



Consultation response

Pearson UK response to the Ofqual consultation on final entries to legacy GCSEs AS and A levels

Contact information

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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.

No

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

Official response

If you ticked “Official response”, please respond accordingly:

Type of responding organisation*

Exam board

Nation*

England

How did you find out about this consultation?

Website

May we contact you for further information?

Yes

Question 1

To what extent do you agree or disagree that students taking AS and A levels should have at least one opportunity to re-sit their exams in the specification for which they studied?

Strongly agree.

Please give reasons for your answer:

For all legacy A levels we do not stipulate the order in which units must be taken nor that AS units must be taken prior to the assessment of the A2 units; therefore it is permissible for learners to complete AS and A2 units in their second year of study. Therefore the provision to resit all units must be available in the summer 2017 examination series so as to be fair to all learners and is consistent with practice in previous transition periods. This approach, therefore, will not disadvantaging these learners in comparison to those that have been in a similar situation in previous series.

Question 2

To what extent do you agree or disagree that students re-sitting their AS and A levels in qualifications that have ceased to be accredited should be able to re-sit any of the AS or A level units they have previously taken (including controlled assessment units)?

Strongly agree

Please give reasons for your answer:

We agree that students should be able to re-sit any of the AS or A level units they have previously taken for qualifications that have ceased to be accredited. Our reasons for this decision are as detailed in response to question 1 and are as follows: For all legacy A levels we do not stipulate the order in which units must be taken nor that AS units must be taken prior to the assessment of the A2 units; therefore it is permissible for learners to complete AS and A2 units in their second year of study. Therefore the provision to resit all units must be available in the summer 2017 examination series so as to be fair to all learners and is consistent with practice in previous transition periods. This approach, therefore, will not disadvantaging these learners in comparison to those that have been in a similar situation in previous series.

Question 3

To what extent do you agree or disagree that there should be an additional re-sit opportunity for legacy GCSEs in English, English language and mathematics (including the linked pair) in summer 2017?

Agree

Please give reasons for your answer:

November 2016 may not provide sufficient time to prepare for the resit opportunity for some learners, particularly those continuing their study at an alternative institution. Should there not be a resit opportunity available in summer 2017 learners would be required to learn the new aspects of the reformed specifications rather than resitting the qualification that they had previously studied. To do so would put learners at a disadvantage when compared to learners that have had the opportunity to fulfill two years of study on the new specifications. As English, English language and mathematics are prerequisites for much of post-16 learning it is important that these candidates are given an additional opportunity to acquire qualifications in these subjects.

Question 4

To what extent do you agree or disagree that, with the exception of English, English language and mathematics (including the linked pair), there should not be a re-sit opportunity available for legacy GCSEs?

Strongly disagree

Please give reasons for your answer:

Given that GCSEs other than English, English language and mathematics are not prerequisites for entry to post-16 learning we believe that there should not be a resit opportunity for legacy GCSEs because of the operational challenges that would be faced by schools and Awarding Organisations and the potential for public confidence in and understanding of the reformed qualifications to be undermined. It should also be noted that aside from English and mathematics the number of resit candidates is forecast to be very few, and potentially in single figures; this in turn would add complexity to the operational delivery.

Confusion may arise in centres as a result of the wider range of GCSEs in operation at the same time. For example, this has the potential to lead to centres teaching to the wrong specification and/or making incorrect entries. In addition confusion as to the different standards and grading scales in operation at the same time across a wider suite of GCSEs could lead to dilution of school and public understanding of and confidence in the reformed qualifications.

An additional final resit opportunity for GCSEs other than English, English language and mathematics has the potential to cause significant operational challenges for Awarding Organisations. It is more valuable to focus finite Assessment Associate on the reformed qualifications. In addition, challenges would be presented in standard setting activities, with multiple cohorts needing to be balanced in order to achieve fair outcomes.

Question 5

Do you have any comments on our draft General Condition D9?

No

Question 6

Do you have any comments on our draft saving and transitional provisions for legacy AS and A level qualifications in the first phase of reform?

No

Question 7

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we adopt the same saving and transitional provisions, amended as necessary, in respect of all further legacy AS and A level qualifications, without further consultation?

Strongly agree

Please give reasons for your answer:

We believe that these proposals represent a parity of access for learners to reformed qualifications and to qualifications that have ceased to be accredited for reasons given above.

Question 8

Do you have any comments on our draft saving and transitional provisions for legacy GCSEs in English, English language and mathematics (including the linked pair)?

No

Question 9

We have not identified any ways in which our proposals on re-sits would impact (positively or negatively) on persons who share a protected characteristic. Are there any potential impacts we have not identified?

No

Question 10

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

No

Question 11

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

No

Question 12

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

Yes

If yes, please provide them here:

We believe that these proposals represent the best balance of fair access for all learners and least risk in terms of burden on centres and potential confusion as to the different standards and qualifications in operation. In addition, we believe these proposals represent the best use of exam board resource in successfully implementing reformed qualifications. It should be noted that the dual running of qualifications will represent an operational burden, but one that can be fully mitigated, and is necessary given the parity of offering to learners.