

Response ID ANON-NBAG-DWMZ-T

Submitted to Proposed changes to the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2022
Submitted on 2021-08-01 14:04:42

Your details

Have you read and understood our privacy policy, as seen in annex C?

Yes

What is your name?

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What is the name of your organisation?

Organisation:
Sixth Form Colleges Association

Is this the official response from your organisation or your own, personal response? Please identify which of the following best describes you:

Organisational - Other representative or interest group

Type of organisation or interest group

What type of organisation or interest group do you represent?

School, college or teacher representative group

Proposals at a glance

1.1 Adaptations to exams and assessments

Adaptations to exams and assessments

GCSE English literature exams in 2022

To what extent do you agree or disagree that centres should have some choice of topics on which their students will answer questions for GCSE English literature exams in 2022?

Agree

Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to carrying forward specific assessment arrangements for GCSE English literature in 2021 into 2022?

GCSE Eng lit comments:

We are very pleased to see plans for greater use of optionality in this subject in 2022, as we urged unsuccessfully in our response to the 2021 consultation – and would like to see the same approach afforded to AS and A level English literature.

Indeed, we would wholeheartedly welcome the dramatic expansion of optional exam questions in the 2022 exams, in all subjects and at all levels. As one SFCFA member principal puts it, 'The broader the range of content that is available to be examined, the stronger the possibility that all candidates will be able to complete the paper. This will mitigate against teaching time lost due to the impact of the pandemic.' Consider what assessment as usual in 2022 would be measuring: learning and understanding, to be sure, but also the extent to which students' parents were available, willing, and able to tutor them at home during lockdown, their access to technology, and the amount of the curriculum their teacher was able to cover during the time available to her. In short, while assessment results are always correlated with socioeconomic factors, assessment as usual in 2022 would in large part directly measure those factors. This dramatically weakens the construct validity of the exams, as well as limiting the chances of the young people affected. On the other hand, the greater use of optional questions in 2022 to allow students to demonstrate a high level of learning and understanding without demonstrating it across all content areas also has a negative effect on construct validity, if the topics covered on a given A level syllabus are representative of the most important elements of a given discipline. The extent to which this is the case likely varies by subject; to be crude, missing out the Russian revolution in a history A level is less deleterious than missing out advanced trigonometry in a maths A level. Alongside this negative effect on construct validity in some

subjects, however, comes no systematic disadvantage for students whose education has been particularly impacted by Covid-19 through no fault of their own. Faced with this choice, optional questions are clearly preferable to assessment as usual.

The possibility that students might receive a strong A level without having adequately shown their understanding of all areas of the syllabus is a frightening one to policymakers and educators alike, and rightly so. In normal times, we would expect students and teachers to have covered the entire syllabus in sufficient detail to allow for examination on every area. However, these are not normal times. The use of teacher-assessed grades in 2021, which we fully support, has also meant that some students who have missed a very significant amount of their total 16-18 study programme will advance to higher education or employment. This is a real sacrifice, but it is one the Government has rightly decided to make in order to ensure that this year's students are not unfairly penalised for an interruption to their studies through no fault of their own. It would be unforgivable not to make a degree of the same sacrifice for the students of 2022, who have missed even more teaching time and may well miss more next year. The greater use of optional questions, even in subjects where they are not usually used at all, is one small way to redress the imbalance.

We must not let our desire to return to 'normal' blind us to the compelling evidence that 2021/22 will not, and cannot, be normal for students given the amount of learning lost, particularly by the most disadvantaged.

GCSE history exams in 2022

To what extent do you agree or disagree that centres should have some choice of topics on which their students will answer questions for GCSE history exams in 2022?

Not Answered

Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to carrying forward specific assessment arrangements for GCSE history for 2021 into 2022?

GCSE history comments:

GCSE ancient history exams in 2022

To what extent do you agree or disagree that centres should have some choice of topics on which their students will answer questions for GCSE ancient history exams in 2022?

Not Answered

Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to carrying forward specific assessment arrangements for GCSE ancient history for 2021 into 2022?

GCSE ancient history comments:

GCSE geography exams in 2022

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should allow centres to have some choice of content on which their students will answer questions in GCSE geography, on the lines set out in Annex B?

Not Answered

Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to allowing centres to have some choice of content on which their students will answer questions in GCSE geography exams in 2022?

GCSE geography comments:

Practical science work

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should carry forward into academic year 2021 to 2022 the arrangements in place for 2021 to 2022, that allow centres to deliver practical work in GCSE biology, chemistry, physics, combined science, geology and astronomy, AS level biology, chemistry, physics and geology, and AS and A level environmental science by demonstration?

Agree

Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to carrying forward specific assessment arrangements for 2021 into 2022 for GCSE biology, chemistry, physics and combined science, geology and astronomy, AS biology, chemistry, physics and geology, and AS and A level environmental science?

science proposal:

While excluding A level sciences from the same arrangements as GCSEs and AS levels made some sense in 2020/21, when it seemed likely that students on a two-year A level course either had already had a chance to undertake practical work themselves, or would have that chance in 2021/22, it is possible that, should localised or national public health restrictions come into force and again require social distancing in classrooms, second-year A level students

in 2021/22 will not in fact be able to safely carry out practical work. Clearly, practical work is hugely important for students who wish to progress into higher education or careers in the sciences, so it should be carried out if at all possible – why not allow centres to demonstrate practical work should it be necessary this year, while strongly encouraging students to undertake their own practicals if possible and safe, in the understanding that this will be the case for most centres?

Practical endorsement

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should carry forward from academic year 2020 to 2021 into academic year 2021 to 2022 the arrangements that allow centres to assess the CPAC across the minimum number of practical activities required to enable students to demonstrate their competence in A level biology, chemistry, physics and geology?

Agree

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should carry forward from academic year 2020 to 2021 into academic year 2021 to 2022 the arrangements to allow the remote monitoring of centres' application of CPAC?

Agree

Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to carrying forward specific assessment arrangements from academic year 2020 to 2021 into academic year 2021 to 2022 for A level biology, chemistry, physics and geology?

A level science comments:

Art and design qualifications

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should carry forward from academic year 2020 to 2021 into academic year 2021 to 2022 the arrangements to remove (where applicable) the exam board set task in GCSE, AS and A level art and design?

Strongly agree

Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to carrying forward from academic year 2020 to 2021 into academic year 2021 to 2022 the specific assessment arrangements for GCSE, AS and A level art and design?

GCSE AS and A level art and design comments:

We welcome the idea of a 100% portfolio focus for A level art, which will help mitigate for time lost and restrictions on access to specialist resources. Photographic moderation is viable, provided the exam board give sufficient time to document work selected for sample, as practical pieces will need to be more professionally photographed for assessment, particularly any tactile or textural aspects.

1.2 Advance information

To what extent do you agree or disagree that exam boards should provide advance information about the focus of the content of exams for the majority of GCSE, AS and A level subjects?

Agree

Advance information

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should be flexible in the timing of the release of advance information in order to respond to the impact on education of any potential worsening of the pandemic?

Strongly agree

Do you have any comments on the proposed flexible approach to the timing of the release of advance information in 2022?

flexibility comments:

A major source of consternation for centres when advance information was a live consideration for 2021 exams was the erroneous assumption from DfE that releasing advance information at the end of the spring term would mean students had completed full content coverage and could instead 'focus their revision' using the information provided. In reality, the time at which centres complete new content teaching varies wildly. It is refreshing to see an explicit admission this time that the pandemic may make delaying the release of information as late as possible unviable in 2021/22, and that this may mean that some students do not cover the whole curriculum before they begin focusing on the topics indicated by advance information. If public health requirements make this necessary, it will be regrettable, but it is important to be clear-eyed about the fact that it may be a price worth paying for students to be able to sit their exams under the fairest conditions possible.

GCSE English literature

To what extent do you agree or disagree that for GCSE English literature, where we propose that centres should have some choice of topics on which their students will answer questions, the exam boards should not provide advance information about the focus of the content of exams in addition?

Not Answered

Do you have any comments on our proposal not to provide advance information for 2022 for GCSE English literature?

GCSE Eng lit Adv info comments:

GCSE history

To what extent do you agree or disagree that for GCSE history, where we propose that centres should have some choice of topics on which their students will answer questions, the exam boards should not provide advance information about the focus of the content of exams in addition?

Not Answered

Do you have any comments on our proposal not to provide advance information for 2022 for GCSE history?

GCSE history adv info comments:

GCSE ancient history

To what extent do you agree or disagree that for GCSE ancient history, where we propose that centres should have some choice of topics on which their students will answer questions, the exam boards should not provide advance information about the focus of the content of exams in addition?

Not Answered

Do you have any comments on our proposal not to provide advance information for 2022 for GCSE ancient history?

GCSE ancient history adv info comments:

GCSE geography

To what extent do you agree or disagree that for GCSE geography, where we propose that centres should have some choice of content on which their students will answer questions, the exam boards should not provide advance information about the focus of the content of exams in addition?

Not Answered

Do you have any comments on our proposal not to provide advance information for 2022 for GCSE geography?

GCSE geog adv info comments:

Other subjects

Are there any GCSE subjects for which advance information about the focus of the content of exams should NOT be given to students in advance of the exam? [select three from drop down]

gcse 3 options - Subject 1:

gcse 3 options - Subject 2:

gcse 3 options - Subject 3:

Are there any AS subjects for which advance information about the focus of the content of exams should NOT be given to students in advance of the exam? [select three from drop down]

AS 3 subjects which should not have advance notice - Subject 1:

AS 3 subjects which should not have advance notice - Subject 2:

AS 3 subjects which should not have advance notice - Subject 3:

Are there any A level subjects for which advance information about the focus of the content of exams should NOT be given to students in advance of the exam? [select three from drop down]

A level subjects not given adv notice - Subject 1:

A level subjects not given adv notice - Subject 2:

A level subjects not given adv notice - Subject 3:

If you have identified any subjects above, do you have any comments on the subjects that should NOT be given advance information about the focus of exams in 2022?

Comments subjects not given adv notice:

1.3 Support materials

To what extent do you agree or disagree that a formulae sheet should be provided in the exam room for GCSE mathematics in 2022?

Agree

Do you have any comments on the proposal to provide a formulae sheet in the exam room for GCSE mathematics in 2022?

GCSE maths formulae sheet comments:

To what extent do you agree or disagree that a revised equation sheet covering all relevant equations should be provided in the exam room for GCSE physics and combined science in 2022?

Not Answered

Do you have any comments on the proposal to provide a revised equation sheet covering all relevant equations in the exam room for GCSE physics and combined science in 2022?

Science equation sheet comments:

2 Exam timetable (for information only)

3 Contingency plans for exams in summer 2022 (for information only)

Equality impact assessment

Are there other potential equality impacts that we have not explored?

No

If yes, what are they?

Responded yes to equality impacts:

Do you have any suggestions for how any potential negative impacts on particular groups of students could be mitigated?

mitigating negative impacts:

Greater use of optionality across subjects and levels - see above for explanation of why this is particularly important for disadvantaged students.

Regulatory impact assessment

Are there additional activities associated with changing the exam and assessment arrangements for students taking GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in summer 2022 that we have not identified above?

No

If yes, what are they?

yes to RIA question:

What, if any, additional costs do you expect you would incur if the proposed changes to the exam and assessment arrangements were introduced for summer 2022?

Additional costs:

Do you have any suggestions for alternative approaches that could reduce burden and costs?

Reduce burden and costs:

Confidentiality and feedback

Do you wish any part of your response to remain confidential?

No

If yes, please state clearly what information you would like to be kept as confidential.

confidentiality statement:

How easy to read did you find this consultation? Please rate from 1 to 5, where 1 is very hard to read and 5 is very easy to read.

5 - Very easy to read

How did you find out about this consultation?

Other