

Consultation Summary Paper

Commons Select Committee Follow up Inquiry on Examinations for 15 to 19 year olds in England

21 May 2014

Opened 22/04/2014, closed 21/05/2014, Pearson lead: Martin O'Donovan

A brief introduction to Pearson

Pearson is the world's leading learning company. Our education business combines 150 years of experience in publishing with the latest learning technology and online support. We are also part of the wider Pearson family which includes Penguin, Dorling Kindersley and the Financial Times. We provide education and assessment services in more than 70 countries. Our qualifications, courses and resources are available in print, online and through multi-lingual packages, helping people learn whatever, wherever and however they choose.

A summary of the call for evidence

The Education Committee held a short inquiry to follow up its previous work on examinations for 15 to 19 year olds in England.

- Inquiry: Exams for 15 to 19 year olds in England
- Education Committee

The inquiry covered issues relating to GCSEs and A levels as raised in the Committee's reports on the administration of examinations for 15 to 19 year olds in England (July 2012), From GCSEs to EBCs: the Government's proposals for reform (January 2013) and 2012 English GCSE results (June 2013). This includes current plans for the administration and structure of the new GCSEs and A levels. Oral evidence will be taken from Ofqual in June 2014, followed by evidence from the Secretary of State for Education at a later date, and brief written comments were invited on these issues in advance of the first session.

A summary of the Pearson response

- Pearson's submission follows on from our submission to the inquiries in 2012/13. This is the largest exam reform in a generation, which includes the recalibration of GCSEs and learning from international best practice, so it is welcome that the reforms are subjected to the Committee's ongoing scrutiny.
- In responding to the Secretary of State's proposed changes in 2012 Pearson announced it had established a World Class Qualifications international panel of experts, chaired by Sir Michael Barber, which would advise Pearson on the development of the new Key Stage 4 qualifications. We have undertaken a rigorous development to four key principles of: demanding, rigorous, inclusive and empowering, and since then, the work of the panel has been expanded to include A level, BTEC, Apprenticeships, and GCSE and A Level.
- Throughout the process Pearson has collaborated and engaged with Ofqual and the Department to better manage the reform. The scale of change is, however, unprecedented and reform needs to be understood in the context of other system-wide reforms.
- There are fundamental changes to the regulatory landscape with this being the first major programme of reform for which Ofqual has taken responsibility. This has included a new regulatory programme which they have consulted on.
- The pace of change has meant that Awarding Organisations have been undertaking most of the developments according to principles outlined in consultation documents. There are risks still being managed and that will need to be managed throughout the implementation.
- We believe it is important that, while addressing the major challenge of implementing reform, significant attention is paid to the practical issues facing students, and support for centres will be critical in minimising the impact of these changes on learners.