

Consultation Summary Paper

Ofqual Consultation on Developing new GCSEs, A levels and AS qualifications for first teaching in 2016 – Part 3

5 January 2015

Opened 7 November 2015, closed 5 January 2015, Pearson lead: Kath Thomas

Link to website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/religious-studies-gcses-as-and-a-levels-new-qualifications-for-2016>

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 consultation

New GCSEs, A levels and AS qualifications are being introduced in England. The new qualifications are being introduced in three phases, with the first new qualifications being taught from September 2015. This consultation covers GCSEs, A levels and AS qualifications in religious studies which, along with a number of other subjects, are due to be taught from 2016. This consultation was designed to be read in conjunction with earlier Ofqual consultations on some of the other subjects that will be taught from September 2016: Developing new GCSEs, A levels and AS qualifications for first teaching in 2016 – Part 2.

A summary of the Pearson response

Pearson welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation on proposed content for reformed Religious Studies GCSEs and A levels. We also welcome the opportunities that we as an awarding organisation have been afforded to feed in to the process, drawing on our extensive research with Higher Education Institutions, stakeholder groups, teachers and learners.

Pearson agrees that GCSEs in RS should be assessed entirely by exam. We also strongly support *not* tiering the GCSEs as the assessments target the full ability range appropriately.

We don't however agree that the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for GCSEs in RS. We support the skills targeted in each assessment objective but suggest that AO2 should also assess students' ability to demonstrate their own values, beliefs and attitudes. This important skill is expressed in the subject aims and learning outcomes and therefore should also be reflected in the assessment objectives. We agree in principle to the proposed weightings of the assessment objectives. However, we think that the Department for Education document, Religious Studies, GCSE Subject Content, Annex A contains only limited opportunities to develop the skills required for AO2. This is due to the amount of core content to be covered in the time given, the way the content is worded and the detailed knowledge and understanding requirements.

Again, we agree that both A and AS qualifications in RS should be assessed entirely by exam.

We support the skills targeted in each assessment objective, but don't think the proposed assessment objectives are appropriate for A levels and AS qualifications in religious studies. Our specific suggestions can be found in our full consultation response. We do not think that the assessment objectives are appropriate for AS qualifications in RS. We agree with the increased emphasis on assessing AO2 skills in AS level RS but propose the weightings permit a small degree of variation in weighting to allow for minor differences of emphasis in the skills being assessed, whilst also being narrow enough to promote comparability. We recommend the weighting range should be no more than 10% for AO1 and AO2.