

Pearson response to the Ofqual Consultation on A level Biology, Chemistry and Physics, Conditions and Guidance

July 2015

Organisation details

Name

Lesley Davies

Position

Vice President, Quality, Standards and Research

Organisation name (if applicable)

Pearson

Address

190 High Holborn

London WC1V 7BH

Email

lesley.davies@pearson.com

Telephone

020 7190 4292

Would you like us to treat your response as confidential?*

If you answer yes, we will not include your details in any list of people or organisations that responded to the consultation.

() Yes (X) No

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

() Personal response (Please answer the question 'If you ticked 'Personal views'...')

(X) Official response (Please answer the question 'Type of responding organisation')

If you ticked 'Personal views' 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 from an organisation/group", please respond accordingly:**Type of responding organisation***

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

Nation*

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

How did you find out about this consultation?

- Our newsletter or another one of our communications
- Our website
- Internet search
- Other

May we contact you for further information?

- Yes No

Question 1

Do you have any comments on our proposal to consolidate the Conditions, requirements and guidance relating to GCE qualifications in biology, chemistry or physics into one set of documents?

Yes No

Question 2

Do you have any comments on our proposed Conditions and requirements relating to the practical science assessments in new A levels in biology, chemistry or physics?

Yes No

1. Condition GCE (Science) 4.1 on page 12 states that *an awarding organisation must calculate....a result for the practical science assessment.*

However, practical science assessments are not assigned individual marks and therefore it is not possible to 'calculate' a result for the practical science assessment. The result for the practical science assessment is either pass or uncertified and is based on a holistic assessment for the mandatory practicals in our specification as required by the subject criteria.

2. Page 16 states:

Evidence generated by a Learner in a practical science assessment may be marked –

(a) by the awarding organisation or a person connected to the awarding organisation,

(b) by a Centre, or

(c) through a combination of (a) and (b).

It is not possible for AOs to mark practical science assessments as this assessment is based on observing the skills and techniques used by students.

(a) would require AOs to have an arrangement to go into centres whenever practical sessions are operated and this is not feasible. Centres who fail to conduct practical science assessments correctly will be given training and one visit from us may be carried out during a practical session to ensure that the centre is implementing correct procedures and the correct level of practical work.

Question 3

Do you have any comments on our proposed requirements on exam board monitoring of schools' provision of practical science assessments?

Yes No

The last sentence of requirement 1.19 on page 15 states: *We propose in our draft requirements that each exam board must make sure that at least some of a school's practical science assessments are monitored at least once in a two-year period.*

However, in the discussions that took place with Ofqual and Awarding Organisations during the last 18 months, our understanding was that we agreed to monitor centres once in the first two years and then the sampling regime for the remainder of the life of the qualification would be discussed with Ofqual.

Question 4

Do you have any comments on our proposed certificate requirements for new A levels in biology, chemistry and physics?

Yes No

Question 5

Do you have any comments arising from the fact that the new Conditions and requirements proposed in this consultation will, if adopted, have the effect of revising the accreditation criterion for GCE science (biology, chemistry and physics)?

Yes No

Question 6

We have summarised how we believe the proposals for the assessment of practical science skills impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any potential impacts we have not identified?

Yes No

Independent workers (e.g. mature learners or home-schooled learners) have not been identified.

Question 7

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

Question 8

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

Yes No

Question 9

Do you have any comments on the impacts of our proposals on schools and/or exam boards?

Yes No

The required system of monitoring the science practical work will increase the financial costs for centres. There will also be an increase in administration. This will make the science A levels more expensive than other subjects that do not have the required system of monitoring and we are concerned that some centres may limit the number of places available to learners who want to take these A levels.