

# Consultation on GCSE Reform

## Consultation Questions



### Question 1

Do you agree that there is a need for a November re-take opportunity for English, English language and mathematics, as set out in [paragraphs 18 to 20](#)?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please provide any additional comments:

A retake opportunity early in the academic year for Mathematics and English is especially important for students starting A Level study who have narrowly missed getting a grade C at the end of year 11. However, we are neutral as to whether November is the best month for this; it may be that January is more convenient to some centres due to A Level examinations taking place then.

## Question 2

Do you agree that we should permit controlled assessment results to be carried forward for students re-taking a qualification, as set out in [paragraphs 21 to 23](#)?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide any additional comments:

This was common practice when most GCSEs were linear and we see no reason for it to stop.

## Question 3

Do you agree that students should be allowed to use unit results from a single GCSE to aggregate to a double award GCSE in the same subject, as identified in [paragraphs 25 and 26](#)?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide any additional comments:

We have no experience of this.

#### Question 4

Do you agree that students should not be allowed to carry forward units from a short course to a full course award, as set out in [paragraph 27](#)?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please provide any additional comments:

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### **Question 5**

Do you agree that, subject to the considerations detailed in [paragraph 28](#), pilots should be considered as exceptions?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide any additional comments:

It seems right to us to consider pilots on a case by case basis and to ensure that the pilot is not invalidated by unnecessary changes.

### **Question 6**

What, if any, other exceptions should we consider to the proposal to make GCSEs linear, as set out in [paragraphs 18 to 28](#)?

There may be good educational reasons for modular assessment. Where qualifications are well designed, fit for purpose and make for good teaching and learning, they should be allowed.

## Question 7

Do you have comments on any potential equality impacts, as detailed in the [Equality Analysis form](#), of the proposed move to linear assessment in all GCSE qualifications, as set out in [paragraphs 18 to 28](#)?

Some students with learning difficulties find it difficult to concentrate in an examination room for long periods of time. A move from modular to linear assessment will result in fewer examinations, which are longer.

For students to be able to demonstrate their achievement in mathematics, it is essential that they are asked questions which are at the right level. If questions are too easy, candidates find them trivial and they merely test who is best at avoiding careless mistakes. If questions are too difficult, candidates cannot attempt them. There have been successful modular schemes in the past which have allowed candidates to do a range of units with a range of levels of challenge. Even the current modular schemes allow candidates who are at the borderline between Foundation and Higher tiers to do one unit at each level. This allows candidates who are nervous about their ability to work at Higher tier the opportunity to do so, while still providing the safety net of being able to do the next unit at Foundation tier. A move to linear assessment will remove this facility.

## Question 8

Do you have comments on any other aspects of the proposed move to linear assessment in all GCSE qualifications, as set out in [paragraphs 18 to 28](#)?

It is possible to design good modular qualifications which help students learn their work more thoroughly because they are being tested on it regularly in tests which really matter to them. We also recognise the possibility of designing poor modular qualifications. The lack of a synoptic requirement at GCSE has not encouraged good design.

We find it extraordinary that only a couple of years after a move to near universal “unitisation” at GCSE, there is now a move to near universal linear assessment at that level. We wish to encourage a thoughtful approach to teaching and assessment, which facilitates the design of qualifications which are fit for purpose and resists simplistic approaches which automatically categorise linear as good and modular as bad (or vice versa).

A more serious concern for GCSE Mathematics was the move to a two tier system and the resulting less adequate preparation for A Level study. See

“The effects of 2-tier GCSE Mathematics on transition to AS and A Level” at [http://www.mei.org.uk/files/pdf/Two\\_tier\\_GCSE.pdf](http://www.mei.org.uk/files/pdf/Two_tier_GCSE.pdf)

### Question 9

Do you agree that the Performance descriptions, as set out in [paragraph 35](#), provide a sound basis for assessing candidates' abilities to spell, punctuate and use grammar accurately?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please provide any additional comments:

Clear and precise communication is important in mathematics, rather than spelling, punctuation and grammar per se. We think it right that the new requirement should not apply to Mathematics GCSE.

### Question 10

Do you think that question papers should indicate to candidates which questions will involve the assessment of accurate spelling, punctuation and use of grammar, as set out in [paragraph 40](#)?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide any additional comments:

Clear and precise communication is important in mathematics, rather than spelling, punctuation and grammar per se. Our response to this question relates specifically to the communication of mathematics. In mathematics it is important that candidates demonstrate that they can communicate mathematical arguments coherently using appropriate mathematical notation. Candidates should endeavour to use mathematical notation correctly at all times; it should not be seen as an optional requirement, which is only important on certain questions. Having said that, we recognise that in GCSE Mathematics there will be some questions where candidates are able to do the working in their heads and would be expected to just down write a numerical answer.

### Question 11

Do you agree that allocating 5 per cent of the total marks available for the qualification, as set out in [paragraph 35](#), gives sufficient emphasis to the importance of accurate spelling, punctuation and use of grammar?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please provide any additional comments:

## Question 12

Do you have comments on any potential equality impacts, as detailed in the [Equality Analysis form](#), of the proposal to assess spelling, punctuation and grammar separately and directly in externally assessed units in English literature, history, geography and religious studies, as set out in [paragraphs 31 to 40](#)?

No.

## Question 13

Do you have comments on any other aspects of the proposed assessment of spelling, punctuation and grammar, as set out in [paragraphs 31 to 40](#)?

No.

## Your details

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