, Spring Place, Herald Avenue, Coventry, CV5 6UB, making clear who you are and in what capacity you are responding
- **We can only consider your response if you fill in the 'About you' section at the end of the document.**

How we will use your response

1. Your response will be used to help us shape our policies and regulatory activity.
2. After the consultation ends, we will publish a summary of responses received.
3. We will not include your personal details in any published list of respondents, although we may quote from your response anonymously.

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation and you are happy for Ofqual to attribute your response in our publications to your organisation, please provide the name of your organisation below.

Organisation name:

Sharing your response

We may share your anonymised response with the Department for Education.

The information you provide in response to our consultations, including personal information, may need to be disclosed in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

Confidentiality and contacting you

To maintain your confidentiality, you are not required to provide your name or any information that will identify you. However, Ofqual may sometimes follow-up responses received. If you are happy to be contacted with regard to your response please complete the details below.

Name: Charlie Stripp

Position (if applicable): Chief Executive (MEI)

Telephone number: 07771 864507

Email: charlie.stripp@mei.org.uk

Consultation questions

Maintaining comparability with previous qualifications

Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should continue to require AEAs to be accessible to students who have taken an A level in the corresponding subject, without requiring further study or learning?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please explain your reasons

We agree with the sentiment behind this proposed requirement, but it does not seem to be worded well. In mathematics it is inconceivable that a student entered for the AEA would not undertake 'further study' beyond preparation for the A level. This 'further study' would, no doubt, include practice of past papers and other problem solving material. It could be argued that this is not 'required', but this would not seem to be a reasonable argument.

In mathematics, what is important is that the content of AEA is identical to the content of the corresponding A level. The wording should be changed to make this clearer.

If non-exam assessment is permitted in a subject, does this count as 'further study'? The wording does need to be clearer.

Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should continue to require AEAs to be more demanding than the corresponding A level, requiring students to demonstrate a greater depth of understanding?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please explain your reasons

The purpose of the AEA qualification is to demonstrate a greater depth of understanding, and so to demonstrate preparedness for demanding Higher Education courses.

Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should continue to require AEAs to have two passing grades – Merit and Distinction?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please explain your reasons

This is the right number of pass grades; it is distinct from the A*-E grade set for A levels; it is a continuation from the current arrangement.

Reflecting A level reform

Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should only permit AEAs in subjects where there is at least one A level offered in England?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please explain your reasons

It might seem bizarre to have an AEA in a subject for which an A level is not offered, but it is not inconceivable that there may be a market for an AEA in something like *Mathematical Economics* or *Maths and Philosophy* which brings together two subjects, or in *Further Pure Maths* which is a subset of an existing A level (Further Maths). It might be difficult to offer an AEA in Further Maths given the number of options within the A level, so offering an AEA in the common core might be thought desirable.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that future AEAs should be based on the DfE's subject content for the corresponding A level?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

We agree with this in the case of Mathematics.

Further Mathematics is a different case. The DfE subject content only covers half of the A level. It might be sensible to allow an AEA covering this compulsory content, called *Further Pure Maths*, or perhaps an AEA with some optional questions. This last possibility is unlikely, given the number of optional questions which would have to be written to cover any one of the Further Maths A levels, let alone all four Further Maths A levels. So, in the case of Further Maths, 'based on' must not be too limiting.

Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that future AEAs should reflect the assessment objectives we have set for the corresponding A level, but with a greater emphasis on the skills of analysis and evaluation?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please explain your reasons

It is not clear what this means. It could mean (in mathematics) that the same three assessment objectives are used, but that the proportion of marks awarded to each may be different, with fewer for AO1. This is fine, but in mathematics the greater emphasis would be on reasoning and problem solving rather than analysis and evaluation.

Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that – in line with reformed A levels – future AEAs should use exam assessment, with non-exam assessment only used in subjects where we have expressly permitted it?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please explain your reasons

There might be a case for permitting an AEA in *Statistics* to be awarded on the basis of a substantial statistical project. Given the likely small size of the cohort, and the individual nature of each student's project, using non-exam assessment in this way would not be subject to the same risks as non-exam assessment in other circumstances.

Securing standards

Question 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should set rules for setting grade boundaries in AEAs that require exam boards to use the same high-level approach we have adopted for reformed A levels?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please explain your reasons

Exam boards should be permitted to take a different approach to awarding than in A levels. University entrance exams in mathematics often give more credit for complete solutions than for several partial solutions, using a scheme of alphas, betas etc as well as the traditional marking. This should be permitted for AEA. So there might be

a threshold like ‘to obtain a distinction, candidates must score more than 70/100 on the paper and score at least 17/20 on three questions’

Our proposed rules and guidance

Question 9: Do you have any comments on our proposed Conditions and requirements for AEAs?

Our responses to questions 1 to 8 above show the points at which we consider the proposed Conditions and requirements should be amended.

We also believe that there should be a requirement that universities should be granted access to a candidate’s AEA scripts, with the permission of the candidate, at an early stage in the process. In mathematics, universities use a range of extra examinations for admissions purposes (eg STEP, MAT, TMUA). This causes considerable difficulties for schools trying to prepare a small number of candidates for different exams, and a lot of pressure on candidates applying for more than one top university. One of the reasons which universities give for setting these examinations is that university maths admissions staff have access to the scripts. If this were possible for AEA examinations it might be the case that the system could be simplified.

Question 10: Do you have any comments on our proposed guidance for AEAs?

Our responses to questions 1 to 8 above show the points at which we consider the proposed guidance should be amended.

Impact of our proposals

Question 11: We have not identified any material impacts (either on persons who share a protected characteristic, or more widely) which would result from our proposed changes. Are there any potential impacts we have not identified?

Yes

No

Question 12: Are there any costs or benefits associated with our proposals which we have not identified?

Yes

No

Question 13: Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impacts resulting from these proposals?

Yes

No

Question 14: Do you have any further comments on the impacts of the proposals?

Yes

No

If 'Yes', please provide further details:

Please see our responses to questions 8 and 9, which aim to improve the usefulness of the AEA in mathematics for university entrance, and so to help cut down on the proliferation of university entrance examinations in mathematics.

About you

To evaluate responses properly, we need to know in what capacity you are responding to the consultation. We will only consider your response if you complete the following section. Questions marked with a * are required.

Organisation (if applicable): *

Mathematics in Education and Industry (MEI)

Is this a personal response or an official response on behalf of your organisation? *

Personal response (please answer the question 'If you ticked 'Personal response'')

Official response (please answer the question 'If you ticked 'Official response'')

If you ticked 'Personal response', which of the following are you? *

- Student
- Parent or carer
- Teacher (but responding in a personal capacity)
- Other, including general public (please state below)

If you ticked 'Official response', which of the following are you? *

- Awarding organisation
- Local authority
- School or college (please answer the question 'School or college type' below)
- Academy chain
- Private training provider
- University or other higher education institution
- Employer
- Other representative or interest group (please answer the question 'Type of representative group or interest group' below)

School or college type

- Comprehensive or non-selective academy
- State selective or selective academy
- Independent
- Special school
- Further education college
- Sixth form college
- Other (please state below)

Type of representative group or interest group

- Group of awarding organisations
- Union
- Employer or business representative group
- Subject association or learned society
- Equality organisation or group
- School, college or teacher representative group
- Other (please state below)

MEI is a charity and a membership organisation. It is an independent curriculum development body for mathematics. It is a major provider of mathematics teaching and learning resources, and of mathematics CPD for secondary school and post-16 mathematics teachers.

MEI developed and manages the DfE-funded Further Mathematics Support Programme (FMSP). This includes providing support for teachers and students with university entrance examinations.

At the time of writing, MEI has preferred bidder status for running the DfE-funded Level 3 Mathematics Support Programme, the successor organisation to the FMSP and the Core Maths Support Programme. This will also involve providing support for teachers and students with university entrance examinations.

MEI developed both the legacy and the reformed OCR(MEI) suites of AS/A level Mathematics and Further Mathematics qualifications which are administered by OCR.

Nation*

- England
- Wales
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Other EU country: _____
- Non-EU country: _____

How did you find out about this consultation?

- Ofqual's newsletter
- Ofqual's social media channels
- Other social media channels
- Ofqual's website
- Internet search
- Other: _____