

# **Annex A: New A Level Regulatory Requirements Consultation Questions**

## All questions

This consultation is about proposed changes to A level assessment objectives (the types of ability used for testing candidates' knowledge, understanding and skills in a subject); assessment arrangements (how assessments should be designed and conducted); and the design and assessment of AS qualifications (once they are free-standing qualifications that do not contribute to the award of an A level).

This consultation considers proposals for the reform of A levels in England. Ministers in Wales and Northern Ireland will determine the future of A levels in their respective countries. Where we refer to 'A levels' we mean A levels offered in England and therefore regulated by us. Where we refer to 'government' and 'ministers' we mean 'Westminster government' and 'Westminster ministers'.

The A level subjects we are consulting on in this document are: biology; chemistry; physics; psychology; English language; English literature; English language and literature; history; geography; art and design; business; computing; economics and sociology. Our aim is for revised A levels in these subjects to be taught in schools in England from September 2015. New AS qualifications in these subjects will therefore be awarded for the first time in the summer of 2016 and A levels in the summer of 2017.

## How to use the consultation documents

We would like to know your views about our proposed regulatory requirements for A level and AS qualifications. Our consultation is available from <http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/a-level-regulatory-requirements-october-2013> .

If you have views on the draft content of A levels you should respond to the consultation hosted by the Department for Education and available from <https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations> .

. Following consultation, any changes to subject content could necessitate an appropriate change to the draft assessment objectives and vice versa.

We will only consider your responses to the consultation questions if you complete the information page. In order for us to evaluate responses properly, we need to know who is responding and in what capacity.

We will publish the evaluation of responses to the consultation following the consultation period. Please note we may publish all or part of your response unless you tell us in your answer to the confidentiality question that you want us to treat your response as confidential.

The deadline for responses to this consultation is **17th January 2014**.

## How to respond to this consultation

Please respond to the consultation questions in one of the following ways:

- Complete the online response form at <http://surveys.ofqual.gov.uk/s3/a-level-regulatory-requirements-consultation-questions-october-2013> .
- Email your completed response document to [consultations@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:consultations@ofqual.gov.uk) – please include the consultation title ('Consultation on New A Level Regulatory Requirements') in the subject line of the email and be clear about who you are and in what capacity you are responding.
- Post your response to **A level Reform Consultation 2013**, Ofqual, Spring Place, Coventry Business Park, Herald Avenue, Coventry, CV5 6UB.

# Information pages

## About you

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

- Personal views
- Official response from an organisation/group (complete the type of responding organisation)

**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 capacity \_\_\_\_\_
- General public (interested in education but no direct link) – please state capacity \_\_\_\_\_

**If you ticked 'official response from an organisation or group', please respond accordingly.**

**Type of responding organisation (tick one only)\***

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

**School/college type**

- Academy and/or free school
  - Comprehensive
  - State selective
  - Independent/private
  - Special school
  - Further education
  - Sixth-form college
  - None of the above (please state what)
- 

**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)

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.

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**Nation\***

England

Wales

Scotland

Northern Ireland

Other EU country (please state which) \_\_\_\_\_

Non-EU country (please state which) \_\_\_\_\_

\*Denotes mandatory fields

# Consultation questions

## Section 2: Background – The objective of AS qualifications

1. To what extent do you agree with the proposed objective of the AS qualifications?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

2. Do you have any further comments relating to this section?

AS Mathematics and Further Mathematics qualifications are very useful to students in enabling them to learn skills which facilitate progression to further study so we are in general agreement with the spirit of the AS objective. However, we note that it assumes that AS is a subset of A level. There are currently useful AS qualifications which do not have an A level and we would not want to see the development of such qualifications prevented in future.

We note the intention expressed in paragraph 2.5 to consider the differences found between Mathematics and Further Mathematics A levels and similar qualifications in other countries. The incorporation of applied content within A level Mathematics has a long history, dating from the time when universities set up exam boards. This practice is not widespread internationally but we wish to draw attention to the fact that A levels in Mathematics and Further mathematics facilitate progression to a wide range of degree courses with most learners going on to further study in subjects other than mathematics. We regard it as essential to consult with university departments who are users of mathematics before considering the removal of sections of A level Mathematics content which they find useful. See, for example, *Newton's Mechanics: Who Needs It?*, Savage and Stripp (2008). International comparability does not mean that we need to do the same as other countries in terms of content.

We welcome the intention that the grading standard of new AS and A levels will not be altered (paragraph 2.8). Mathematics and Further Mathematics A levels already prove challenging for students who are successful in other A level subjects and we would not wish to see any reduction in uptake caused by an increase in difficulty. However, for a synoptic subject like mathematics, the linearisation of the assessment may itself cause an increase in perceived difficulty for less confident students and the effect of this needs to be carefully considered in the design of the reformed A levels.

### Section 3: Assessment

#### Biology, Chemistry, Physics

3. To what extent do you agree that exams in biology, chemistry and physics should include questions to access conceptual and theoretical understanding of experimental methods?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion
4. To what extent to you agree that practical skills in biology, chemistry, and physics should continue to be assessed?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion
5. To what extent do you agree that the results of practical skills assessments in biology, chemistry and physics should be reported separately on the certificate and not count towards the final grade?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion



6. To what extent do you agree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for A level and AS qualifications in biology, chemistry and physics?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion

7. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for A level?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion

8. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for AS?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion

9. Do you have any further comments relating to these subjects?

We wish to comment on paragraph 3.9 which seems to apply to all subjects and which does not have a consultation question attached to it. The increased use of mathematical methods in a wide variety of subjects relies on students making use of appropriate technology in order to deal with complex calculations and large sets of data. It is difficult to assess such skills satisfactorily in A level Mathematics examinations due to the difficulty of providing sufficient equipment for the large cohorts of students involved. We wish to highlight the importance of the use of technology and associated mathematical methods in reformed mathematics A levels.

## Psychology

10. To what extent do you agree that for psychology A level all assessment should be by exam?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion
11. To what extent do you agree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for A level and AS qualifications in psychology?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion
12. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for A level?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion
13. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for AS?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion

14. Do you have any further comments relating to this subject?

No

English language, English literature and English language and literature

15. To what extent do you agree that for English language, English literature and English language and literature A levels, 20 per cent of the available marks should be allocated to non-exam assessments?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

English language

16. To what extent do you agree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for A level and AS qualifications in English language?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

17. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for A level?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

18. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for AS?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion

English literature

19. To what extent do you agree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for A level and AS qualifications in English literature?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion
20. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for A level?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion

21. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for AS?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion

English language and literature

22. To what extent do you agree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for A level and AS qualifications in English language and literature?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion
23. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for A level?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know/no opinion

24. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for AS?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

25. Do you have any further comments relating to these subjects?

No

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### History

26. To what extent do you agree that for the history A level 20 per cent of the available marks should be allocated to non-exam assessments?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

27. To what extent do you agree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for A level and AS qualifications in history?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

28. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for A level? \_\_\_\_\_

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

29. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for AS?

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

30. Do you have any further comments relating to this subject?

No

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### Geography

31. To what extent do you agree that for the geography A level 20 per cent of the available marks should be allocated to non-exam assessments?

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

32. To what extent do you agree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for A level and AS qualifications in geography?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

33. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for A level?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

34. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for AS?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

35. Do you have any further comments relating to this subject?

No

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Art and design

36. To what extent do you agree that art and design should be assessed by non-exam assessment only?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

37. To what extent do you agree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for A level and AS qualifications in art and design?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

38. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for A level?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

39. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for AS?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

40. Do you have any further comments relating to this subject?

No

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### Business

41. To what extent do you agree that for business A level all assessment should be by exam?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

42. To what extent do you agree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for A level and AS qualifications in business?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

43. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for A level?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

44. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for AS?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

45. Do you have any further comments relating to this subject?

No

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Computer science

46. To what extent do you agree that for the computer science A level 20 per cent of the available marks should be allocated to non-exam assessments?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

47. To what extent do you agree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for A level and AS qualifications in computer science?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

48. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for A level?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

49. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for AS?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

50. Do you have any further comments relating to this subject?

No

## Economics

51. To what extent do you agree that for economics all assessment should be by exam?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

52. To what extent do you agree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for A level and AS qualifications in economics?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

53. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for A level?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

54. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for AS?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

55. Do you have any further comments relating to this subject?

No

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### Sociology

56. To what extent do you agree that for sociology all assessment should be by exam?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

57. To what extent do you agree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for A level and AS qualifications in sociology?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

58. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for A level?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

59. To what extent do you agree that the proposed weightings are appropriate for AS?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

60. Do you have any further comments relating to this subject?

No

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#### General questions on A level assessment

61. To what extent do you agree that our proposals for A level assessment will support our aim of more secure and valid assessment?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

62. To what extent do you agree that our proposals for A level assessment will support our aim of reducing incidents of malpractice in A level assessment?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

63. We will be working with the exam boards to consider how greater assurances about the authenticity of students' work can be secured and the moderation of teachers' assessments enhanced. Do you have proposals to contribute to this work?

MEI's A level Mathematics coursework includes a small number of marks for candidate oral communication; this communication also helps to authenticate the work as the candidate's own. Candidates who have completed work independently are able to discuss it and answer questions about it. Improved methods of electronic communication can now allow awarding bodies to discuss work with a sample of candidates remotely.

#### **Section 4: Assessment strategies**

64. To what extent do you agree that exam boards should be required to develop and apply assessment strategies for A levels and AS qualifications?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion



65. To what extent do you agree that our proposed requirements for an assessment strategy are appropriate?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

Question types

66. To what extent do you agree that we should require exam boards to include in their exams questions that provide opportunities for students to gain marks by demonstrating their ability to:

a) integrate and apply their knowledge, understanding and skills across different aspects of the subjects;

b) construct a response which develops a sustained line of reasoning, is coherent, relevant, comprehensive and logically structured?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

67. Do you have any further comments relating to this section?

No

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## Section 5: AS qualifications

68. To what extent do you agree that where AS content is identified within the A level content it should be used as the basis for developing the new AS qualification in the same subject?
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion
69. To what extent do you agree that where no AS content is prescribed, we should require the content to be drawn from the A level content in the same subject?
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion
70. To what extent do you agree that AS qualifications should be assessed at a level of demand appropriate to the knowledge, skills and understanding to be reasonably expected of someone who had completed the first half of the A level course of study?
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/no opinion
-

### Teaching AS students with A level students

71. To what extent do you agree that our regulations should not prevent qualifications from being designed so that AS and A level can be co-taught, providing the design of a good quality, linear A level is not compromised as a result?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

### Assessment of AS qualifications

72. To what extent do you agree that for the subjects on which we are consulting (with the exception of art and design) all AS assessment should be by exam only?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

73. Do you have any further comments relating to this section?

no

## Section 6: Conditions of Recognition for A level and AS qualifications

74. Do you have any comments on our proposed Conditions?

Condition 2.1 is ambiguous. Does it imply that all students at the end of an A level course have achieved the same level of understanding? A student who achieves grade A\* at the end of two years has a different level of understanding to a student who achieves grade E. In order to assess the full range of A level students in Mathematics, it is essential that the levels of demand of examination questions differ. Mathematics examinations are differentiated by task as well as by outcome. If all questions were at the same standard, the full range of students would not be able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, rendering the assessment invalid.

### How our proposals fit within our regulatory framework

75. To what extent do you agree that A level and AS qualifications should be subject to an accreditation condition?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

76. To what extent do you agree that the accreditation criterion we should apply when we decide whether or not to accredit A level and AS qualifications should be as follows:

***The awarding organisation must demonstrate to Ofqual's satisfaction that it is capable of complying, on an ongoing basis, with all of the General Conditions of Recognition that apply in respect of the qualification for which it is seeking accreditation, including all relevant Qualification Level Conditions and Subject Level Conditions.***

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know/no opinion

77. Do you have any further comments relating to this section?

The consultation document seems to imply that Ofqual is responsible for assessment objectives while the DfE is responsible for content. It is our view that for mathematics it does not make sense to divorce assessment objectives from content when designing qualifications.

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### Section 7: Equality impact analysis

78. We have identified a number of ways the proposed requirements for reformed A levels and AS qualifications may impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any other potential impacts we have not identified?

Yes

No

If so, what are they?

For STEM subjects, where girls are typically less confident about their ability than boys, anecdotal evidence suggests that the requirement to have all assessment at the end of the course may result in fewer girls choosing to take such subjects and lead to an increase in the gender imbalance. We believe that research should be conducted to establish the extent to which there is an association between the form of assessment and gender in relation to uptake of qualifications.

79. Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impact resulting from these proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?

Yes

No

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

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80. Have you any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on persons who share a protected characteristic?

No

## **Follow up/information sharing**

**We use quotes from responses to highlight views expressed in the consultation document. It is helpful to attribute those quotes to specific organisations. We will not name individuals. If you do not want us to attribute your organisation to the quote, please opt out by ticking the box below**

Do not attribute my name/organisation to the quote

**Please only respond to the next statement if you have ticked 'no' or 'don't know' above.**

**We intend to forward your response to Department for Education where your comments are relevant to Department for Education's consultation. If you do not want us to do this, please opt out by ticking the box below**

Do not share my response with Department for Education

## Personal data

For the purposes of the Data Protection Act, we are the data controller for any personal data you supply in response to this consultation. We will process all personal data (such as your name, address and any other identifying information) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. In most circumstances, this means that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Please do **not**:

- provide information in comments boxes that might identify you unless you are content for that information to be released into the public domain; or
- provide information in your response that might lead to the identification of other living individuals.

<b>Name</b>	Charlie Stripp
<b>Name of organisation or group (if applicable)</b>	Skip if personal response Mathematics in Education and Industry
<b>Your role (if applicable)</b>	Skip if personal response Chief Executive
<b>Address (if organisation only)</b>	Skip if personal response Monckton House, Epsom Centre, White Horse Business Park, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 0XG
<b>Email address</b>	Charlie.stripp@mei.org.uk

**Would you be happy for us to contact you again in relation to this consultation response?**

(x ) Yes

( ) No

## **Additional information**

### **How did you find out about this consultation?**

- Ofqual's newsletters or website
- Media/press
- Internet search
- Department for Education (newsletter or website)
- Awarding organisations / exam boards
- Subject associations / learned societies
- Schools / headteacher / local authority
- Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

### **We want to write clearly, directly and put the reader first. Overall, do you think we have got this right in this document?**

- Yes
- No

### **Do you have any comments or suggestions about the style of writing?**

Overall the style of writing is clear but, as you will see earlier, condition 2.1 is ambiguous.



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

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